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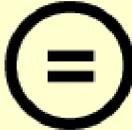
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**Master's Thesis of International Studies**

# **Crisis and Grand Strategy**

**Analyzing the Implications of the Ukraine War for  
the Grand Strategies of South Korea and Japan**

위기와 대전략: 우크라이나 전쟁 이후 한국과  
일본의 대전략에 관한 고찰

**February 2025**

**Graduate School of International Studies**

**Seoul National University**

**Korean Studies Major**

**Andrew Soohwan Kim**

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**Andrew Soohwan Kim**

**Confirming the Master's Thesis written by  
Andrew Soohwan Kim**

**February 2025**

Chair	<u>Eun, Ki Soo</u> (Seal)
Vice Chair	<u>Cho, Young Nam</u> (Seal)
Examiner	<u>Park, Tae Gyun</u> (Seal)

# Abstract

This study analyzes in-depth the implications of the crisis of the Ukraine War for the grand strategies of South Korea and Japan. First, the concept of grand strategy is operationalized via a comprehensive literature review, which outlines its usage within existing scholarship and the interpretation of the concept that will be utilized for the purposes of this study. I then outline South Korea's grand strategy by referencing the analyses of Ramon Pacheco Pardo and others, highlighting in particular Pacheco Pardo's middle state grand strategy model, South Korea's *sui generis* grand strategic goal of inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification, and the dichotomy of autonomy versus alignment in South Korean strategic thinking. Regarding South Korea's *sui generis* goal of inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification, I outline how the Ukraine War has drastically changed the geopolitical environment in ways that are inimical to South Korea's paramount pursuit of national reunification. Regarding the strategic dichotomy between autonomy and alignment, this paper demonstrates how the post-Ukraine Yoon administration has accelerated South Korea's march towards alliance alignment and integrated deterrence while also sending costly signals to Russia, North Korea, and China in ways that evinced the participation of the Republic of Korea (ROK) in a new Cold War paradigm. This study then outlines the grand strategy of Japan, Northeast Asia's other middle power, using the same conceptual framework of Pacheco Pardo's middle power grand strategy model to outline Japan's *sui generis* grand strategic goal (i.e., overcoming the legacy of the postwar era) and its geographical "line of interest" or *ri-ekisen* (i.e., the Indo-Pacific as highlighted by the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" concept first proposed by Abe Shinzō). Regarding the *sui generis* goals of the so-called Abe Doctrine, the effects of the Ukraine War in making some of these goals less viable (i.e., receipt of the disputed "Northern Territories" from Russia) while accelerating the achievement of others (i.e., military "normalization" of Japan as shown by further erosions of barriers to weapons transfers and international security cooperation) is analyzed. Finally, the expansion of the geographical scope of Japan's middle power grand strategy (i.e., its *ri-ekisen*) via the

post-Ukraine War linkage of Transatlantic and Indo-Pacific security paradigms is also discussed. A comparative discussion and a discussion of the current outlook preface a recapitulation of the main findings of this study in the conclusion.

**Keywords:** Grand Strategy, Ukraine War, Republic of Korea (South Korea), Japan, Middle Power Grand Strategy Model

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# Chapter I. Background and Introduction

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched what Vladimir Putin initially called a “special military operation” and what actually constituted a large-scale military invasion of Ukraine. On the same day, Russia sent a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) via its Permanent Representative to the UNSC, in which Putin listed his invented *casus belli* for the invasion.<sup>1</sup> Putin invoked Article 51 of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which legitimizes a state’s use of force in connection with its “inherent right of individual or collective self-defense,” as the justification of his invasion in terms of international law. Within Article 51, he explicitly invoked the right of collective self-defense, citing intervention requests by the pro-Russian “states” of the Donestsk People’s Republic and Luhansk People’s Republic, two pro-Russian entities that Putin had not given state recognition since their independence declarations following the 2014 Euromaidan and had only recognized as regions of Ukraine with “special status” in the 2015 Minsk II agreements.<sup>2</sup> Russian recognition of the “People’s Republics” came just three days prior to the invasion, paving the way for Russia’s collective self-defense claim months after reports had already circulated throughout the West regarding the imminent nature of Russia’s initial offensive. Russia also tacitly invoked the emergent and highly-disputed concept of “humanitarian intervention” within international law by stating in its letter to the UNSC Secretary General that the purposes of the operation was to protect both its civilians in Ukraine and “people who have been subjected to abuse and genocide by the Kiev regime for eight years” (thus explicitly claiming that the Ukrainian crackdown on post-2014 pro-Russian

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Security Council. 2022. “Letter dated 24 February 2022 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General,” S/2022/154, February 24, 2022, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n22/268/16/pdf/n2226816.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Asada, Masahiko. 2024. "The War in Ukraine under International Law: Its Use of Force and Armed Conflict Aspects", *International Community Law Review* 26, 1-2: 5-38, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/18719732-12341493>.

insurgents, especially those in the Donbas region, constituted the crime of “genocide” as governed by the 1948 Genocide Convention).

Russia further staked its claim on geopolitical grounds and a revanchist historiography. Regarding geopolitics, Putin explicitly blamed US-led NATO expansion for provoking the war in the UNSC letter, calling NATO militarization on Russia’s periphery a “matter of life and death” for Russia. Regarding identitarian irredentism, Putin previewed his invasion in July 2021 with an article titled “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians,” a history treatise which presented Russia’s historiography regarding the perceived ethnic and territorial unity of Russia and Ukraine from the Kievan Rus to the present.<sup>3</sup> Russia’s historical mythology and its overlooking of the substantial reification of a distinct Ukrainian identity that accelerated profoundly after the collapse of the Soviet Union led to an egregious underestimation of Ukraine’s capabilities to resist a large-scale invasion.<sup>4</sup> The rude awakening of the past three years contrasted with Russia’s experience during its swift 2014 annexation of Crimea, which encouraged Putin to attempt similar annexations in the Russian-speaking regions of eastern and southern Ukraine. Moscow posited an EU-friendly political establishment (which it pejoratively labelled as a “regime” full of “Nazis” or “Banderites”) as one of the only impediments to a pan-Russian unity, and Putin drew parallels between the historical episode of the Second World War and his slow-burn war in the Donbas (and later attempt to annex the entirety of the Ukraine). Russia paid the price for its miscalculations and revisionist boilerplate, with even Russophilic Ukrainian politicians reversing their pro-Russian positions following the 2022 invasion and joining a remarkably united Ukrainian cause against Russian aggression.

The response to Russia’s invasion by the liberal democratic “West” (i.e., the US, Europe, NATO, and other aligned nations) was immediate and sweeping. Russia’s

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<sup>3</sup> Putin, Vladimir. 2021. “Article by Vladimir Putin ‘On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians.’” President of Russia, July 12, 2021. <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181>.

<sup>4</sup> Mankoff, Jeffrey. 2022. “Russia’s War in Ukraine: Identity, History, and Conflict.” Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), April 1, 2022. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep40567>.

claims of genocide and humanitarian intervention were dismissed by the International Court of Justice via its March 2022 provisional measures,<sup>5</sup> in which the ICJ ordered Russia to “immediately suspend the military operations that it commenced on 24 February 2022 in the territory of Ukraine” (a landmark order which may transform the authority of the “World Court” and the purview of its provisional measures).<sup>6</sup> The US and its allies revived the 1950 Uniting for Peace Resolution (UN General Assembly Resolution 377A), a vestige of the Korean War, to obtain UNGA condemnation of Russia’s violation of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter in its use of force against Ukraine amidst Russia’s use of its P5 veto power in the UNSC.<sup>7</sup> Regarding Putin’s geopolitical grievances and historical revanchism, the 2022 invasion only reified the Europeanization of Ukraine’s political class while also expanding NATO membership. Since 2022, the US and Canada, along with the entirety of the EU and Switzerland, as well as US-aligned countries in the Asia-Pacific region (South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Australia, and New Zealand), *inter alia*, have all imposed or joined sanctions against Russia.<sup>8</sup> In addition, forty-one countries plus the EU Commission and Council have provided military, financial, and humanitarian aid to Ukraine since the voiding of diplomatic relations between Russia and Ukraine.<sup>9</sup>

The implications of this epoch-making crisis are starting to be addressed in academic literature. In particular, beyond the continual circadian stream of tactical

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<sup>5</sup> *Allegations of Genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Ukraine v. Russian Federation)*, Provisional Measures, Order, 16 March 2022

<sup>6</sup> Andreas Kulick. 2022. “Provisional Measures after *Ukraine v Russia* (2022),” *Journal of International Dispute Settlement*, Volume 13, Issue 2, June 2022, Pages 323–340, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jnlids/idac012>.

<sup>7</sup> Scharf, Michael P. 2023. “Power Shift: The Return of the Uniting for Peace Resolution.” Case Western Reserve University School of Law Scholarly Commons. [https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/faculty\\_publications/2153](https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/faculty_publications/2153).

<sup>8</sup> For an updated list of sanctions see: S&P Global Market Intelligence, S&P Global Commodity Insights. 2025. “Sanctions against Russia – a Timeline.” S&P Global, January 17, 2025. <https://www.spglobal.com/marketintelligence/en/news-insights/latest-news-headlines/sanctions-against-russia-8211-a-timeline-69602559>.

<sup>9</sup> Trebesch, Christoph, Pietro Bompreszi, and Ivan Kharitonov. 2023. “The Ukraine Support Tracker: Which Countries Help Ukraine and How?” Kiel Institute, February 21, 2023. <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/publications/the-ukraine-support-tracker-which-countries-help-ukraine-and-how-20852/>.

and military analysis regarding the prosecution of the war by its belligerents, scholarly analysis of the now nearly three-year-old conflict has started to gravitate towards studies of the conflict's longer-term implications for the long-term strategic outlook of various political actors. Regarding Europe, for example, scholarly analysis has pointed to the Ukraine War as a potential inflection point in the rise of the EU Commission (EC) as a geopolitical actor in international relations. These studies focus on the expansion of the EC's proactive executive role in an integrated European policymaking process regarding the fields of security and defense seen during the incumbent Von der Leyen Commission (e.g., a so-called "Brusselisation" of foreign and security policy, groundbreaking utilization of the European Peace Facility, alignment with NATO via the 2022 Strategic Compass for Security and Defence).<sup>10</sup> In sum, these analyses note the implications of the Ukraine War for the larger project of European integration, tracing the centripetal formation of an integrated and (largely) unified foreign policy strategy *à la* Jean Monnet following the 2022 invasion.<sup>11</sup> Such an integrated EU strategy subsumes both strategies of containment (via economic and military pressure) against Russia and continuing selective engagement with the country (the interconnectedness of a globalized economy, energy infrastructure, and supply chains precluding complete containment). To be sure, per the pluralism of liberal democracy, the opposite strategic counterpart to a values-based alignment and containment of Russia (i.e., non-interventionism) has been shown to coexist within nations, with populism and Euro-skepticism correlated strongly with a solipsistic foreign policy and an aversion towards united support for Ukraine.<sup>12</sup>

States and political actors across the globe have had to adjust their political, diplomatic, and strategic policies to adjust to a new world order that has been

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<sup>10</sup> Håkansson, Calle. 2023. "The Ukraine War and the Emergence of the European Commission as a Geopolitical Actor." *Journal of European Integration* 46 (1): 25–45. doi:10.1080/07036337.2023.2239998.

<sup>11</sup> Tocci, Nathalie. 2023. "How the War in Ukraine Has Transformed the EU." Social Europe, November 15, 2023. <https://www.socialeurope.eu/how-the-war-in-ukraine-has-transformed-the-eu>.

<sup>12</sup> Hooghe, Liesbet, et al. 2024. "The Russian Threat and the Consolidation of the West: How Populism and EU-Skepticism Shape Party Support for Ukraine." *European Union Politics* 25, no. 3: 459–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14651165241237136>.

described as constituting a “new Cold War” or an order marked by multiple “new Cold Wars.”<sup>13</sup> The post-Ukraine global order has also been described as a case of “fuzzy bifurcation,” a novel concept that delineates the limitations of modern-day countries to recreate Cold War-era bipolarity, containment policy, and geopolitical confrontations within an interconnected world where the continuing influence of globalization is omnipresent.<sup>14</sup> For such hegemonic “great powers” as the US, the implications of the Ukraine question features centrally in debates regarding the US’s perceived grand strategy of neo-containment. Namely, recent studies have focused on the Ukraine War’s implications for the grand strategy of the Biden administration (i.e., a “Biden Doctrine”), with such a grand strategy being described as a policy of neo-containment against revisionist powers<sup>15</sup> or a US leadership of the free world (i.e., the liberal internationalist order) *sans* the excesses of unipolar US hegemony.<sup>16</sup>

Though most of the discussion regarding the strategic implications of the Ukraine War have focused on the US and its allies in Europe, it is clear that the Ukraine crisis engenders massive geopolitical implications for other regions as well. In particular, East Asia, like Eastern Europe, constitutes a major security hotspot where shifts in global politics are acutely felt. Within this region, discussions of a continuing Cold War legacy perennially accompany the political divisions and subsequent residual conflicts between the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan and again between North and South Korea (with the concept of “frozen conflicts” having been used to describe such lingering Cold War divisions, especially in the Korean

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<sup>13</sup> Sanger, David E., and Mary K. Brooks. 2024. *New Cold Wars: China’s rise, Russia’s invasion, and America’s struggle to defend the west*. New York: Crown.

<sup>14</sup> Higgott, Richard, and Simon Reich. 2022. “It’s Bifurcation, Not Bipolarity: Understanding World Order after the Ukraine Invasion.” Brussels School of Governance Centre for Security, Diplomacy and Strategy, July 7, 2022. [https://brussels-school.be/sites/default/files/CSDS\\_Policy\\_brief\\_202101.pdf](https://brussels-school.be/sites/default/files/CSDS_Policy_brief_202101.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Gebert, Philip T. 2024. “President Biden’s Restrained Hamiltonian Foreign Policy.” *Canadian Review of American Studies* 54, no. 2: 153-169. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/936426>.

<sup>16</sup> Mathews, Jessica T. 2024. “What Was The Biden Doctrine?” *Foreign Affairs*, August 14, 2024. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/what-was-joe-biden-doctrine-leadership-hegemony-jessica-mathews>.

peninsula).<sup>17</sup> In addition, the region hosts middle powers (i.e., powers with strong regional significance and aspirational global influence) such as South Korea and Japan that are central to any discussion of a “new Cold War” order, neo-containment, or rising bloc politics (with these nations constituting the nexus of the US’s Indo-Pacific strategy and its legacy “hub and spokes” alliance system in the Asia-Pacific). However, despite the glaring need for analysis of the impact of the Ukraine War on the strategic thinking of this key region, relevant analysis of this topic is, as of yet, scant within academic literature.

