



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on February 23, 2023

Japan Pledges Another \$5.5 Billion in Aid to Ukraine

SINGAPORE — Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida declared on Monday, February 20, that Tokyo is prepared to provide another \$5.5 billion in financial aid to Ukraine, according to a report from the [Japan Times](#).

Japan joined Western sanctions against Russia at the onset of the Ukraine crisis last February, and has hitherto provided Ukraine over \$600 million worth of direct financial support, together with hundreds of millions of dollars in emergency humanitarian aid.

However, “there is still a need to assist people whose livelihoods have been destroyed by the war, and to restore destroyed infrastructure,” the prime minister stated in his speech at a think-tank symposium. “We have decided to provide additional financial support of \$5.5 billion.”

Based on figures from the Kiel Institute’s [“Ukraine Support Tracker,”](#) governments around the world had pledged €143.6 billion for Ukraine as of January 15 this year, with €73.2 billion coming from the United States, €54.9 billion from EU members and institutions, and €15.5 billion from other countries, including Japan.

Chairing this year’s Group of Seven (G-7), Kishida declared that he will host a video conference with the G-7 leaders and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Friday, the day of the conflict’s one-year anniversary. An in-person meeting of the G-7 leaders is poised to happen in Hiroshima in May.

“This year, Japan, as G-7 president and a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, will support Ukraine in its fight against Russian aggression and lead the world’s efforts to uphold a free and open international order based on the rule of law,” Kishida pointed out in his speech.

Kishida’s tough position on the Ukraine crisis seems to have the support of a considerable proportion of the Japanese public. A recent *Nikkei* poll revealed that 66 percent of respondents think the government should continue to back Ukraine, even if it causes “adverse effects on their own lives,” and 71 percent think that the sanctions against Russia should be enhanced. Additionally, the proportion of respondents hoping for enhanced cooperation with the United States attained record levels, the same poll indicated.

Meanwhile, Russia said last month that it will not hold yearly talks with Japan on renewing a pact that permits Japanese fishermen to operate near disputed islands, in retaliation for Japan’s anti-Russian measures following the Ukraine crisis.

The islands, off the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido, are called the *Kurils* in Russia and the *Northern Territories* in Japan, and have been at the crux of years of tension between the two countries.

“In the context of the anti-Russian measures taken by the Japanese government ... the Russian side



AP Images
Fumio Kishida



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informed Tokyo that it could not agree on the holding of intergovernmental consultations on the implementation of this agreement,” the RIA state news agency reported, citing Russia’s foreign ministry.

That being said, adopting a strong stance against Russia regarding Ukraine is viewed as a direct security necessity by many in Japan, failing which China could be motivated to militarily undermine Taiwan, an island that is perceived as vital to Japan’s own security.

On Feb. 22, in the Asian powers’ first formal security talks in four years, China voiced its displeasure at Japan’s military buildup, and Tokyo slammed Beijing’s military ties with Russia, as well as its suspected use of spy balloons.

The talks, targeted at reducing tensions between the world’s second- and third-largest economies, came about as Tokyo fears that Beijing will use military force to take control of Taiwan amid the Ukraine-Russia crisis, provoking a conflict that could affect Japan and disrupt global trade.

Last December, Japan said it would double defense spending over the next five years to 2 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) — a total of \$320 billion — to deter China from undertaking military action. Beijing, which boosted defense spending by 7.1 percent last year, spends more than four times as much as Japan on its forces.

Tokyo plans to obtain longer-range missiles that could strike mainland China, and to stock up on other munitions it would require to maintain a conflict alongside the large U.S. force it currently houses within Japanese territory.

“The international security situation has undergone vast changes and we are seeing the return of unilateralism, protectionism, and a Cold War mentality,” Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong said at the beginning of the meeting in Tokyo with Japanese Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Shigeo Yamada.

Amid the present complicated and uncertain international and regional situation, the significance of Sino-Japanese relations has not changed, and will not change, Sun said during the meeting, based on a statement from China’s foreign ministry. China and Japan should “deal with differences appropriately” to ensure that relations “do not stagnate, do not go off course, do not regress, and move steadily along the right track,” he told Yamada.

Sun said that Taiwan is among key issues linked to basic trust between both countries, and hopes Japan can “learn from history, be consistent, adhere to the path of peaceful development and the ‘one-China’ principle.”

After the meeting, Sun revealed that they had also discussed Japan’s release of wastewater from the Fukushima nuclear plant into the Pacific and talked about “unblocking” industrial supply chains, without elaborating further.

China is Japan’s largest trading partner, accounting for around a fifth of its exports and almost a quarter of its imports. It is also a key manufacturing base for Japanese companies.

“While relations between Japan and China have a lot of possibilities, we are also facing many issues and concerns,” Yamada told Sun. He singled out their territorial dispute over uninhabited islands in the East China Sea (known as the *Senkaku* in Japan and *Diaoyu* in China), Beijing’s recent joint military drills with Moscow, and the suspected Chinese surveillance balloons detected over Japan at least three times since 2019.



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Following the shooting down of a suspected Chinese spy balloon by the United States, Japan declared that it planned to clarify military engagement rules to permit its jet fighters to down unmanned aircraft that violate its airspace.

In a statement after the meeting, Japan’s foreign ministry said it had also highlighted the necessity of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, adding that the two countries agreed to try setting up a direct communication hotline “around spring” and to boost dialogue between their senior security officials.



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