

# The Ukraine-Japan Security Dialogue as an Important Contribution to International Peace and Security

Violetta Udovik\*

## Abstract

In 2018 security consultations between Ukraine and Japan were held for the first time, becoming their newest area of bilateral cooperation. This paper reviews when and under what circumstances Ukraine-Japan security dialogue commenced. It follows the timeline of defense contacts, putting emphasis on common interests such as tackling the issue of the territories occupied by Russia, ensuring freedom of navigation, denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, development of armed forces, and participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations (PKO). The paper explores the position of President Zelenskyy on security cooperation with Japan and concludes with an assessment of its significance in the context of international peace and security.

## Introduction

On October 12th, 2018, for the first time in the history of Ukraine-Japan bilateral relations, “anpo kyogi” or security consultations were held in Tokyo. Ukraine

was represented by Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Vasyl Bodnar and Deputy Minister of Defense for European Integration, Lieutenant General Anatoliy Petrenko. On behalf of Japan Deputy Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Uyama Hideki and Director General for International Affairs of the Ministry of Defense Suzuki Hideo participated in the consultations.

As reported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the sides discussed a wide range of issues of mutual interest, including those related to security and defense policies of both countries, the security situation in their respective regions, as well as bilateral cooperation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2018). During the visit of Ukrainian delegation to Japan, the Memorandum between the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine and the Ministry of Defense of Japan on Cooperation and Exchanges in the field of Defense was signed. As stated by Vasyl Bodnar in his twitter account, Ukraine has become the first country in its region with which Japan signed a memorandum on defense cooperation (Vasyl Bodnar, 2018).

Notwithstanding the significance of this historic event, security dialogue between Ukraine and Japan

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\* Violetta Udovik is an academic fellow at the Institute for Languages and Cultures of Europe and Asia, Japan. She holds PhD (World History) from I.I.Mechnikov Odesa National University, Ukraine.

has not received due attention of research community. Therefore, this paper can be considered to be the first attempt to analyze current state of Ukraine-Japan cooperation in defense sector, find common interests of both countries in security area, as well as evaluate its significance in the context of international peace and security.

### **Initial Steps: Ukraine-Japan Relations, 1992-2014**

It should be noted that Ukraine-Japan relations have been gradually developing since their establishment in 1992. In 1994, after Ukraine denounced its nuclear arms, which represented the third biggest nuclear arsenal in the world after the United States and Russia, Ukraine and Japan signed the Agreement Concerning Cooperation for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons Reduced in Ukraine and the establishment of a committee on this cooperation, which paved a way to a closer cooperation between the two countries.

In 1995 Ukraine President Leonid Kuchma visited Japan for the first time as a head of Ukrainian state, and in 1997 Japan started providing Ukraine with the Official Development Assistance consisting of loans, grant aid, financial assistance, technical cooperation, green investment and Chernobyl related projects, which in February 2018 totaled 3.1 billion US Dollars (Embassy of Japan in Ukraine, 2018).

Multilateral cooperation was strengthened after Minister for Foreign Affairs Aso Taro proclaimed the “Arch of Freedom and Prosperity” as the fourth principle of the foreign policy of Japan, based on which a dialogue between Japan and GUAM – Organization for Democracy and Economic Development consisting of Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova – was established in 2007. In 2012, following the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear plant accident, Ukraine and Japan signed first ever Agreement on the Cooperation to

Advance Aftermath Response Activities for Accidents at Nuclear Power Stations.

Amidst deterioration of Ukraine’s security environment due to the temporary occupation of the Crimean Peninsula and Donbas region by Russia in 2014, the following year Japan’s Prime Minister Abe Shinzo visited Ukraine reassuring Japan government’s support for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and announced the provision of assistance totaling 1.84 billion US Dollars (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2015). Japan implemented sanctions against Russia and has been supporting United Nations General Assembly Resolutions regarding the human rights situation in Ukraine’s Crimea. As an active member of G7, Japan has made its utmost effort in order to push for Ukraine agenda within the G7 Ukraine Support Group.

As can be seen from above, Ukraine and Japan managed to develop close relations in a wide range of areas such as political dialogue, economic affairs, nuclear safety, and humanitarian cooperation. However, the international crisis of 2014 brought by the occupation of Ukraine’s territories by Russia urged both countries to seek closer ties in a completely new area of bilateral cooperation which is related to security and defense matters.

### **Building Common Interests: from Cyber Security to Broader Defense Cooperation**

In December 2016 Ukraine and Japan launched bilateral dialogue on the cyber security by holding first consultations in Ukraine’s capital Kyiv. During its visit to Ukraine, the Japanese delegation, headed by Ambassador-at-large Mizushima Koichi, familiarized Ukrainian counterparts from the competent authorities with Japan’s achievements in monitoring and neutralizing of the cyber incidents and introduced

Japan's National Strategy in cyber security domain. Parties have also discussed major contemporary strategies and tendencies in the field of cyber security, basic mechanisms of its reinforcement including further perspective directions of Ukraine-Japan bilateral cooperation in this strategic area (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2016).