This study thus contributes to existing scholarship by assessing the implications of the truly global crisis of the Ukraine War on the long-term strategic directions of Northeast Asia’s two middle powers, South Korea and Japan. This study differs from existing literature and commentary on the topic as it utilizes the concept of grand strategy in order to address the fundamental long-term strategic goals of each country. Chapter 2 operationalizes the concept of grand strategy by outlining its usage in existing literature and how it will be interpreted for the purposes of this study. Chapter 3 outlines South Korea’s grand strategy by referencing the analyses of Ramon Pacheco Pardo and others, highlighting in particular Pacheco Pardo’s middle state grand strategy model, South Korea’s *sui generis* grand strategic goal of inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification, and the dichotomy of autonomy versus alignment in South Korean strategic thinking.

Chapter 4 then analyzes how the Ukraine War has constituted an inflection point for South Korea’s grand strategy. First, regarding South Korea’s *sui generis* goal of inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification, I outline in Chapter 4-1 how the Ukraine War has drastically changed the geopolitical environment in ways that are inimical to South Korea’s paramount pursuit of national reunification. In Chapter 4-2, I then describe how the security crisis of the Ukraine War has affected South Korea’s long-standing strategic dilemma between autonomy and alignment (and its concomitant dichotomy of deterrence vs. accommodation vis-à-vis North Korea)

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<sup>17</sup>Grzelczyk, Virginie. 2019. “Threading on Thin Ice? Conflict Dynamics on the Korean Peninsula.” *Asia Europe Journal* 17, no. 1: 31–45. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-018-0523-8>.

endemic to the policy debates of South Korea's political actors. The subchapter details how the post-Ukraine Yoon administration has accelerated South Korea's march towards alliance alignment and integrated deterrence while also sending costly signals to Russia, North Korea, and China in ways that evince the ROK's participation in a new Cold War paradigm. Post-Ukraine polling data is also presented that shows an Overton window shift within South Korea towards the conservative strategic orientation of greater alignment.

Chapter 5 outlines the grand strategy of Japan, using the conceptual framework of Pacheco Pardo's middle power grand strategy model, outlining Japan's *sui generis* grand strategic goal and its geographical "line of interest" or *ri-ekisen* (i.e., the Indo-Pacific as highlighted by the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" concept first proposed by Abe Shinzō). Finally, Chapter 6 examines the impact of the Ukraine War on this model of Japan's grand strategy. I argue that the Ukraine War has complicated the geopolitical circumstances surrounding Japan's pursuit of its *sui generis* grand strategic goal (i.e., the Abe Doctrine's goal of overcoming the legacy of Japan's postwar era in terms of actualizing irredentist territorial expansion, expanded military/security capabilities, and geopolitical power apposite to Japan's status as an economic powerhouse), making some goals less achievable (i.e., receipt of the "Northern Territories" from Russia) while accelerating the achievement of others (i.e., military "normalization" of Japan as shown by further erosions of barriers to weapons transfers and international security cooperation). The expansion of the geographical scope of Japan's middle power grand strategy (i.e., its *ri-ekisen*) via the post-Ukraine War linkage of Transatlantic and Indo-Pacific security paradigms is also discussed. A comparative discussion of the findings and a discussion of the current outlook is presented in Chapter 7, which outlines convergences and divergences endemic to the two cases as well as the possibility that yet another period of crisis or punctuated equilibrium remains on the horizon for the East Asian middle powers of South Korea and Japan. A final recapitulation of this study's main findings is then presented in the conclusion.

## Chapter II. Conceptual Background: Grand Strategy

As this study examines the impact of the independent variable, operationalized as the crisis of the Ukraine War on the dependent variables constituted by the grand strategies of East Asia's middle powers, South Korea and Japan, it is essential to examine the question of what is meant by the term "grand strategy" in foreign policy and international relations discourse. Grand strategy constitutes a mainstay concept endemic to analyses of the foreign policy behavior of national actors, with discussions of the concept typically focusing on the strategic thinking of such major powers as the US and China. Despite this selective focus, more recent studies have attempted to widen the application of the concept to so-called "pivotal powers" (i.e., regional powers with great regional significance and more limited significance for global politics)<sup>18</sup> and so-called "middle powers" (with analysis of the latter focusing on the behavior of South Korea).<sup>19</sup>

The intellectual birthplace of the concept was originally situated at the crossroads between military theory and war studies. British military historian and theorist Sir Basil Henry Liddell Hart's famous 1929 formulation<sup>20</sup> and his reiteration in 1974<sup>21</sup> of the concept of grand strategy has often been cited as the seminal formulation of the concept in existing literature. Liddell's definition stated that "the role of grand strategy is to co-ordinate and direct all the resources of a nation towards the attainment of the political object of the war – the goal defined by national policy." He further elaborates on the distinction between the level of ordinary strategy (i.e., wartime tactics) and grand strategy, stating that "while the horizon of strategy is bounded by the war, grand strategy looks beyond the war to the subsequent peace. It should not only combine the various instruments, but so regulate their use as to

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<sup>18</sup> Balzacq, Thierry, Peter J. Dombrowski, and Simon Reich. 2019. *Comparative Grand Strategy: A Framework and Cases*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>19</sup> Pacheco Pardo, Ramon. 2023. *South Korea's Grand Strategy: Making its Own Destiny*. New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>20</sup> Liddell Hart, Basil. 1929. *The Decisive Wars of History: A Study in Strategy*. London: G. Bell & Sons, 151.

<sup>21</sup> Liddell Hart, Basil. 1974. *Strategy: The Indirect Approach*, 2nd rev. ed. New York: Praeger, 357.

avoid damage to the future state of peacefulness, secure and prosperous. Little wonder that, unlike strategy, the realm of grand strategy is for the most part *terra incognita!*”<sup>22</sup>

Liddell Hart’s last point is a salient one, as the usage and definitions of grand strategy, though ubiquitous, have remained thoroughly contested to the present day. Liddell Hart’s formulation itself has been subject to interpretation, or, as Lukas Milevski points out, reinterpretation or even misinterpretation. Milevski points out that Liddell Hart never elucidated a peacetime role for grand strategy, only engrafting “peace” onto his definition of grand strategy as his perceived remedy to the deadly limitations of a martial Clausewitzian strategy during World War I.<sup>23</sup> The actual ideation of Liddell Hart did in fact heavily comport with the classic theories of Carl von Clausewitz, with his theoretical framework of policy, strategy, tactics, and grand strategy closely mirroring Clausewitz’s. It has also been noted that Liddell Hart was not the only foundational theorist of grand strategy, but that his contribution was but a part of a burgeoning grand strategy discourse led by such naval theorists as Sir Julian Stafford Corbett and Alfred Thayer Mahan and such military historians as J.F.C Fuller and Liddell Hart, whose shared identity as British ex-soldiers and military theorists led to the contention that “Britain can lay claim to the important idea of grand strategy.”<sup>24</sup>

Regarding Liddell’s ideational predecessor, the universally cited formula of Carl von Clausewitz in his 1832 treatise *On War* stated that “war is the continuation of policy by other means.”<sup>25</sup> Clausewitz goes on to explicate war as an extension of politics (what would today be described using the terms “international politics” or “geopolitics”), noting that “war is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of other means” and that “war in itself does not suspend political

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<sup>22</sup> Liddell Hart, Basil, 1929, 151.

<sup>23</sup> Milevski, Lukas. 2021. “Liddell Hart’s Impact on the Study of Grand Strategy,” In *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy*, edited by Thierry Balzacq, and Ronald R. Krebs, 73-88, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021.

<sup>24</sup> Layton, Peter. 2012. “The Idea of Grand Strategy.” *The RUSI Journal* 157 (4): 56–61. doi:10.1080/03071847.2012.714193.

<sup>25</sup> Von Clausewitz, Carl. 1976. *On War*. Princeton University Press, translated by Howard, Michael and Paret, Peter, 87.

intercourse or change it into something entirely different.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, an explicit connection is drawn between the military and the political, even while the former remained the main focus of attention. As shown by the preponderance of military theorists cited both in the field of strategic studies and in the emergent field of grand strategy (e.g., Sun Tzu, Thucydides, Clausewitz, and the aforementioned British military theorists), the traditional theorizations regarding grand strategy revolved around the phenomenon of war, from its political inception to its conduct, and how military power is utilized in serving national goals.

Balzacq, Dombrowski, and Reich provide a label for this traditional strain of thinking within their classifications of grand strategy theory, calling it the “classicist approach” and emphasizing the anachronistic and “nineteenth-century” nature of its preoccupation on military issues.<sup>27</sup> The same authors cite Barry Ross Posen as an example of a modern-day, realist defender of the classicist approach to grand strategy. Posen’s definition of grand strategy stated that it constituted a “political-military, means-ends chain, a state’s theory about how it can best ‘cause’ security for itself.”<sup>28</sup> As Pacheco Pardo points out in his literature review regarding the concept of grand strategy, such realist views of the “classicist approach” dating from the Cold War subsumed the assumption that security, as the goal of grand strategy, equated to “state survival guaranteed through military power.”<sup>29</sup>

In contrast to the classicist view, Balzacq, Dombrowski, and Reich’s second categorization of grand strategy, the international relations (IR) approach, reflects the modern complexity of international relations and the concomitant need for a pluralistic move away from scholars’ erstwhile one-dimensional focus on war and military power. In terms of the means (i.e., the instruments) of grand strategy, this approach translates to a pluralistic view of the sources of national power in which

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<sup>26</sup> Von Clausewitz, Carl, 1976, 605.

<sup>27</sup> Balzacq, Thierry, Peter Dombrowski, and Simon Reich. 2019. “Introduction: Comparing Grand Strategies in the Modern World,” In *Comparative Grand Strategy: A Framework and Cases*, edited by Thierry Balzacq, Peter Dombrowski, and Simon Reich, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 6-7.

<sup>28</sup> Posen, Barry. 1984. *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 13.

<sup>29</sup> Pacheco Pardo, Ramon, 2023, 14.

military power was just one of many tools (e.g., diplomatic, political, economic, social, and technological power) that could be leveraged in the service of security and the national interest.<sup>30</sup> In terms of the aims or goals of grand strategy, the pluralistic IR approach moves away from the realist interpretation of security as simply constituting military issues and state survival. Such an approach comports with the contemporary “securitization” of many topics outside the realm of military affairs; per the Copenhagen School of IR and security studies, securitization (and conversely *desecuritization*) of issues constitutes a discursive process of consensus building between authoritative actors and their audiences (e.g., intellectuals, political parties, or mass publics).<sup>31</sup> Thus, the IR trend has diversified the concept of security itself, which was posited as the goal of grand strategy by classical theorists, to match the complex realities of modern-day geopolitics and international relations.

In another study, Balzacq doesn’t use the word “security” at all to describe the goal of grand strategy under the newer IR approach. Instead, he opts to use the broader phraseology of “national interest” to describe grand strategy’s *raison d’etre*, a broader concept that would also subsume security interests.<sup>32</sup> As for the logic (focus) driving this pursuit of “national interest,” Balzacq shifts the focus away from war and on an IR environment marked by international competition and the scarcity of resources. It should be noted that the latter element acknowledges the academic debates concerning resource scarcity, which were initiated by discussions of Thomas Robert Malthus (and the broadening of his concept of scarcity by “neo-Malthusians”)<sup>33</sup> and which were again invoked after the Ukraine War with Russia’s

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<sup>30</sup> Balzacq, Dombrowski, and Reich, 2019, 7-8.

<sup>31</sup> Roxanna Sjöstedt. 2017. “Securitization Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis.” In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

<sup>32</sup> Balzacq, Thierry, and Mark Corcoral. 2022. “Modern Grand Strategic Studies: Research Advances and Controversies.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

<sup>33</sup> Daoud, Adel. 2010. “Robbins and Malthus on Scarcity, Abundance, and Sufficiency: The Missing Sociocultural Element.” *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 69 (4). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.

weaponization of energy resources and withdrawal from the Black Sea Grain Initiative.<sup>34</sup>

**Table 1:** Thierry Balzacq’s “Two Traditions of Grand Strategy”

	<b>Classical</b>	<b>International Relations</b>
Logic	War	Competition and scarcity
Substance	Security	National interest

Source: Balzacq and Corcoral, 2022.<sup>35</sup>

Paul Kennedy, cited as a representative scholar of the IR approach,<sup>36</sup> wove together its main elements as outlined by Balzacq and others within his own definition of grand strategy. Kennedy’s view on the concept, presented amidst the collapse of the Cold War order, stated that the “crux of grand strategy lies therefore in policy, that is, in the capacity of the nation’s leaders to bring together all the elements, both military and nonmilitary, for the preservation and enhancement of the nation’s long-term (that is, in wartime and in peacetime) best interests.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, Kennedy neatly links the classicist marriage of military affairs and state policy together with the IR approach’s pluralistic views on both means (“elements, both military and nonmilitary”) and ends (“the nation’s long-term best interests” and not just survival).

Despite the best efforts of scholars operating within (and some without) the two traditions of grand strategy outlined above, grand strategy remains a highly contested

<sup>34</sup> European Council - Council of the European Union. 2024. “How the Russian Invasion of Ukraine Has Further Aggravated the Global Food Crisis.” January 27, 2024. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/how-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine-has-further-aggravated-the-global-food-crisis/>.

<sup>35</sup> Balzacq and Corcoral, 2022, 11.

<sup>36</sup> Pacheco Pardo, Ramon, 2023, 15.

<sup>37</sup> Kennedy, Paul. 1992. “Grand Strategy in War and Peace: Toward a Broader Definition.” In *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*, edited by Paul Kennedy, New Haven, Yale University Press, 5.

concept, with each scholarly utilization of the concept warranting a bespoke definitional discussion on the part of the scholar. First, regarding the goals of grand strategy, the two traditions of grand strategy outline the ends of grand strategy as security and national interests, respectively. However, some scholars choose to leave the “end(s)” of a grand strategy as an open question, instead of filling the blank using semantic placeholders like “security” or the nation’s “best interests.” Ramon Pacheco Pardo mentions such scholars as Arthur F. Lykke and Nina Silove, who present formulations of grand strategy in this way.<sup>38</sup> From a military classicist perspective, Arthur F. Lykke’s formula posits strategy as “*ends* (objectives towards which one strives) plus *ways* (courses of action) plus *means* (instruments by which some end can be achieved),”<sup>39</sup> presenting theorists of grand strategy with an equation-like template in which “ends,” “ways,” and “means” are left as open variables. Nina Silove provides an even more simplified equation, claiming that grand strategy is “constituted by two elements: ends and means.”<sup>40</sup> The dyadic and triadic formulas share a commonality in that they both emphasize that the elements constituting a country’s grand strategy remain open-ended and subject to interpretation. Indeed, even if one fills in such blanks (i.e., the “ends” of a country’s grand strategy) with such placeholders as “security” or “national interest,” it is important to remember that views regarding what constitutes each are often contested. This is especially the case within societies with democratic political systems, in which views of national security are fundamentally pluralistic and may differ according to contesting political affiliations or ideologies.

This dichotomy between a theoretically rigid approach and an open-ended approach to identifying the ends of grand strategy harkens to a more fundamental bifurcation in approaches to grand strategy theorization. One approach presents grand strategy as consisting of series of axiomatic self-evident categories, and there

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<sup>38</sup> Pacheco Pardo, Ramon, 2023, 17-18.

<sup>39</sup> Arthur F. Lykke Jr. 1989. “Defining Military Strategy = E + W + M,” *Military Review* 69, no. 5, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Silove, Nina. 2018. “Beyond the Buzzword: The Three Meanings of ‘Grand Strategy.’” *Security Studies* 27 (1). London: Routledge: 27–57. doi:10.1080/09636412.2017.1360073.

have attempts to itemize different grand strategies or present a typology of grand strategies as possible options for adoption by countries (mostly great powers and especially the United States). For example, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt presented “offshore balancing” as a realist grand strategy for the US that would be a preferable and sustainable alternative to the US’s traditional grand strategy of “isolationism” and the newer grand strategy of “liberal hegemony.”<sup>41</sup> In a similar prescriptive treatise on US grand strategy, Robert Art presented a list of eight grand strategies (i.e., selective engagement, dominion, global collective security, regional collective security, containment, isolationism, and offshore balancing), of which he favors “selective engagement” as a viable alternative for the US in between the two extremes of isolationism and dominion (of the global order).<sup>42</sup>

In contrast, the direct counterpart to the axiomatic approach is a contextual or processual approach to grand strategy, in which such strategies organically emerge from the ever-changing dynamics of domestic and international politics while being constantly inflected and influenced by the same dynamics. As pointed out in one study, the contextual (expressed as “emergent” and “adaptive”) view of strategy has emerged from the necessity for strategic studies to account for the volatility and variability endemic to a nation’s external environment, domestic politics, and national/bureaucratic leadership.<sup>43</sup> Such a view inevitably intersects with the Constructivist focus on the ideational origins of foreign policy and strategy. The axiomatic and contextual views of grand strategy also entail different methodologies for scholars of national grand strategies, with the former mostly entailing deductive reasoning in theorization and the latter largely involving inductive reasoning.

Directly related to the axiomatic/contextual dichotomy is the dichotomy between scholars who emphasize the temporal requirement of grand strategy to be “long-term” in nature and those who downplay this aspect. As shown above, Paul Kennedy is

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<sup>41</sup> Mearsheimer, John J., and Stephen M. Walt. 2016. “The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior U.S. Grand Strategy.” *Foreign Affairs* 95, no. 4: 70–83.

<sup>42</sup> Art, Robert J. 2013. *A Grand Strategy for America*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 7-11.

<sup>43</sup> Popescu, Ionut C. 2018. “Grand Strategy vs. Emergent Strategy in the Conduct of Foreign Policy.” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41 (3). London, Routledge, 438–60.

one scholar who adds this temporal qualification of “long-term” within his definition of grand strategy. However, per the increasing acknowledgement of contextual variables in defining and evaluating grand strategies, shorter-term developments have been placed in the spotlight. Indeed, grand strategy has even been conflated or used interchangeably with the ideation of individual (albeit influential) leaders (e.g., the Abe Doctrine as grand strategy).<sup>44</sup>

As a contested concept, grand strategy also has to compete for space in academic discourse with other terminology which label very similar concepts. Chief amongst these is the concept of “national security strategy,” which Silove notes is the preeminent example of grand strategy being expressed in the form of an authoritative national plan.<sup>45</sup> “National Security Strategy” at present refers not to an academic term but an archetypal type of governmental document that discusses a country’s fundamental national security interests, with the US’s seminal NSS format having been initiated by the Goldwater-Nichols DoD Reorganization Act of 1986;<sup>46</sup> South Korea has since released similar documents since the Roh Moo-hyun administration,<sup>47</sup> and Japan followed suit with its first NSS document during the second Abe administration in 2013. The key academic term within the NSS, “national security,” was conceptualized alongside grand strategy especially by American scholars during the Second World War.<sup>48</sup> “National security” is posited as a form of grand strategy that comports well with the classicist approach to grand strategy seen above, with a focus on such negative (reactive) values as self-preservation and defense instead of positive (proactive) values such as amplifying a

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<sup>44</sup> Hughes, Christopher W., Alessio Patalano, and Robert Ward. 2021. “Japan’s Grand Strategy: The Abe Era and Its Aftermath.” *Survival (London)* 63 (1). London: Routledge: 125-160. doi:10.1080/00396338.2021.1881258.

<sup>45</sup> Silove, 2018, 37-38.

<sup>46</sup> Historical Office - Office of the Secretary of Defense. n.d. “National Security Strategy.” Accessed October 15, 2024. <https://history.defense.gov/Historical-Sources/National-Security-Strategy/>.

<sup>47</sup> 이소연, 황지환. 2021. "국가안보전략과 전시작전통제권 전환 정책 변화: 노무현, 이명박, 박근혜 정부의 비교연구" *국가전략* 27, no.1, 134.

<sup>48</sup> Preston, Andrew. 2021. “National Security as Grand Strategy: Edward Mead Earle and the Burdens of World Power,” In *Rethinking American Grand Strategy*, edited by Elizabeth Borgwardt, Christopher McKnight Nichols, and Andrew Preston, New York, NY, Oxford University Press.

nation's influence or achieving specific, *sui generis* goals that are uniquely valued by the nation in question. This is perhaps unsurprising in light of the fact that these concepts were debated when the world was still under the shadow of global wars.

Finally, regarding the actual actors of grand strategy, there is the view that only “great powers” with significant control and influence over the international order can be the protagonists of grand strategies. However, per changes in international politics often referred to as the rise of multipolarity, recent scholarship broaches discussions which pertain to the grand strategies of so-called “middle powers” (e.g., South Korea and Japan), which are shown to exercise influence in certain geographical regions or niche sources of power while aspiring for global power status.<sup>49</sup> Even the grand strategies of “small states” have been analyzed, with such research identifying a correlation between smaller states and more “pragmatic, responsive, and adaptive” strategies (i.e., a state's lack of influence necessitating a contextual approach to its grand strategies).<sup>50</sup>

Having thus provided a comprehensive overview of the contested conceptual landscape of grand strategy in academic discourse, I now summarize my own formulation of grand strategy for the purposes of this paper. First, despite the contested nature of its definition and the view of some scholars that grand strategy has lost its conceptual power given the unpredictability of the political environment,<sup>51</sup> I share the view that grand strategy is too inextricably tied to the essence of foreign policymaking to be disposable.<sup>52</sup> I choose to discuss grand strategy for other reasons as well. For example, I utilize grand strategy because, as

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<sup>49</sup> Giacomello, Giampiero and Bertjan Verbeek. 2024. “Foreign Policy of Middle Powers,” In *The Oxford Handbook of Foreign Policy Analysis*, edited by Juliet Kaarbo and Cameron G. Thies, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

<sup>50</sup> Wivel, Anders. 2021. “The Grand Strategies of Small States,” In *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy*, edited by Thierry Balzacq, and Ronald R. Krebs, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

<sup>51</sup> Drezner, Daniel W., Ronald R. Krebs, and Randall Schweller. 2023. “The End of Grand Strategy.” *Foreign Affairs*, July 13, 2023.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2020-04-13/end-grand-strategy>.

<sup>52</sup> Ehrhardt, Andrew, and Maeve Ryan. 2020. “Grand Strategy Is No Silver Bullet, but It Is Indispensable.” *War on the Rocks*, May 19, 2020.

<https://warontherocks.com/2020/05/grand-strategy-is-no-silver-bullet-but-it-is-indispensable/>.

shown above, the concept remains eminently definable despite the diversity in viewpoints. As Ramon Pacheco Pardo does with his analysis of South Korea's grand strategy,<sup>53</sup> the definition privileged most in this study is the IR approach's consensus definition presented by Paul Kennedy. I privilege the IR approach over the classicist approach as there are *sui generis* goals (i.e., national interests) endemic to the grand strategies of South Korea and Japan (e.g., Korean reunification, "normalization" of Japan's military and defense policies, *inter alia*) that do not fit neatly within the realist pursuit of national security or self-preservation. This is not to say that this is neatly the case for other grand strategies outside the ROK and Japan cases (e.g., Taiwan's necessary prioritization of self-preservation), some of which may echo Barry Posen's definition of grand strategy and a realist fixation on security issues.

Regarding the axiomatic/contextual dichotomy of approaches to grand strategy, I adopt a contextual approach in which the contents of grand strategy are left as open-ended questions subject to variation according to national and environmental circumstances. This means that temporally, I acknowledge the significant power of short-term crises/events and political leaders/factions in inflecting the long-term trajectory of a nation's grand strategy. Indeed, the *raison d'être* of this paper is to analyze the impact of one such short-term event (the Ukraine War) on the long-term strategic thinking of South Korea and Japan, as operationalized by the middle power grand strategy model. As I have stated above, my use of grand strategy comports most with Kennedy's IR definition which posits grand strategy as a "policy" (or plan). As Silove points out, "if grand strategy is a plan, then it is not a necessary characteristic of the concept that the plan remains constant. In this case, the long-term characteristic of grand strategy refers to the nature of the plan, not to the plan's longevity in operation."<sup>54</sup> In other words, long-term "plans" or strategic thinking are not immutable monoliths and are subject to inflection and punctuated equilibrium by such crises as the one constituted by the Ukraine War.

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<sup>53</sup> Pacheco Pardo, Ramon, 2023, 14.

<sup>54</sup> Silove, 2018, 52.

Finally, I choose to adopt the grand strategy perspective in order to interact with existing literature, especially regarding South Korea and Japan, which invokes the concept of grand strategy and which proposes some of defining elements of these nations' grand strategies. In the chapters below, I will outline the grand strategies of East Asia's two middle powers, Korea and Japan, identifying the defining features of each by surveying relevant literature. I will then analyze the implications of the crisis of the Ukraine War for the grand strategies of these countries. I start with the grand strategy of South Korea.

## Chapter III. South Korea's Grand Strategy

Regarding the search to identify South Korea's modern grand strategy and its defining elements, Ramon Pacheco Pardo's 2023 study<sup>55</sup> constitutes the most recent and direct attempt to define South Korea's grand strategy within existing literature. In his book, Pacheco Pardo surveys the historical policies of each South Korean administration from the post-democratization-*cum-ex-military* clique administration of Roh Tae-woo to the first six months of the Yoon Suk-yeol presidency (although discussion of the impacts of the Ukraine War is limited due to its recency). Theoretically, Pacheco Pardo states that his framework of grand strategy was based on William Martel's theorization of grand strategy,<sup>56</sup> which in turn states that "grand strategy is a coherent statement of the state's highest political ends to be pursued globally over the long term. Its proper function is to prioritize among different domestic and foreign policy choices and to coordinate, balance, and integrate all types of national means—including diplomatic, economic, technological, and military power—to achieve the articulated ends. In effect, grand strategy provides a framework of organizing principles that in a useful way help policy makers and society make coherent choices about the conduct of foreign policy."<sup>57</sup> Regarding the conceptual use of grand strategy, Pacheco Pardo makes it clear that his utilization of grand strategy comports with the IR approach within Balzacq's dyad and an eclectic view of the sources of national power. Regarding the goals of grand strategy, Martel's premise of "highest political ends" also dovetails with Paul Kennedy's delineation of a "nation's long-term best interests" as constituting the ends of grand strategy within his consensus IR definition.

Temporally, both Kennedy and Martel explicitly add the "long-term" qualification to their definitions and Pacheco Pardo mostly inherits this precondition, albeit with the acknowledgement that "elements" of grand strategy outside a nation's

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<sup>55</sup> Pacheco Pardo, Ramon, 2023.

<sup>56</sup> Pacheco Pardo, Ramon, 2023, 28.

<sup>57</sup> Martel, William C. 2015. *Grand Strategy in Theory and Practice: The Need for an Effective American Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 32-33.

highest political goals (ends) may have a shorter shelf life, being susceptible to short-term environmental changes.<sup>58</sup> He is able to outline this long-term view of the ends of South Korea's grand strategy as he argues that a constant through line (or as he calls it an "elite consensus")<sup>59</sup> exists within the grand strategies of all ROK administrations from the Sixth Republic to the present. In short, Pacheco Pardo proposes that all governments of South Korea since at least the end of the Cold War, irrespective of liberal or conservative partisan affiliation, shared the same ends for Korea's grand strategy. He alleges the structural stability and immutability of this grand strategy consensus, which withstands the "façade of disagreement" and "political bickering" endemic to a participatory democracy like South Korea's.<sup>60</sup>

As part of his formulation of South Korea's grand strategy, Pacheco Pardo also presents his archetypical model of the grand strategy of middle powers. In doing so, he untethers the academic discussion regarding grand strategy from its traditional preserve, the study of the behavior of great powers, and resituates it within the scholarly discourse regarding "middle powers" (the conceptual preserve of countries like South Korea). Like the concept of grand strategy, "middle powers" in political science and IR studies is a concept that is both universally cited and contested. An example of a generic definition of middle powers is provided by Eduard Jordaan, who defines a middle-power as a state that is "neither great nor small in terms of their power, capacity and influence and exhibits the capability to create cohesion and obstruction toward global order and governance."<sup>61</sup>

Obviously, the vagaries of such a minimalistic definition would hinder its usefulness as an authoritative classification of states. Within the corpus of scholarship on middle powers, the realist perspective puts meat on the bones of the 'neither big nor small' thesis by situating middle states within power hierarchies with

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<sup>58</sup> Pacheco Pardo, Ramon, 2023, 29.

<sup>59</sup> Pacheco Pardo, Ramon, 2023, 91.

<sup>60</sup> Pacheco Pardo, Ramon, 2023, 234.