For Japan, which saw its total number of cyber attacks explode from 12.8 billion in 2013 to 128.1 billion in 2016 – a 900% increase in just three years (Volodzko, 2018), the issue of cyber security has been gaining more and more importance. In 2014 the Defense Ministry of Japan set up a cyber defense unit within the Self-Defense Forces to respond to the large number of cyber attacks (The Asahi Shimbun, 2018), and in 2015 the government of Japan adopted the Cyber security strategy (The Government of Japan, 2015). Currently, Japan has bilateral dialogues on cyber security with the following countries: the US, Australia, the UK, France, Germany, Russia, India, Republic of Korea, Israel, Estonia and Ukraine (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2018).

Ukraine, in its turn, has experienced numerous cyber attacks including ransomware hits in June 2017, and has been strengthening its capabilities to protect itself from such attacks in the future. It ranks 8th among the world's top countries with the best programmers compared, for example, to the 34th place taken by India (Goncharov, 2018) known for its IT specialists. Thus, it is natural that Ukraine has become Japan's partner in terms of cyber security cooperation. In the context of holding of 2020 Tokyo Olympics and introduction of super-smart 5.0 Society by the government of Japan, its cooperation with Ukraine in cyberspace gains significant importance.

Ukraine-Japan contacts regarding cooperation in national security and defense areas commenced in 2017. In March, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada Parliament of Ukraine Andriy Parubiy paid a visit to Japan, during which he held meetings with the Prime

Minister of Japan Abe Shinzo, Crown Prince Naruhito, and State Minister of Defense Wakamiya Kenji. Besides bilateral cooperation and Japan's support for Ukraine, the parties discussed characteristics of the Japan Self-Defense Forces and the armed forces of Ukraine, analyzed security threats, focusing mainly on modern hybrid war (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2017). Andriy Parubiy also visited a naval base in Yokosuka (112 International, 2017).

In continuation of this dialogue, Japan's Vice Minister of Defense for International Affairs Manabe Ro visited Ukraine in August 2017, where he held talks with First Deputy Minister of Defense of Ukraine Ivan Rusnak. As the parties exchanged opinions on defense policy, the military-political situation in the region, and other defense related issues, they agreed to promote exchange between defense authorities and further develop Ukrainian-Japanese defense relations (Ukraine Government Portal, 2017). Practical realization of this agreement was achieved during the first Ukraine-Japan security consultations held in October 2018 and is reflected in the signing of the Memorandum on Cooperation and Exchange in the Field of Defense.

Fast and smooth formalization of this document shows profound interest on both sides in promoting close cooperation in defense and security sectors. It is clear that Japan and Ukraine not only respect common values such as democracy, market economy, and rule of law, but also share common threats. Dr. Olena Mykal, President of Ukrainian Center for Asian Studies, states that both countries share such challenge as "Russian annexation of the territories of Ukraine and Japan" (Mykal, 2018). The illegal occupation of the Crimea and its militarization by Russia, as well as Russia's military aggression in Eastern Ukraine which resulted in occupation of Donbas, have been main challenges for Ukraine's government since 2014.

In case of Japan, Prime Minister Abe has been making consistent efforts aimed at resolution of the

“Northern Territories” issue and signing of the peace treaty with Russia. At the same time, the Ministry of Defense of Japan informs that Russia maintains a considerable size of military forces in the Far East including nuclear capabilities such as anti-ship missile systems “Bastion” and “Bal”, reportedly installed on the islands of Etorofu and Kunashiri (Japan Ministry of Defense, 2019). Russia has also been active in upscaling military drills with participation of Chinese troops such as Vostok-2018, which were not held on the Northern Territories because of request made by Japan (Mainichi Japan, 2018). These facts show that both countries face territorial issues with Russia and share the problem of Russia’s pursuit of militarization of their surrounding regions. In this regard, Ukraine and Japan clearly call for adherence to the norms and principles of international law and emphasize the non-recognition of change of the status quo through the use of force.

Both Japan and Ukraine have profound interest in ensuring of freedom of navigation. According to Ambassador of Japan to Ukraine Sumi Shigeki (2014-2018), Japan has long insisted on the need to respect the freedom of navigation in the East China Sea and other seas and considers it “extremely important” (Ukrinform, 2018). For Japan, situation around the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea as well as growing military potential of China have been posing a serious concern (Diplomatic Bluebook, 2016). Pointing out the direct connection between the security situation in East Asia and Europe, Ambassador Sumi stated that freedom of navigation under international law in the Kerch Strait, the Sea of Azov, and the Black Sea cannot be violated. It is worth to mention that practical implementation of such a position is reflected in Japan’s support for UN General Assembly Resolutions on the Problem of militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, which were

adopted in 2018 and 2019.