<sup>61</sup> Jordaan, Eduard. 2003. "The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations: Distinguishing between Emerging and Traditional Middle Powers." *Politikon* 30, no. 1: 165–81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0258934032000147282>.

a focus on a state's material and geopolitical conditions.<sup>62</sup> In contrast, other scholars such as Shin Soon-ok adopt an alternative, constructivist approach which places emphasis on the formation of a middle power identity within a country, a process consisting of the genesis of such an identity by the political class and the reaffirmation that identity in the international and domestic spheres.<sup>63</sup> Per both approaches (realist and constructivist), South Korea fits firmly within the purview of a middle state as its material and geopolitical situation hardly warrants either “great” or “small” state status and as the ROK has itself been using the phraseology of “middle power” to describe its international status since 1991 per the strategic vision of President Roh Tae-woo.<sup>64</sup> Korea's self-identification as a middle power is identified to have had significant staying power through successive administrations, despite some variation in the strategic outlook of each administration.<sup>65</sup>

In his book, Pacheco Pardo presents a novel model for understanding the grand strategy of middle powers that outlines its geographical and temporal perimeters while also typifying its ends and means, using a dyadic variation of Lykke's aforementioned equation of strategy. In terms of geography, middle powers, according to this model, do make aspirational attempts to influence the realities of global politics, polarity, and governance, while often lacking the influence to do so. Thus, the focus of middle powers' grand strategies remains mostly tethered by necessity to a regional geographical scope, with the caveat that the shaping of regional dynamics inevitably has concomitant consequences on global realities. Temporally, as mentioned, the ends of grand strategy, as opposed to the other variables within grand strategy, are posited as spanning decades of government policy. Regarding those ends, the model identifies autonomy as a separate and

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<sup>62</sup> Chapnick, Adam. 1999. “The Middle Power.” *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 7, no. 2, 73–82.

<sup>63</sup> Shin, Soon-ok. 2016. “South Korea's Elusive Middlepowermanship: Regional or Global Player?” *Pacific Review* 29 (2). ABINGDON: Routledge: 187–209.

<sup>64</sup> Karim, Moch Faisal. 2018. “Middle Power, Status-Seeking and Role Conceptions: The Cases of Indonesia and South Korea.” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 72 (4). Canberra: Routledge: 343–63.

<sup>65</sup> Robertson, Jeffrey. 2013. “Middlepowerism & Continuity in South Korean Foreign Policy.” *The Diplomat*, May 29, 2013. <https://thediplomat.com/2013/05/middlepowerism-continuity-in-south-korean-foreign-policy/>.

overarching aim, constituting a certain *primus inter pares* amongst the goals of middle power grand strategy. From there, goals endemic to a nation’s “highest political ends” are listed as a set of constituent aims. The realist approach’s unitary goal of (national) security is listed amongst these “highest political ends,” followed by (economic) prosperity and national “status” (i.e., the perception and influence of the nation within the international system). Finally, regarding the means for achieving these ends, these are seen as eclectic and inclusive, with Pacheco Pardo adding such novel domains such as soft power and information technology to the traditional tools of national power (military, diplomatic, and economic power).

**Table 2:** A Model for Understanding the Grand Strategy of Middle Powers

TABLE 1.1  
Middle power grand strategy model

<b>Geographic scale</b>	<b>Temporal scope</b>	<b>Types of ends</b>	<b>Types of power (means)</b>
Global when possible, regional always	Long-term (decades)	Autonomy, highest political ends (security, prosperity, status)	All if possible (diplomacy, military, economy; informational, soft, cyber)

Source: Ramon Pacheco Pardo, 2023<sup>66</sup>

Pacheco Pardo adds onto this generic framework to create a specific outline of South Korea’s grand strategy in the modern era. Per this framework, autonomy is again posited as a *primus inter pares* aim for South Korea’s grand strategy, an overarching aim which subsumes four constituent ends. These ends, which essentially constitute the “highest political ends” of South Korea’s grand strategy, are “protection from external military threats,” “inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification,” “deeper integration in the world economy,” and “recognition as an

<sup>66</sup> Pacheco Pardo, Ramon, 2023, 28.

influential middle power.”<sup>67</sup> The first goal of “protection from external military threats” simply constitutes a rewording of the end of security in the generic middle power grand strategy model. The second goal of “inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification” is labeled by the author as entailing the political ends of “security” and “status.” For a country like South Korea that so deeply relies on globally competitive, export-oriented industries, “deeper integration in the world economy” is a slant rhyme for the middle power goal of “prosperity.” Finally, “recognition as an influential middle power” equates to national status and is labelled as such by the author.

One may note that of the four ends of South Korea’s autonomous grand strategy, three are virtually unchanged from the three highest political ends of middle powers (security, prosperity, and status). Only the end of Korean unification exists outside this generic format. Indeed, national reunification and reconciliation with the North constitutes a bespoke, *sui generis* goal that is unique to the ROK (as few countries suffer from similar national divisions, and none approach the international stature of a middle power like South Korea). National reunification is not only an exclusively Korean goal, but also one that is a paramount precondition of autonomous Korean nationalism (having been fostered by the political splitting of a singular ethnical entity) and of the identity of the South Korean state. Regarding this identity, the ROK Constitution states clearly that national sovereignty extends to the entire “Korean peninsula and its adjacent islands” (Article 3)<sup>68</sup> while the North Korean constitution stakes a more ethnical claim over the “interests of all the Korean people”<sup>69</sup> (although the latter is undergoing fundamental amendments per Kim Jong-un’s recent “two hostile states” narrative).<sup>70</sup> The ROK constitution further mandates

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<sup>67</sup> Pacheco Pardo, Ramon, 2023, 55.

<sup>68</sup> 국가법령정보센터. n.d. “Constitution of the Republic of Korea.” Accessed October 20, 2024.

<https://www.law.go.kr/LSW/lsInfoP.do?lsiSeq=61603&viewCls=engLsInfoR&urlMode=engLsInfoR#0000>.

<sup>69</sup> NCNK. 2021, “DPRK Constitution (2019).” May 20, 2021.

[https://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/dprk-constitution-2019.pdf/file\\_view](https://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/dprk-constitution-2019.pdf/file_view).

<sup>70</sup> 로동신문. 2024. “조선중앙통신사 보도 조선민주주의인민공화국 남부국경 동, 서부지역에서 대한민국과 연결된 도로와 철길 완전폐쇄,” October 17, 2024.

a “policy of peaceful unification based on the principles of freedom and democracy” (Article 4). While the ROK constitution highlights unification under a correct political system, the 1972 Three Principles of National Reunification, often cited as the conception of a reconciliation phase (c.f., attempts at unilateral reunification) in inter-Korean relations, emphasizes national unity as a goal that transcends “difference in ideas, ideals and systems,”<sup>71</sup> highlighting that national reunification was at times posited as a superlative goal that transcended political considerations (at least rhetorically).

There are some limitations to Pacheco Pardo’s model of South Korean grand strategy. First, the issues of ideology or domestic political differences are not included as factors or variables of consideration within the model. In particular, the deeply rooted disagreements in the strategic visions of the Korean left and right are addressed only in passing and mostly in the narrative portions of his work, while Pacheco Pardo’s theoretical framework fails to include this variable. The closest factor is “democracy,” but this is in reference to Korea’s international status as a full democracy (only one of three in East Asia). The main problem is that, as shown above, Pacheco Pardo’s main thesis is predicated on the idea of elite consensus and continuity, which necessitates, for the sake of economical narrative building, a focus on policy/strategic continuity over policy/strategic contestation.

A major strategic contestation for South Korea that is missing in the Pacheco Pardo model is the fork in the road constituted by the often-competing dichotomy between greater autonomy and greater alignment with the United States and its allies.<sup>72</sup> Whereas Pacheco Pardo posits autonomy as an undisputed overarching goal of both generic middle powers and South Korea, such scholars as Scott Snyder postulates the existence of a spectrum within which autonomy constitutes one

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<http://www.rodong.rep.kp/ko/index.php?OEAYMDI0LTEwLTE3LU4wMDJAMTFAQEAXMg=>.

<sup>71</sup> 국사편찬위원회. n.d. “7·4 남북 공동 성명.” Accessed October 17, 2024.

[http://contents.history.go.kr/front/hm/view.do?levelId=hm\\_153\\_0050](http://contents.history.go.kr/front/hm/view.do?levelId=hm_153_0050).

<sup>72</sup> Bekkevold, Jo Inge. 2024. “Why Middle Powers Can’t Pursue Grand Strategy.” Foreign Policy, February 3, 2024. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/02/03/review-ramon-pacheco-pardo-scott-snyder-south-korea-us-strategy-alliance-geopolitics/>.

extreme and alignment with the US-ROK alliance (certainly pursued for reasons of security and ideology) constitutes another. In his 2018 book, Snyder attempts to map out this strategic divide via a quadrant chart, in which autonomy and alliance alignment constitute one axis and a strategic focus on “international” affairs and “parochial” affairs (i.e., the Korean peninsula) constitutes the other (the latter axis addressing the geographic scope of Korea’s strategic thinking as shown in the middle power grand strategy model above).<sup>73</sup>

Snyder attempted to map the strategic orientations of both progressive and conservative administrations on this conceptual plane. The result is that all administrations more or less shared a place in the alliance alignment-internationalist quadrant (what Snyder terms “alliance-enabled internationalism”),<sup>74</sup> a viewpoint that sees alliance partnership as, most of the time, facilitatory for South Korea’s interests (or at least is not inimical to them). Nevertheless, Snyder highlights the clear strategic differences that existed beneath this apparent consensus, associating conservative administrations with more rigid alliance alignment and coordination and progressives (especially the Roh Moo-hyun administration) with parallel efforts to seek both “autonomy within the alliance” and “autonomy from the alliance.”<sup>75</sup> Indeed, of the post-democracy South Korean administrations, Snyder situates the Roh Moo-hyun administration as the one that has most emphasized autonomy over alignment and that has had the most parochial focus on solving inter-Korean issues. As cited by Snyder, one scholar’s 2007 analysis posited Roh’s self-proclaimed “pragmatic” grand strategy of Korea as a “balancer” state as one that avoided “being overly tilted towards one specific state and thus becoming rigid” while also “adhering to a flexible diplomatic position in inter-state relations.”<sup>76</sup> That this period coincided with a global trend of “soft balancing” against the US adds to the

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<sup>73</sup> Snyder, Scott. 2018. *South Korea at the Crossroads: Autonomy and Alliance in an Era of Rival Powers*. New York: Columbia University Press, 7-10.

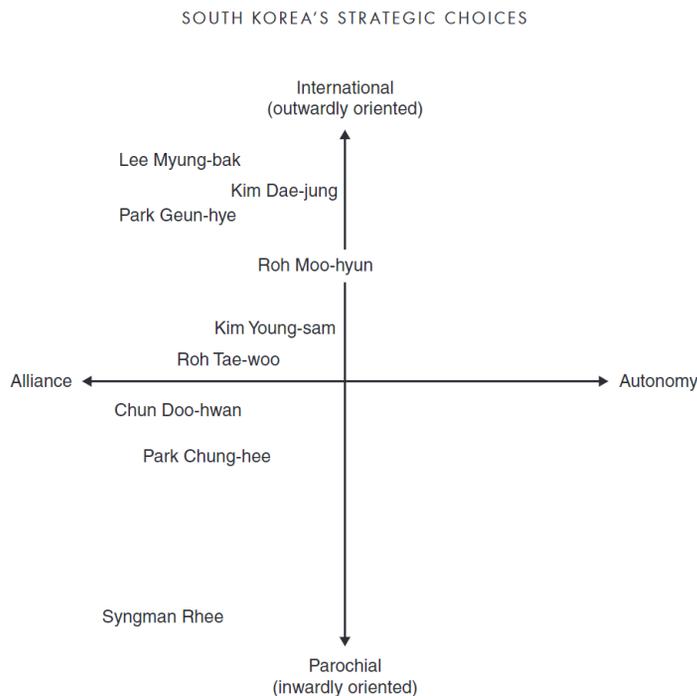
<sup>74</sup> Snyder, Scott, 2018, 8.

<sup>75</sup> Snyder, Scott, 2018, 19.

<sup>76</sup> Lee, Ju-heum, and Su-hoon Lee. 2007. “Balanced and Pragmatic Diplomacy: Conceptual Background and Accomplishments.” Essay. In *Security and Foreign Policy of the ROK Government*, 73.

significance of this progressive strategic orientation.<sup>77</sup> Of course, there are other scholars that would argue this view of Roh’s “Northeast Asian Balancer” concept by Snyder and others is a misleading exaggeration of the progressive administration’s hedging against the US alliance vis-à-vis its reliance on the US alliance.<sup>78</sup> Regarding this point, few events demonstrates the strategic tension between autonomy and alignment like the Iraq War, during which Roh ignored opposition by Korean progressives to contribute the third largest contingent to troops to the coalition forces (apparently in return for US concessions regarding inter-Korean policy).

**Figure 1:** South Korea’s Strategic Orientation by Administration



Source: Snyder, 2018<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Pape, Robert A. 2005. “Soft Balancing against the United States.” *International Security* 30, no. 1: 7–45. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4137457>.

<sup>78</sup> 박영준. 2006. “‘동북아 균형자’론과 21 세기 한국외교.” *한국정치외교사논총* 28, no.1: 161-191.

<sup>79</sup> Snyder, Scott, 2018, 18.

In short, South Korean “progressive nationalists” (as Snyder terms them in his later 2023 work)<sup>80</sup> fears entrapment by an overly ideological, Cold War-esque alignment strategy, which would be inimical to South Korea’s autonomy, economic interests (especially vis-à-vis China), ability to confront Japan on a host of issues, and the ultimate goal of ethnic reunification. Such progressive nationalism in South Korea is based on ethnic nationalism (which may differentiate it from other strains of leftism in global politics) and is informed by a subaltern historiography. As the maxim of Korea as a “shrimp between whales” (which informs the title of another book by Pacheco Pardo)<sup>81</sup> demonstrates, Korea’s geographical location has made it susceptible to countless foreign invasions and breaches of its sovereignty (especially by China and Japan) throughout its history. After a scarring colonial period and subsequent national division, a strain of what has been called a revisionist approach to Korean history belies how South Korean perceptions of yet another “whale’s” (i.e., the US’s) role in national division, prolongation of the legacy of colonialism, Cold War-era suppression of democracy, and great power interventionism competed with traditional views of the US’s role as a positive agent for democratic change and free market capitalism.<sup>82</sup> The most unadulterated form of this subaltern nationalism is embodied by left-wing Korean civil societies such as the People’s Solidarity for Participatory Democracy and labor unions such as the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, who currently criticize myriad aspects of alliance alignment (e.g., US “comfort women” and historical human rights issues, environmental issues stemming from US bases, opposition to expansion of the alliance or even of the alliance itself, opposition to revamped alignment and security cooperation with Japan, opposition to a new Cold War paradigm in East Asia and the Korean peninsula, etc.). Such rhetoric often intersects with a global leftist discourse critiquing the

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<sup>80</sup> Snyder, Scott. 2024. *The United States-South Korea Alliance: Why It May Fail and Why It must not*. New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>81</sup> Pacheco Pardo, Ramon. 2022. *Shrimp to whale: South Korea from the forgotten war to K-pop*. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>82</sup> Cumings, Bruce. 2005. *Korea’s Place in the Sun: A Modern History*. New York: W.W. Norton.

phenomenon of “American imperialism” or “American hegemony.”<sup>83</sup> Due to Korea’s unique colonial experience, anti-Japanese sentiment constitutes another paradigmatic antagonism of the progressive nationalists.<sup>84</sup> While the center-left within Korea’s (largely) two-party system moderates these progressive nationalist views significantly, some overlap is evident.