An important point of contact in the area of international peace and security for Japan and Ukraine is a common position regarding the urgent need for complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and abolishment of North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs. Since 2016 North Korea has conducted three nuclear tests and launched as many as 40 ballistic missiles. The position of Japan’s Ministry of Defense is that these military trends in North Korea pose an unprecedentedly serious and imminent threat to Japan’s security as well as peace and security of the region and the international community (Defense of Japan 2018). Ukraine, sharing the position of the government of Japan, in its official statements has resolutely condemned North Korea’s launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles and called upon Pyongyang to stop provocations immediately and restart dialog with the international community (Embassy of Ukraine in Japan, 2017).

Ukrainian expert on foreign policy and security in the Asia Pacific region from Ukraine’s National Institute For Strategic Studies Serhiy Koshovyy holds that preferred areas of cooperation for Ukraine might be cyber security, strengthening of the defense sector, access to the advanced technologies in the production of military products, implementation of joint research and production projects with Japan on manufacturing of precision and high-tech weapons. He thinks that Ukraine’s interest is connected with the fact that its defense complex is currently being modernized, and states that Japan could take note of Ukraine’s unique combat experience in the face of Russian aggression. In Koshovyy’s opinion, deep trust between Ukraine and Japan needs to be converted into real projects related to common geopolitical challenges as annexation of the territories, demand for further development of national armed forces, and the defense-industrial complex (Ukrinform, 2018).

It should be added that both Ukraine and Japan

have taken part in UN Peacekeeping Operations. As of 2019, as many as 45,000 Ukrainian military and civilian personnel have participated in 27 peace support operations all around the world since 1992 under the auspices of the United Nations and NATO (Kyiv Post, 2019). Japan, in its turn, was the second largest contributor to UN Peacekeeping Budget as of 2014 and dispatched about 9,300 Self-Defense Forces and police personnel to UN PKO missions in Cambodia, Mozambique, Golan Heights, Timor-Leste, and Haiti (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2014).

After the victory of Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the Presidential elections held in Ukraine in April 2019, the course for further strengthening of bilateral relations with Japan, including security dialogue, has been confirmed by both sides. In September 2019, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Lieutenant General Serhiy Bessarab had a working meeting with the Director General for International Affairs of the Ministry of Defense of Japan Suzuki Hideo (General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, 2019). In October same year, Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine Oleksiy Danilov held a meeting with Ambassador of Japan to Ukraine Kurai Takashi, during which the parties exchanged views on development of the security situation in global and regional dimensions (National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, 2019).

International security matters were also discussed during the visit of President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy to Japan in October 2019. At the meeting with Prime Minister Abe, carried out with the participation of Secretary General of the National Security Secretariat of Japan Hasegawa Eiichi, President Zelenskyy expressed gratitude to Japan for its consistent policy of support for Ukraine, non-recognition of the illegal occupation of Crimea, and maintenance of sanctions against Russia. Volodymyr

Zelenskyy informed his Japanese counterpart regarding security situation in Donbas and recent developments towards achieving the peace (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2019). Both countries' intention to develop exchanges in the area of security was further confirmed at the meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and Japan Vadym Prystaiko and Motegi Toshimitsu (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2019).

## Conclusion

Drawing conclusions, one should mention that significance of Ukraine-Japan defense cooperation is connected not only with the strengthening of bilateral relations and political dialogue, but also with formation of the strong security triangle between Ukraine, Japan and the United States, which is strategic partner for both countries. In this way, Ukraine-Japan defense exchanges could harmonically add up to Japan's partnerships with the US and NATO as well as Ukraine's cooperation with this organization.

Bilateral collaboration between Ukraine and Japan in the security sector proves that relations between the two countries are based on profound trust which is provided for by the absence of issues in bilateral relations as well as sharing of universal democratic values and an understanding of importance of adherence to the principles of international law. It provides a valuable opportunity for interregional defense cooperation, as well as opinion exchange on the challenges which exist in Europe and Asia's security environments.

Cyberspace security related cooperation is another important element that could contribute to stable functioning of domestic and international transaction systems, ensuring of both countries' nationals' security, as well as boost further smooth digitalization of Ukrainian and Japanese societies including public

and private services.

Ukraine-Japan security dialogue can be considered equally important for ensuring of international peace and security given that closer cooperation between the two countries may lead to better coordination of their participation in UN activities.

Considering that Ukraine-Japan cooperation in security and defense areas has all prerequisites necessary for its further successful development, preparation of detailed plan for the practical realization of such cooperation and its smooth implementation can be expected to be further steps that could contribute to securing a more stable future for both Ukraine and Japan as well as for the whole international community.

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