The direct counterpart of Korea’s progressive nationalism is of course the anti-Communist, pro-alliance, pro-alignment right. The right postulates its own oppositional paradigm (against North Korea, China, and Russia), its own idealistic code of values (e.g., aggressive values diplomacy, criticism of North Korea’s human rights record, etc.) and its own strategic preferences (greater alignment over hedging and a balanced foreign policy). While Pacheco Pardo is right in that the broad ends of South Korean grand strategy (inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification, security, prosperity, and status) remain more akin to valence issues than position issues in South Korea, the ‘more-or-less-consensus’ thesis fails to capture the contestation and tension that is endemic to Korea’s long-term strategic thinking. In particular, that a Cold War style alignment or new containment policy might be a strategic vision that competes with the default middle power urge for autonomy is not directly addressed in Pacheco Pardo’s outline of the ROK’s grand strategy. Additionally, with regards to the valence issue of inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification, the left-right paradigm presents a concomitant strategic choice between conciliatory measures vis-à-vis North Korea and heightened deterrence. As shown below, understanding the contested nature of these strategic outlooks is important in understanding the implications of the Ukraine War for South Korea in the pursuit of its grand strategy. As such, I present two revisions to the generic middle power grand strategy model to match the case of South Korea. Instead of autonomy as a standalone strategic end, I reflect the strategic dilemma of autonomy

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<sup>83</sup> For an analysis of a global leftist discourse on “American imperialism” or “American hegemony” see: Walzer, Michael. 2018. *A Foreign Policy for the Left*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

<sup>84</sup> Shaw, Meredith. 2022. “Godzilla vs Pulgasari: Anti-Japanism and Anti-Communism as Dueling Antagonisms in South Korean Politics.” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 22 (2). New York, USA: Cambridge University Press: 201–30.

vs. alignment in my adapted model. South Korea’s *sui generis* grand strategy goal of inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification is also reflected as such in my model.

**Table 3:** Model of South Korea’s Grand Strategy

Geographic Scale	Temporal Scope	Types of Ends (Goals)	Types of Means
Global when possible, regional always	Long-term thinking influenced by short-term events <sup>85</sup>	<b>Autonomy vs. alignment.</b> Highest political ends.  <b><i>Sui generis</i> grand strategy goal for South Korea:</b> inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification	All if possible.

Source: Compiled by author by adapting Pacheco Pardo’s middle power grand strategy model.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Mention of “short-term events” added by author to highlight the interplay between long-term strategic thinking and short-term inflection points and political actors, per the scholarship of Nina Silove and others as outlined in Chapter 2.

<sup>86</sup> Pacheco Pardo provides his own South Korean grand strategy model, but it deviates significantly from the generic middle power grand strategy model and adds additional variables to the model (e.g., independent variables labelled as “factors” along with ends and means). For the sake of concise analysis and in order to apply the same conceptual framework to both of Northeast Asia’s middle powers, South Korea and Japan, I use the generic middle power grand strategy model to both countries with my own adaptations to match the unique circumstances of each.

# **Chapter IV. The Ukraine War and South Korea's Grand Strategy**

## **1. Regarding Inter-Korean Reconciliation and Reunification**

As shown in the previous chapter, the goal of inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification constituted a *sui generis* end unique to South Korea's grand strategy and was reiterated as a top priority of every ROK administration from the era of military authoritarianism, through democratization, and down to the present Yoon Suk-yeol administration. Also, it was shown that while the overall end of national or ethnic reconciliation and eventual reunification more or less constituted a political valence in South Korea, significant differences in the ideological and strategic preferences of the progressive nationalist left and the anti-communist right could lead to divergences in the policy approaches towards this long-term goal. In addition to these constants, another permanent feature of the reconciliation process is the intimate involvement of outside actors (i.e., the United States and such regional actors as Japan, China, and Russia) in inter-Korean affairs.

In particular, Russia, as a prominent regional actor and as one of the five members of the Permanent Council of the UNSC, has always been inextricably tied to the handling of the inter-Korean issue, demonstrating its own agency and preferences in influencing the process of inter-Korean reconciliation. Such participation was encouraged by both Koreas, which prioritized Russia as a key player in this regard for different reasons. For South Korea, Russia was a Cold War-era adversary who had been directly involved in the political division of the Korean peninsula, in the subsequent outbreak of the Korean War, and in supporting the North Korean regime militarily and economically thereafter. Per the designs of Moscow, as previewed in Mikhail Gorbachev's 1988 Krasnoyarsk Speech, to foster economic partnership with

South Korea<sup>87</sup> (in ways that would benefit the barren Soviet Far East) and per the interests of Seoul, which sought a conducive environment for reconciliation with North Korea via its *Nordpolitik* policy,<sup>88</sup> diplomatic relations were established by the end of the Cold War with the understanding that Russia (i.e., the Soviet Union) would play a role in the actualization of South Korea's grand strategic goal of national reconciliation (as shown in Russia's endorsement of "inter-Korean dialogue" in its 1990 Moscow Declaration with the ROK).

From this early period onwards, ties and cooperation with Russia were maintained as a key component in the ROK's inter-Korea policy. For example, South Korean policymakers (representing both progressive and conservative administrations) envisaged that the potential connection of a Trans-Siberian railway with a Trans-Korean railway would constitute a tool accelerating inter-Korean integration.<sup>89</sup> Another conceptual framework sought to integrate Russia's position as an exporter of natural resources with the goal of inter-Korean integration via the construction of an inter-Korea pipeline that would connect Russian energy resources to the Korean peninsula. Before the Ukraine War, these concepts were consensus initiatives which factored into the policy goals of successive ROK administrations. For example, both the Park Geun-hye administration's proposals presented as part of her "Eurasia Initiative" (i.e., a proposed "Silk Road Express" from Busan to Europe, modernization of the warm-water port of Rajin for shipments of Russian bituminous coal to South Korea via the Khasan-Rajin rail line)<sup>90</sup> and the Moon Jae-in administration's proposals within his "New Northern Policy" (i.e., infrastructure and

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<sup>87</sup> Meyer, Peggy Falkenheim. 1992. "Gorbachev and Post-Gorbachev Policy toward the Korean Peninsula: The Impact of Changing Russian Perceptions." *Asian Survey* 32, no. 8: 757–72. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2645367>.

<sup>88</sup> Ahn, Byung-joon. 1991. "South Korean-Soviet Relations: Contemporary Issues and Prospects." *Asian Survey* 31, no. 9: 816–25. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2645297>.

<sup>89</sup> Snyder, Scott, 2018, 129.

<sup>90</sup> Kiriyanov, Oleg. 2016. "An Uncertain Future for the Russia-DPRK "Rajin-Khasan" Project" *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 25, no.1: 163-197.

cooperation projects within the “9-Bridge Strategy”<sup>91</sup> were understood as positive compliments to Putin’s “Turn to the East” policy initiatives.<sup>92</sup>

Additionally, Russia played a prominent diplomatic role as a participant of the five rounds of Six Party Talks (2003-2007), which had followed North Korea’s withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). One of the highlights of the Six Party Talks, the 2.13 Agreement of 2007, created the “Northeast Asia Peace Security Mechanism” working group, which was cited as Northeast Asia’s first intergovernmental security cooperation dialogue.<sup>93</sup> The position of host and chair of this groundbreaking working group was given to Russia. During more confrontational episodes in inter-Korean relations (especially following North Korean missile tests), when South Korea and the international community applied punitive pressure on North Korea, Russia played a pivotal role as a P5 member state in approving UNSC resolutions regarding DPRK sanctions and enforcing the application thereof. Thus, in terms of both carrots and sticks within South Korea’s policy vis-à-vis North Korea, Russian diplomatic participation was often crucial. Per this long-standing importance of Russia, during the 2018-2020 denuclearization negotiation phase with North Korea, Moon Jae-in became the first ROK leader to visit and address the Duma, imploring Russian assistance in the project of inter-Korean integration.<sup>94</sup>

For North Korea, Russia was an erstwhile ally that was directly involved in the formation and sustaining of the North Korean regime throughout the Cold War. Having approved of North Korea’s designs for forcible unification leading up to the

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<sup>91</sup> Zakharova, Liudmila. 2019. “Economic Relations between Russia and South Korea in the New Northern Policy.” Korea Economic Institute of America, December 10, 2019. [http://www.keia.org/sites/default/files/publications/kei\\_aps\\_zakharova\\_191206.pdf](http://www.keia.org/sites/default/files/publications/kei_aps_zakharova_191206.pdf).

<sup>92</sup> Rozman, Gilbert. 2024. “Russian Thinking about the Korean Peninsula and the US Role There Over a Decade.” In *Putin’s “Turn to the East” in the Xi Jinping Era*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Routledge, 119-137.

<sup>93</sup> Jun, Bong-geun. 2021. “Promoting Peace and Cooperation in Northeast Asia in an Era of US-China Competition.” *IFANS PERSPECTIVES*, Korea National Diplomatic Academy.

<sup>94</sup> 손제민. 2018. “문 대통령, 러 하원 첫 연설 ‘시베리아철도, 부산까지 다다른 길.’” 경향신문, June 21, 2018. <https://www.khan.co.kr/article/201806220200015>.

Korean War,<sup>95</sup> the Soviet Union failed to intervene in the formation of the UN Command (UNC) and military assistance to South Korea as a result of its absence from the UNSC during the passing of UNSC Resolution 84. Nevertheless, the alliance relationship between North Korea and the Soviet Union was codified via their joint signing of the 1961 “Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance,” which provided for a mutual defense clause (Article 1) that mandated immediate “military and other assistance” by one state in the event of an “armed attack” against the other and mutual consultation on security issues between the parties (Article 3).<sup>96</sup> Soviet subsidization of the regime, via military equipment, technical aid and training, and economic aid, was a major element in regime viability, and the collapse of the Soviet bloc was directly linked to the political and economic isolation and atrophy of North Korea.<sup>97</sup>

Despite its erstwhile alliance with North Korea, Russia was one of the first countries to acknowledge the pair of South and North Korea as two distinct countries, having normalized relations with both countries soon after the Soviet collapse (c.f., the US’s continuing non-recognition and non-normalization of relations vis-à-vis North Korea). Russia formalized the expiration of the 1961 alliance treaty with the DPRK in 1996, and renegotiated a new treaty with North Korea, the 2000 “Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborliness and Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the DPRK,” which established basic relations while extirpating legal mechanisms of military significance. In doing so, Russia turned down North Korea’s insistence on the preservation of the old automatic military intervention clause in the

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<sup>95</sup> 김동길. 2011. "Stalin's Korean U-Turn: The USSR's Evolving Security Strategy and the Origins of the Korean War" *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 24, no.1: 89-114.

<sup>96</sup> “UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS and DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF KOREA Treaty of Friendship, Co-Operation and Mutual Assistance.” United Nations Treaty Collection, July 6, 1961.

<sup>97</sup> Oberdorfer, Don, and Robert Carlin. 2014. *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*. New York: Basic Books.

new treaty and downgraded mutual relations to little more than that of a basic diplomatic relationship, as opposed to the former alliance.<sup>98</sup>

Despite these snubs, North Korea continued to envisage a place for Russia within their diplomatic toolkit, as evidenced by its attempts to keep its mutual defense obligations with Moscow. As an intermediary for inter-Korean relations, Russia at times seemed to prevent diplomatic isolation for Pyongyang, taking its side most notably during the North Korean attacks of South Korea in 2010. North Korea signaled alignment with Russia (and China) in inter-Korean negotiations in pursuit of “soft balancing” of the US. It has been noted that North Korea used this approach most recently during its 2018-2019 *détente* and summits with South Korea and the US Trump administration, aiming to strengthen its diplomatic hand while preventing a return to Trump’s maximum pressure campaign.<sup>99</sup>

From the perspective of Russia, once it became clear following the end of the Cold War that the status quo in the Korean peninsula would be surprisingly durable (and an anticipated collapse of the DPRK regime would not materialize), Russia has embarked on an “equidistant” diplomatic stance with regards to both Koreas that was noted by some observers to have been remarkably consistent, especially in comparison to the policies of the United States and China.<sup>100</sup> As shown in the table below, such scholars as Snyder have attempted to map out Russia’s policy preferences regarding the Korean peninsula and the ROK’s grand strategic goal of reunification.<sup>101</sup> Snyder argued that Russian interests in the Korean peninsula were mainly geoeconomic in nature, linked to commercial energy and transportation projects.<sup>102</sup> Russia is also shown as opportunistically seeking to maximize its discourse power regarding inter-Korean issues to increase regional influence and to

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<sup>98</sup> Seung-Ho Joo. 2000. DPRK-RUSSIAN RAPPROCHEMENT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR KOREAN SECURITY. *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies*, 9: 193-223.

<sup>99</sup> Pacheco Pardo, Ramon. 2020. “North Korea-US Relations: From Kim Jong Il to Kim Jong Un.” 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 167.

<sup>100</sup> Rinna, Anthony V. 2018. “The Wisdom of Moscow’s Equidistant Korea Policy.” *The Diplomat*, March 3, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/03/the-wisdom-of-moscows-equidistant-korea-policy/>.

<sup>101</sup> Snyder, 2018, 256.

<sup>102</sup> Snyder, 2018, 257.

leverage multilateralism as a tool against the US, with whom it has conflicting security interests in the European side of Eurasia.

**Table 4:** Perceived Preferences of Four Major Powers Regarding Korean Reunification

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U.S.-ROK Alliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Included in the U.S.-ROK Joint Vision Statement of June 2009</li> <li>• A unified, democratic, and denuclearized Korea that embraces free-market principles</li> </ul>
China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A unified, denuclearized Korea that is friendly or at least not hostile to China</li> <li>• Preferably an end to the U.S.-ROK alliance or at least a reconfigured alliance with a much smaller role on the Korean Peninsula</li> </ul>
Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presumably a denuclearized Korea tied to the U.S.-ROK alliance to ensure it is not hostile to Japan</li> </ul>
Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A unified, denuclearized Korea</li> <li>• Limited ability to affect the outcome of unification but an interest in energy and transportation projects on the Korean Peninsula</li> </ul>

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Source: Snyder, 2018<sup>103</sup>

Other scholars note that Russia’s policies vis-à-vis South Korea was part and parcel of a “turn to the East” strategy by Moscow that was informed by the rising economic and geopolitical importance of the region. Moscow established the “Eastern Economic Forum” at the free port city of Vladivostok, inviting dignitaries and businesspeople from Asia-Pacific countries to yearly summits. As mentioned, it constructed the Khasan-Rajin railway line jointly with North Korea. The Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean oil pipeline and the Power of Siberia natural gas pipeline (as well as a proposed Power of Siberia 2.0 pipeline) also form the nexus of a regional power grid. For Russia, South Korea acted as a constituent of this regional power network and a diversifying agent needed to prevent Russia’s Asia-Pacific policy from becoming too “Sinocentric” in the eyes of Moscow.<sup>104</sup>

There is also another, far-less positive interpretation of Russia’s thinking regarding South Korea during the leadup to 2022 and the Ukraine War. Gilbert

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<sup>103</sup> Snyder, 2018, 257.

<sup>104</sup> Leksyutina, Yana. 2023. “Russia’s Turn to the East.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Russian International Relations Studies*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Routledge, 287-298.

Rozman argues that Russia’s strategic view of South Korea, Japan, and other US-aligned powers has steadily changed from optimistically positive to confrontational throughout the past decade, especially after the inflection points of the 2010 Cheonan sinking and 2016 THAAD deployment, when moderate, consensus management of the North Korean situation devolved into a Cold War style bifurcation in allegiances.<sup>105</sup> Rozman further outlines how this rise in Cold War thinking with regards to Russia’s Turn to the East policy was catalyzed by Russia’s historical and ideological bonds with North Korea and by its wariness of a “New Cold War” order marked by confrontational values-based diplomacy and alignment by the West. The economic potential of the ROK emphasized by Snyder and others, as well as South Korea’s continued eagerness even after the 2014 Crimea invasion to use Russia as a tool for its grand strategy aim of national reconciliation and reunification failed to alter Moscow’s increasingly negative thinking regarding the country (although such thinking remained mostly below the surface before the Ukraine War). It is even argued that Russia was actually relieved at the failure of the Hanoi Summit and the denuclearization initiatives of the Trump administration, as Russia (along with China) stood the gain the most from a divided status quo in the Korean peninsula (while it also lurched towards alignment with China and North Korea).<sup>106</sup> This contrasts with Russia’s *prima facie* pronouncements regarding the North Korea issue and Snyder’s assessment in the figure above that Russia prefers a unified and denuclearized Korean peninsula; this also indicates that Russia’s Asia-Pacific strategy was potentially incompatible with South Korea’s grand strategic end of reunification even before the Ukraine invasion.

Whatever the timeline of Russia’s cooling of relations with South Korea before 2022, there is little room for doubt or disagreement that the *de jure* policy of equidistance within the triangular relationship amongst the two Koreas and Russia were fundamentally altered by the Ukraine War. After Russia’s so-called “special military operation” commenced on February 24, 2022, South Korea’s President Moon immediately expressed regret at Russia’s actions and signaled that South

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<sup>105</sup> Rozman, Gilbert, 2024.

<sup>106</sup> Rozman, Gilbert, 2024, 131.

Korea would participate in international sanctions against Russia, even while ruling out the possibility of independent (i.e., unilateral) sanctions.<sup>107</sup> This is in contrast to the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014, during which South Korea under the Park Geun-hye administration constituted one of the largest US allies to opt out of international sanctions against Russia.

However, the early-2022 sanctions were clearly inimical to the strategic direction that Seoul still earnestly wanted to take with Russia in the former's pursuit of its grand strategic goals. For example, before the war, Seoul was still involved in prolonged negotiations to conclude an FTA agreement with the Russian-led, post-Soviet economic bloc, the Eurasian Economic Union (EUEA).<sup>108</sup> Seoul's Presidential Committee for Northern Economic Cooperation, the first such committee dedicated to economic coordination with Russia's Asia-Pacific policy as announced by Moon Jae-in during his keynote address at the 2017 Eastern Economic Forum,<sup>109</sup> was still operative before the invasion, having concluded its tenth convocation in 2021,<sup>110</sup> and was not formally disbanded during the remainder of the Moon Jae-in presidency even after the war. Two days prior to the invasion, after Russia's intentions were clear enough for many nations to have already preemptively vacated their embassy staff in Ukraine, Prime Minister Kim Bu-gyeom pronounced the government position that the Ukraine situation should be resolved using dialogue, but that the joint natural gas pipeline projects with Russia were crucial for bringing North Korea into the realm of international peace and cooperation and that such

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<sup>107</sup> 이완, 이제훈. 2022. “문 대통령 ‘무력 침공 유감...러 제재 동참할 것.’” 한겨레, February 24, 2022. <https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/bluehouse/1032451.html>.

<sup>108</sup> 이창수, 박지원, 송백훈, 제성훈. 2021. “유라시아경제연합 (EAEU) 통합과정 평가와 한국의 협력전략” 대외경제정책연구원 KIEP, 전략지역심층연구 20-04.

<sup>109</sup> KOREA.net. 2017. “Address by President Moon Jae-in at the 3rd Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, Russia.” September 7, 2017. <https://www.korea.net/Government/Briefing-Room/Presidential-Speeches/view?articleId=149834&pageIndex=1>.

<sup>110</sup> 경제외교활용포털. 2022. “북방경제협력위원회 10 차 회의.” July 22, 2022. [https://president.globalwindow.org/kz.info.MediaDetail.do?media\\_seq=370](https://president.globalwindow.org/kz.info.MediaDetail.do?media_seq=370).

projects must be continued regardless of who won the South Korean presidential contest that March.<sup>111</sup>

South Korea decided to join the international sanctions regime against Russia by February 28<sup>th</sup>, a decision that actually came slower than other US allies such as Japan, which had announced economic sanctions against Russia after Russia's recognition of the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) and Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and before the actual invasion proper.<sup>112</sup> It was after the US strikingly excluded the ROK from a list of 32 countries that were exempt from the Russia/Belarus "Military End User" (MEU) Foreign Direct Product (FDP) rules (i.e., US licensing requirements for American technology that may be diverted for military purposes) and after subsequent criticism of the government by Korean conservatives<sup>113</sup> that the sanctions were announced. Initial sanctions on March 2022 saw South Korea suspend transactions with 11 Russian institutions and subsidiaries (including the Central Bank of Russia, eight other major banks and their subsidiaries, and Russia's sovereign wealth funds) and participate in the global exclusion of Russian financial institutions from the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT), a dominant international payment messaging system with very few alternative platforms.<sup>114</sup> ROK exports to Russian organizations and firms found in the US's entity list were also banned.

Overall, South Korea's sanctions participation was indicative of sequential movement from initial hesitance to alignment with a Western-led, more-aggressive

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<sup>111</sup> 김성진. 2022. "김 총리 '남북러 가스관 계속 추진돼야...우크라 사태 대화로 해결.'" 뉴시스, February 22, 2022. [https://www.newsis.com/view/NISX20220222\\_0001769064](https://www.newsis.com/view/NISX20220222_0001769064).

<sup>112</sup> 首相官邸. 2022. "ウクライナ情勢を踏まえた制裁措置等についての会見." February 23, 2022.

[https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/101\\_kishida/statement/2022/0223kaiken.html](https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/101_kishida/statement/2022/0223kaiken.html).

<sup>113</sup> 조선일보. 2022. "[사설] 美 수출 통제 면제에서 빠진 한국, 이러다 '껍데기 동맹' 된다." March 1, 2022.

<https://www.chosun.com/opinion/editorial/2022/03/01/QPDT6RTYBFEDVGFJ6DDDICFJSQ/>.

<sup>114</sup> Hess, Maximilian, and Taehwa Hong. 2023. "Seoul Searching: Lessons from South Korea's Experience with Sanctions against Russia." Foreign Policy Research Institute, December 26, 2023. <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/12/seoul-searching-lessons-from-south-koreas-experience-with-sanctions-against-russia/>.

policy. South Korea initially placed export controls (via situational licensing) over 57 items (ECCNs) that were designated by the US as within the purview of the Russia/Belarus FDPRs.<sup>115</sup> Since then, the ROK Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy (MOTIE) has amended the “Public Notice on Trade of Strategic Items” to reflect the ROK’s unilateral sanctions on an increasing pool of “strategic items.” From the original designation of 57 strategic items, increases to the list from 57 to 798 items were announced in February 2023, from 798 to 1159 in February 2024, and from 1159 to the current 1402 items in June 2024 (in the aftermath of the significant defense pact between Russia and North Korea). The ROK’s salami slicing towards an independent sanctions regime against Russia was catalyzed by independent sanctions against North Korea. For example, in June 2023, the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) announced that, as part of the Yoon administration’s more stringent sanctions against illicit financial activities by North Korea, it was unilaterally sanctioning Choi Chon-gon, a Russian citizen (as well as a Russian firm, Epsilon) for illicit procurement of financing for the DPRK in contravention of UN sanctions, the first time that the ROK placed unilateral sanctions on an ethnic Korean individual (Choi being an ex-Korean citizen).<sup>116</sup> Following evidence of weapons transfers between the DPRK and Russia and Russia’s veto of the mandate extension for the Panel of Experts (PoE) assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee, MOFA announced South Korea’s first unilateral sanctions against Russian entities, individuals, and ships, placing independent sanctions on two Russian organizations (Intellekt LLC and Sodeistvie), the CEOs of these companies, and two Russian ships all accused of violating the UNSC DPRK sanctions regime.<sup>117</sup> Sanctions regimes against the DPRK thus became regimes against Russia for US-aligned powers like South Korea.

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<sup>115</sup> Kim & Chang. 2022. “우크라이나 사태 장기화에 따른 주요국의 대(對) 러시아 및 벨라루스 제재/수출통제 조치 확대.”, March 16, 2022.

[https://www.kimchang.com/ko/insights/detail.kc?sch\\_section=4&idx=24882](https://www.kimchang.com/ko/insights/detail.kc?sch_section=4&idx=24882).

<sup>116</sup> 외교부. 2023. “대북 제재를 위반하여 북한 정권을 위해 활동해 온 한국계 러시아인 대북 독자제재 지정.” June 28, 2023.

[https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/www/brd/m\\_4080/view.do?seq=373848](https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/www/brd/m_4080/view.do?seq=373848).

<sup>117</sup> 외교부. 2024a. “우리 정부의 대북 독자제재 지정.” April 2, 2024.

[https://www.mofa.go.kr/www/brd/m\\_4080/view.do?seq=374842](https://www.mofa.go.kr/www/brd/m_4080/view.do?seq=374842).

Following the war, it was Russia, who was crucial to South Korea's heretofore "carrot and sticks" approach to the inter-Korean issue and the joint management of the same issue as a P5 member state, that violated rules that it had only recently agreed to, while concurrently working to deracinate the DPRK sanctions regime. Even before the war, Russia had increasingly considered the sanctions regime against North Korea to be an overly draconian measure that impeded Russian fossil fuel exports and, as a result, it only reluctantly approved the December 2017 slate of sanctions by the following the lead of China.<sup>118</sup> Thereafter, China and Russia have synchronized their positions on the North Korean issue to avoid stepping on each other's toes in the diplomatic sphere. On the eve of the global disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia drafted a UNSC resolution with China that would have removed some sanctions, including on inter-Korean transportation projects and overseas workers (the two having called for sanction liftings for a year prior to the draft resolution).<sup>119</sup> Three months after the Ukraine War, Russia, together with China, issued its first veto of a UNSC DPRK sanctions resolution proposal that called for another tightening of the sanctions regime on North Korea following its continual ICBM launches.<sup>120</sup> Russia and China have since acted as a staunch bulwark against UNSC DPRK sanctions.

Russia drove another nail into the coffin of UN sanctions on March 28, 2024, when it vetoed the routine mandate renewal of the UN Panel of Experts (PoE), which monitored UN DPRK sanctions and which advised the UN 1718 Sanctions Committee since 2010.<sup>121</sup> Russia also called for the "sunsetting" of the sanctions resolutions against North Korea, which have been a staple of inter-Korean relations

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<sup>118</sup> Rozman, Gilbert, 2024, 126.

<sup>119</sup> Radio Free Asia. 2019. "China, Russia Propose Lifting Sanctions on North Korea for Humanitarian Purposes at U.N. Security Council." Radio Free Asia, December 17, 2019. <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/nk-china-russia-uns-c-draft-resolution-sanctions-12172019172522.html>.

<sup>120</sup> Nichols, Michelle. 2022. "China, Russia Veto U.S. Push for More U.N. Sanctions on North Korea." Reuters, May 27, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/china-russia-veto-us-push-more-un-sanctions-north-korea-2022-05-26/>.

<sup>121</sup> Cha, Victor, and Ellen Kim. 2024. "Russia's Veto: Dismembering the UN Sanctions Regime on North Korea." CSIS, March 29, 2024. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russias-veto-dismembering-un-sanctions-regime-north-korea>.

since 2006. In doing so, Russia was making a fundamental political statement repudiating decades of equidistant policy towards the Korean peninsula. For example, the seminal UNSCR 1718 (2006) mandated not only sanctions but also called for “complete, verifiable, and irreversible” denuclearization (CVID) and for North Korea’s return to the NPT and the Six-Party Talks.<sup>122</sup> UNSCR 2321 (2016) was the first resolution to emphasize the inherent human rights of the people within the DPRK.<sup>123</sup> By opposing the UNSC sanctions regime, Russia and China effectively pronounced that the whilom international consensus for a denuclearized (and perhaps even a unified) Korean peninsula (as outlined by Snyder in 2018) that underpinned Seoul’s hopes for its grand strategy goal of reunification is no longer extant. In its place, a group of “like-minded” countries (as Japan put it), which includes the G7, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and the international legal hub of the Netherlands, announced in October 2024 their joint formation of a Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT) to replace the UN’s PoE.<sup>124</sup> Such developments indicate that, going forward, the DPRK sanctions regime will reflect a Cold War bifurcation of global politics rather than a consensus mode of global governance.

A major factor of the new alignment between to Russia and North Korea, as well as South Korea’s oppositional alignment against the pair, involves weapons transfers. US intelligence revealed by a seminal New York Times report in September 2022, seven months into the war, claimed that Moscow was in the process of purchasing millions of North Korean artillery shells and rockets as well as other equipment.<sup>125</sup> The White House then determined in December of that same year that North Korea

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<sup>122</sup> United Nations Security Council. 2006. “Resolution 1718 (2006),” S/RES/1718, October 14, 2006, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n06/572/07/pdf/n0657207.pdf>.

<sup>123</sup> 김화영. 2016. “<유엔 대북제재> 대북제재결의 2321 호 주요내용-1.” 연합뉴스, November 30, 2016. <https://en.yna.co.kr/>.

<sup>124</sup> U.S. Department of State. 2024a. “Joint Statement on the Republic of Korea-U.S.-Japan Trilateral Vice Foreign Ministerial Meeting.” October 16, 2024. <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-the-republic-of-korea-u-s-japan-trilateral-vice-foreign-ministerial-meeting-2/>.

<sup>125</sup> Barnes, Julian E. 2022. “Russia Is Buying North Korean Artillery, According to U.S. Intelligence.” The New York Times, September 6, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/05/us/politics/russia-north-korea-artillery.html>.

had initiated these arms shipments to the Wagner Group in November 2022.<sup>126</sup> Large-scale shipments of weapons from the DPRK to Russia began in earnest around August of 2023,<sup>127</sup> during the first Ukrainian counteroffensive and immediately before Russia's "partial mobilization" (draft) of Russian men. These shipments were prefaced by visits of the DPRK by high-ranking Russian Defense Ministry officials, including Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu (the visit constituting Shoigu's first known post-pandemic meeting with a foreign dignitary).<sup>128</sup>

Immediately following the initiation of ammunition shipments, Kim Jong-un attended a summit meeting with Putin during a week-long excursion to the Russian Far East, his first summit since before the pandemic.<sup>129</sup> The topic of these exchanges was clearly martial, featuring exhibitions of North Korean ballistic missile technology to Russian officials and visits by Kim of Russian assembly shops for fighter jets, a spaceport, and the Russian Pacific Fleet. The implication was clearly that Russian tutelage of North Korea's anachronistic Soviet era military technologies would be part of a *quid pro quo* involving the DPRK's filling of Russian munitions. Per an October 2024 press release by the ROK National Intelligence Service (NIS), North Korea completed weapons transfers to Russia over 70 times since August 2023.<sup>130</sup> Regarding specific weapons, the aid was estimated to have been over eight million 122mm and 152mm artillery shells as well as additional transfers of Bulsae-4 anti-tank weapons, RPG anti-tank rockets, and KN-23 short-range ballistic missiles

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<sup>126</sup> Kanno-youngs, Zolan. 2022. "Washington Says North Korea Is Delivering Arms to the Wagner Group for Russia's Use in Ukraine." The New York Times, December 22, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/22/world/europe/north-korea-wagner-group-russia-ukraine.html>.

<sup>127</sup> Bowen, Andrew S., Mark E. Manyin, and Mary Beth D. Nikitin. 2024. "Russia-North Korea Relations." Congressional Research Service, October 30, 2024. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12760>.

<sup>128</sup> Al Jazeera. 2023. "North Korea's Kim Jong Un Meets Russian Defence Chief, Showcases Missiles." Al Jazeera, July 27, 2023. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/27/north-koreas-kim-jong-un-meets-russian-defence-minister-in-pyongyang>.

<sup>129</sup> 구교운. 2023. "김정은 '북러관계 전략적 중요성 중시 입장 뚜렷'...러시아 입성 첫 일성(종합)." 뉴스 1, September 12, 2023. <https://www.news1.kr/nk/politics-diplomacy/5169423>.

<sup>130</sup> 국가정보원. 2024. "국정원, 북한 특수부대 러-우크라 전쟁 참전 확인." October 18, 2024. [https://www.nis.go.kr/CM/1\\_4/view.do?seq=320](https://www.nis.go.kr/CM/1_4/view.do?seq=320).

(the ROK NIS's claims having been supported by satellite imagery and material evidence collected from Ukraine).

Weapons transfers is a two-way conversation, however, as South Korea has been indirectly involved in weapons transfers to Ukraine via “backfilling” of the weapons stockpiles of Ukraine’s weapons donors (i.e., replenishing gaps in donor countries’ domestic stockpiles to make possible continued transfers of existing stockpiles to Ukraine). A major destination for these backfilled South Korean weapons is Poland, an eastern European country with deep-seated mistrust and antipathy towards Russia and one of Ukraine’s most prominent weapons suppliers. Poland is a party to both the January 2023 Tallinn Pledge to donate military assistance (artillery pieces, ammunition, and tanks are specifically mentioned) to Ukraine “as long as necessary” to defeat the Russian invasion<sup>131</sup> and the December 2023 Tallinn Mechanism to provide assist Ukraine’s civilian capacities in the realm of cybersecurity.<sup>132</sup> Also, per the well-documented rise in security cooperation and commitments across European capitals following the war, Poland now spends over 4 percent of its GDP on defense, over double the NATO target budget of two percent (with further increases planned for 2025).<sup>133</sup> On July 27, 2022, while Russia’s foreign procurement from North Korea was still only a speculative threat, South Korea signed a \$12.4 billion package of defense contracts with Poland that arranged for South Korean transfers of Hyundai Rotem’s K-2 Black Panther main battle tank (MBT), Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI)’s FA-50 fighter jet, Hanwha Defense’s K-9 Thunder 155mm self-propelled howitzer (SPH), and licensing for joint production by the ROK and Poland of the K-2PL MBT and FA-50PL fighter jet (localized versions of the K-2 and FA-50, respectively). Following the initial

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<sup>131</sup> UK Ministry of Defence. 2023. “Joint Statement – The Tallinn Pledge.” January 19, 2023. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-the-tallinn-pledge>.

<sup>132</sup> U.S. Department of State. 2023a. “Formalization of the Tallinn Mechanism to Coordinate Civilian Cyber Assistance to Ukraine.” December 20, 2023. <https://www.state.gov/formalization-of-the-tallinn-mechanism-to-coordinate-civilian-cyber-assistance-to-ukraine/>.

<sup>133</sup> Krzysztozek, Aleksandra. 2024. “Poland to Increase Defence Spending Plans in 2025 - Media Reports.” Euractiv, October 1, 2024. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/poland-to-increase-defence-spending-plans-in-2025-media-reports/>.

framework agreement, Poland inked a \$2.67 billion acquisition of K-9 howitzers in December 2023 and a \$1.64 billion acquisition of Chunmoo rocket artillery units (to be converted to Poland's HOMAR-K variant via local production of the chassis body originally produced by Korea's Doosan).<sup>134</sup> A second major arms deal has been negotiated with Poland since 2023, with estimates of its overall value reaching \$30 billion.<sup>135</sup> Poland has sought to finance these purchases by procuring loans from the provider country, South Korea, which necessitated a vote by the ROK parliament to approve a ceiling raise on the Export-Import Bank of Korea's capital reserves to 25 trillion won.<sup>136</sup>

Overall, it is important to remember that South Korea's contribution to Poland did not constitute a direct transfer of weapons (i.e., lethal aid) nor a transfer of weapons via a third party, but a simple replacement of a nation's older domestic stockpiles which had been donated to Ukraine. That South Korean arms are for Polish domestic use only and would be barred from use in weapons transfers to Ukraine was confirmed by President Andrzej Duda during his summit with President Yoon on October 25, 2024.<sup>137</sup> In the same way, the Yoon administration took care to characterize a 2023 backfilling transfer of 300,000 155mm artillery shells to the US as a "loan" instead of a sale while also adding an end-user condition that would on paper preclude the final use of the weapons by a country other than the procuring nation, the US<sup>138</sup> (although this was noted to be impossible to enforce in practice).

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<sup>134</sup> Świerkowski, Adam. 2024. "First Homar-K Rocket Launchers Delivered to Poland's 16th Mechanized Division." Defence24.com, August 16, 2024. <https://defence24.com/armed-forces/first-homar-k-rocket-launchers-delivered-to-polands-16th-mechanized-division>.

<sup>135</sup> Jang, Won-Joon, Park, Hea Ji and Kim, Mi Jung. 2024. "The Crucial Role of Financing in Defense Exports: Focusing on the Korea-Poland Deal." Korea Institute for Industrial Economics and Trade Research Paper No. 24/iKIET/158, iKIET Issues & Analysis, No. 158, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4823311>.

<sup>136</sup> 김동규. 2024. "방산업계, 수은법 개정안 국회 통과에 일제히 환영·기대." 연합뉴스, February 29, 2024.

<sup>137</sup> Eun-jung, Kim. 2024. "Poland Declined Ukraine's Request for Weapons from S. Korea: Reports." Yonhap News Agency, October 25, 2024. <https://m-en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20241025009600315>.

<sup>138</sup> Shekina, Daria. 2024. "US Reportedly Offers to Transfer South Korean Shells to Ukraine." RBC, March 26, 2024. <https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/news/us-reportedly-offers-to-transfer-south-korean-1711463128.html>.

Nevertheless, Putin, in a rare June 2024 meeting with foreign press, made it clear that he “highly appreciates” South Korea’s consistent position to not directly supply weapons to Ukraine, extolling the ROK’s Russia policy as devoid of “any Russophobic stance.”<sup>139</sup> By staking this position, Putin tacitly drew a diplomatic red line: direct provision of weapons to Ukraine. South Korea for its part was forced to draw its own red lines with regards to Russia, per the latter’s salami slicing towards comprehensive alignment with the DPRK. In an exclusive interview on April 2024, ROK National Security Advisor (and former ROK ambassador to Russia) Chang Ho-jin mentioned that a mutual management of ROK-Russian relations was occurring that included mutual recognition of the other party’s red lines (widely understood to be direct provision of weapons to Ukraine by South Korea and Russian sponsorship of advanced military technologies for North Korea) and that bilateral relations will recover after the Ukraine War provided that new external variables or the acceleration of bloc formation in international relations do not materialize.<sup>140</sup>

However, the ‘external variable’ that upset this tentative balance in relations as cited by the Yoon administration materialized in spectacular fashion on June 19, 2024, with the signing of the “Treaty on the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership” between the DPRK and Russia. The treaty is the successor of the “2000 Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborliness and Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the DPRK,” but it shares much in common with the 1961 “Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance” between the DPRK and the Soviet Union in that it includes a mutual defense clause in its Article 4. Article 4 specifies the conditions and content of a *casus foederis* invocation by stating the following: “If one of the parties is subjected to an armed attack by any state or several states and thus finds itself in a state of war, the other Party will immediately provide military and other assistance with all means at its disposal in accordance with Article 51 of

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<sup>139</sup> Sun, Chang Jae. 2024. “Putin ‘highly Appreciates’ S. Korea’s Position Not to Directly Supply Weapons to Ukraine.” Yonhap News Agency, June 6, 2024. <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20240606000800315>.

<sup>140</sup> 김경진. 2024. “[단독] 국가안보실장 ‘한러, 서로 “레버리지” 있어...우크라 전쟁 끝나면 관계 복원.’” KBS, April 27, 2024. <https://news.kbs.co.kr/news/pc/view/view.do?ncd=7950549>.

the UN Charter and in accordance with legislation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Russian Federation.”<sup>141</sup>

This is almost verbatim the mutual defense clause that was featured in the 1961 agreement, with the addition of two qualifications that bind the invocation of *casus foederis* to both the UN Charter's Article 51's specification of individual/collective self-defense (instead of an unqualified use of the term “self-defense” which could have been subject to the broader interpretation of customary international law) and the domestic legal systems of each signatory. Article 51 defers significant authority to the UNSC in the reporting, determination, and resolution of a case of self-defense, and it is argued in international legal scholarship that a country's use of force in self-defense must be suspended once the UNSC takes action in restoring “international peace and security.”<sup>142</sup> Thus, it is seen that Russia had adopted a conservative, not-fully-committed approach by binding itself to a mutual defense clause with major caveats, which contrasts with the DPRK's eager touting of an “alliance” relationship with Russia.<sup>143</sup> North Korea being more bullish regarding the inclusion of a mutual defense clause would be in line with historical precedent, as it had unsuccessfully tried to keep the 1961 mutual defense clause during negotiations for the 2000 treaty. There is a view that, per Putin's comments linking the concept of “armed invasion” with NATO's military buildup against Russia, Article 4 was meant to provide *ad hoc* justification for the DPRK's military support for Russia in its war in Ukraine<sup>144</sup> (presumably as opposed to *ex ante* justification for Russia's costly entrapment in a Korea contingency which would be an obvious net negative for Russia). In the end,

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<sup>141</sup> Sputnik International. 2024. “Full Text of Russia-North Korea Strategic Agreement.” June 20, 2024. <https://sputnikglobe.com/20240620/full-text-of-russia-north-korea-strategic-agreement--1119035258.html>.

<sup>142</sup> Halberstam, Malvina. 1996. “The Right to Self-Defense Once the Security Council Takes Action,” Michigan Journal of International Law. 229 Vol. 17-2.

<sup>143</sup> 차두현. 2024. “북러 밀착관계와 『북러 포괄적인 전략적 동반자관계에 관한 조약』의 함축성.” 아산정책연구원, July 31, 2024. <https://www.asaninst.org/contents/북러-밀착관계와-『북러-포괄적인-전략적-동반자관/>.

<sup>144</sup> 이래현, 리차드 김. 2024. “북러조약: '무력침공시 지체없이 군사원조'...4 조 조항 어떻게 해석해야 하나.” BBC News 코리아, June 20, 2024, Accessed on October 25, 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/korean/articles/cn00elnzqvzo>.

much of the future application of Article 4 will depend on the interpretations or even the political will of the signatories, especially since Russia has been shown through very recent events to be capable of selectively honoring similar mutual defense treaty obligations (e.g., Article 4 of the Collective Security Treaty) in some cases (as shown in the Collective Security Treaty Organization’s 2022 intervention in Kazakhstan)<sup>145</sup> while ignoring them in others (as was the case with Armenia in the 2023 Azerbaijani takeover of Nagorno-Karabakh).<sup>146</sup>

No less significant than the addition of a flexible and conditional mutual defense clause is the other provisions of the treaty as well as the political statements made its signatories. First, regarding the ROK’s grand strategy end of reconciliation and reunification, the treaty constitutes a seminal case in which North Korea has concluded such a treaty as a nation wholly distinct from its ethnic compatriots to its south. Article 5 of the 1961 treaty explicitly endorsed the “peaceful and democratic” unification of Korea in keeping with the “national interests of the Korean people”<sup>147</sup> (which mirrors the ethnical language found in the original DPRK constitution) and Article 4 of the 2000 treaty repeated this phraseology while also calling for unification on the basis of autonomy, peaceful means, and national unity (mirroring the commitments outlined in the 1991 Inter-Korean Basic Agreement).<sup>148</sup> However, all mentions of unification, Korean ethnic unity, or even the Korean Peninsula are omitted in the new treaty, replaced exclusively by references to the DPRK and its territory. This is in sharp contrast to the previous 2000 treaty, during which

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<sup>145</sup> Dyner, Anna Maria. “The CSTO Operation in Kazakhstan.” The Polish Institute of International Affairs, January 19, 2022. <https://pism.pl/publications/the-csto-operation-in-kazakhstan>.

<sup>146</sup> Bellamy, Daniel. “Armenia to Leave Russian-Led Collective Security Treaty Organization.” Euronews, June 12, 2024. <https://www.euronews.com/2024/06/12/armenia-to-leave-russian-led-collective-security-treaty-organisation>.

<sup>147</sup> “Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance” United Nations Treaty Collection, 1961. <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20420/volume-420-I-6045-English.pdf>

<sup>148</sup> “조·리 친선·선린 및 협조에 관한 조약 (2000.2.9).” 평화를만드는여성회 북핵관련자료실, February 9, 2000.

[http://www.peacewomen.or.kr/www1/index.php?document\\_srl=16790&mid=wmp\\_pds\\_nu\\_clear](http://www.peacewomen.or.kr/www1/index.php?document_srl=16790&mid=wmp_pds_nu_clear).

Pyeongyang had tried to tie Russia not only to an endorsement of unification, but also to an endorsement of the DPRK's "Koryo Confederation" formula for reunification (the latter aim being ultimately unsuccessful).<sup>149</sup> The omission is so complete that a powerful political statement emerges from the vacuum; while South Korea may still prioritize inter-Korean reunification as a unique grand strategic end for itself, North Korea reserves the right to move on from this legacy goal completely (if it has not already done so).

This is not to say that the treaty lacks statements of historical ties, except that these ties are endemic to a historical camaraderie between old allies instead of ethnical ties with the ROK. Concurrent to the announcement of the June 2024 treaty, the *Rodong Sinmun* featured an article by Putin himself on the title page of its June 18, 2024 edition. In his article, Putin emphasized the historical comradeship between Russia and the DPRK, mentioning the Red Army's role in forming a common front with "patriots of Chosun" and in jointly defeating the Kwantung Army (as commemorated by the Moranbong Liberation Monument).<sup>150</sup> This portrayal of Russia as an anti-Japanese liberator contrasts with the DPRK's current rhetoric towards the ROK's Yoon administration, which it caricatures as a group of pro-Japanese traitors.<sup>151</sup> Putin draws parallels between this historical narrative and present-day geopolitics, portraying Russia and North Korea as victims of a US-led effort to institute a "neo-colonialist" global hegemony under the guise of a "rules-based international order." Such developments directly dovetail Gilbert Rozman's aforementioned diagnosis of Russia's foreign policy as being increasingly informed by an ideological historiography and a wariness of a new Cold War paradigm. The 2024 treaty reiterates this sentiment in its prelude, which spells out a common front in opposition against "hegemonic aspirations" and "a unipolar world order" (i.e., US-

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<sup>149</sup> Joo, 2000, 202.

<sup>150</sup> 대한민국 주재 러시아연방 대사관. 2024. "'노동신문'에 게재된 블라디미르 푸틴 러시아 대통령의 기사." June 18, 2024. <https://korea-seoul.mid.ru/ko/press-centre/news/emabassynews-240619-kor/>.

<sup>151</sup> 송성희. 2022. "북한 김정은, 윤석열 겨냥? '친일이 활개치는 세상 된다면...'" 국제뉴스, March 12, 2022.

<https://www.gukjenews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=2424653#rs>.

centered hegemony and unipolarity) and in favor of “a multipolar international system.”

The 2024 treaty, consisting of 23 articles, is also much longer than its 1961 and 2000 antecedents and includes the legal basis for cooperation that is directly inimical to South Korea’s priorities regarding an inter-Korean ‘resolution.’ For example, the treaty mandates mutual support of the other party’s “right to development” (Article 6), mutual coordination in international organizations such as the UN to prevent challenges “to the common interests and security of the Parties” (Article 7), and opposition to the use of “unilateral coercive measures” and minimization of their effects when directed against one of the signatories (Article 16). This could easily be interpreted as the legal codification of Russia’s policy to compromise the UN sanctions regime against the DPRK and its enforcement. Article 14’s mutual obligation to protect the “legal rights and interests” of the other signatory’s legal entities and citizens might mean the further compromising of the UN prohibition on DPRK overseas workers. Furthermore, whereas the 2000 treaty almost exclusively focused on mutual cooperation and consultation in non-military matters, the 2024 treaty highlights military and security issues in its extended text. Article 8 mandates joint activities and mechanisms to “strengthen defense capabilities in the interests of preventing war” (in other words deterrence capabilities). Articles 9 and 18 mandate cooperation in “information and communication technologies” (ICT) for security purposes, a mandate which comports with global trends in alliance and bloc cooperation regarding cybersecurity (e.g., Japan’s “information security agreements,” Ukraine’s Tallinn Mechanism, *inter alia*).

Finally, Article 10’s provisions proffer particularly problematic possibilities for South Korea and its allies, with its injunction to the parties to deepen “joint research in the field of science and technology, including in such areas as space, biology, peaceful nuclear energy, artificial intelligence, information technology and others.” Already there has been speculation that “peaceful nuclear energy” might mean Russia’s acknowledgement of the DPRK as a nuclear state, in a similar fashion to

the 2008 US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement.<sup>152</sup> Of course, the “space” provision is especially concerning to South Korea as North Korea has long been seen as using the pretext of launching civilian satellite launch vehicles (SLVs) to test their long-range ballistic missile technology, which is banned by existing UNSCRs (recent Malligyong-1 spy satellite launches utilized North Korea’s Chollima-1 SLV technology, which shares first-stage engine technology with the Hwasong-17 ICBM).<sup>153</sup> Missile technology aside, a space-based surveillance system for North Korea will transform its current monitoring and precision-strike capabilities. Putin stated in his first post-Ukraine summit with Kim in 2023 that he would assist North Korea’s satellite program, and the ROK’s NIS has concluded that this technological assistance was likely the main factor in North Korea first successful spy satellite launch in November 2023.<sup>154</sup> Although North Korea has since failed subsequent launch attempts in 2024, the specter of possible Russian support for the DPRK’s advanced military technologies per its new 2024 treaty with the latter (possible support ranging from ICTs, to nuclear weapons and submarines, to advanced telemetry, to SLVs and ICBMs) casts a long shadow over the viability of any of South Korea’s goals regarding the DPRK (e.g., North Korea’s reentry into the NPT, a CVID or FFVD denuclearization process, economic reintegration, and political reunification).

A second sea change in inter-Korean dynamics occurred during the month of October 2024. On October 3, 2024, intelligence sources cited by Ukraine’s Kyiv Post reported that, within a group of 20 military personnel killed in a rocket strike by the Ukrainian Armed Forces near Donetsk, six were identified to be officers from

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<sup>152</sup> 국가안보전략연구원. 2024. “러북 정상회담 결과 평가 및 對 한반도 파급 영향.” INSS 전략보고 No. 275.

<https://www.inss.re.kr/upload/bbs/BBSA05/202012/F20201215183752588.pdf>.

<sup>153</sup> Madden, Michael, Daniel R. DePetris, and John Erath. 2023. “First Flight of North Korea’s ‘Chollima-1’ SLV Fails, but More Launches and More New SLVs Are Likely.” 38 North, June 7, 2023. <https://www.38north.org/2023/06/first-flight-of-north-koreas-chollima-1-slv-fails-but-more-launches-and-more-new-slvs-are-likely/>.

<sup>154</sup> Kim, Hyung-Jin. 2024. “South Korea Calls for Immediate Withdrawal of North Korean Troops Allegedly in Russia.” AP News, October 22, 2024. <https://apnews.com/article/north-south-korea-russia-ukraine-27780e4b672ee638b96099ec5f5168e4>.

North Korea (with three additional DPRK personnel wounded).<sup>155</sup> A subsequent report by the ROK NIS on October 18, 2024 confirmed that South Korea had been monitoring a key figure in the DPRK's Munitions Industry Department (which oversees the DPRK's missile weapons program) and dozens of military officers participating in on-site excursions to the Russian-Ukrainian frontlines.<sup>156</sup> From October 8 to 13, 2024, the NIS captured satellite imagery of four landing ships and three escort ships of the Russian Pacific Fleet transferring an initial detachment of 1,500 North Korean special forces from North and South Hamgyong Provinces to Vladivostok, constituting the first time Russian vessels entered DPRK waters since 1990. As of the time of this writing, the most recent estimates of the total size of the DPRK's troop deployment (including current and future transfers) to Ukraine center around the number of 12,000 (per ROK government sources), a number which has been echoed in Ukrainian media along with the number of 3000, which was the initial estimated number of DPRK elite special operations forces stationed 50 miles outside the Ukrainian border by the end of October 2024.<sup>157</sup> The Russian ambassador to South Korea explained via Facebook post on October 21 that the current cooperation between Russia and the DPRK was not a security threat to the ROK and was conducted in accordance with international law.<sup>158</sup> This implies that the DPRK has used Russia's (debunked) narrative that its war in Ukraine was initiated as an act of both individual and collective self-defense to provide "military assistance" to Russia per Article 4 of the 2024 Russia-DPRK treaty.

According to one CSIS analysis, this deployment possibly constitutes the seventh instance in which the DPRK deployed its military to foreign countries, after deployments to North Vietnam during the Vietnam War, Egypt during the Yom

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<sup>155</sup> Serohina, Kateryna. 2024. "6 North Korean Officers Killed as a Result of Missile Strike near Donetsk." RBC, October 4, 2024. <https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/news/6-north-korean-officers-killed-as-a-result-1728080864.html>.

<sup>156</sup> NIS 국가정보원, October 18, 2024.

<sup>157</sup> Bashchenko, Oleksandra. 2024. "North Korean Soldiers Stationed 50 Km from Ukrainian Border - FT." RBC, October 30, 2024. <https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/news/north-korean-soldiers-stationed-50-km-from-1730279228.html>.

<sup>158</sup> 주한 러시아대사관. 2024. "게오르기 지노비예프 주한 러시아 대사과 김홍균 대한민국 외교부 제 1 차관의 면담에 관하여." October 21, 2024. <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/EwuxWTAVraJMA4D1/>

Kippur War, Libya in 1984, Uganda in 1987, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 2014, and Syria during its civil war.<sup>159</sup> Like the Russia case, North Korea's previous deployments were rooted in the situational paradigm of Cold War alignment and obligations. For example, as Park Tae Gyun points out, the DPRK sought to assist their co-revolutionaries in Vietnam by opening a second front in the Korean peninsula (via DMZ skirmishes as well as the Blue House raid and Pueblo incidents) to disrupt the ROK's Vietnam War troop deployments<sup>160</sup> (he also mentions a more aggressive ROK stance vis-à-vis the DPRK during this time as a contributing factor).<sup>161</sup> It was in this context that North Korea dispatched air forces and psychological warfare personnel in 1965, per recently released Vietnamese archives.<sup>162</sup> Likewise, North Korea's military and diplomatic ties to African nations like the DRC could be understood as a legacy of Cold War ties with the continent.<sup>163</sup> Scholars have outlined how North Korea's special connection with allies such as Syria was also informed by Cold War era alignment<sup>164</sup> and by an endemic proxy war with the state of Israel;<sup>165</sup> per these scholars, Syria in particular received fighter pilots from the DPRK during the 60s and 70s (an early instance of DPRK deployment not reflected in the CSIS count), missile and nuclear technological assistance (which

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<sup>159</sup> Cancian, Mark F., and Chris H. Park. 2024. "North Korean Troops Deploy to Russia: What's the Military Effect?" CSIS, October 25, 2024. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/north-korean-troops-deploy-russia-whats-military-effect>.

<sup>160</sup> 박태균. 2015. "(박태균의) 이슈 한국사." 파주: 창비, 185-186.

<sup>161</sup> Park, Tae Gyun. 2009. "Beyond the Myth: Reassessing the Security Crisis on the Korean Peninsula during the Mid-1960s." *Pacific Affairs* 82 (1). VANCOUVER: Pacific Affairs, a division of the University of British: 93-110. doi:10.5509/200982193.

<sup>162</sup> 도미엔. 2019. "1960년대 북한의 베트남전 지원과 공군 심리전 전문가 파병 - 새로 발굴한 베트남 자료를 중심으로." *Ihwa sahak yŏn'gu* 59. 이화사학연구소: 225-63. doi:10.37091/ewhist.2019..59.007.

<sup>163</sup> Ramani, Samuel. 2016. "North Korea's African Allies." – *The Diplomat*, June 4, 2016. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/06/north-koreas-african-allies/>.

<sup>164</sup> DePetris, Daniel R., John Erath, and Gilbert Rozman. 2021. "The North Korean-Syrian Partnership: Bright Prospects Ahead." 38 North, March 23, 2021. <https://www.38north.org/2021/03/the-north-korean-syrian-partnership-bright-prospects-ahead/>.

<sup>165</sup> Solomon, Jay. 2019. "The North Korean-Israeli Shadow War." *The Washington Institute*, September 9, 2019. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/north-korean-israeli-shadow-war>.

Syria's other ally Russia was unwilling to give), and specialist (and possible militia) units.

However, the total number of ground units in Syria, a mold breaking instance of North Korea's foreign deployment of such ground units, was only an unidentified and small number above a baseline of 20 specialists. The DPRK's initial deployment of 3,000 special operations forces and its estimated total deployment of 12,000 to the Ukraine War dwarfs any foreign military engagement involving the DPRK since the Korean War. It was also noted that even during the Vietnam War, when South Korea was shoring up both its alliance with the US and substantial economic windfalls through its massive troop deployments to Vietnam, North Korea showed some hesitance in aggressively "internationalizing" a regional conflict and limited most of its support to North Vietnam to pecuniary aid.<sup>166</sup> In contrast, there is now very little hesitance evident in North Korea's willingness to involve itself in international conflicts. The DPRK's de facto declaration of war with Ukraine will also add to the symbolism of a "blood alliance" first forged during the fall of the Kwantung army, this time with Russia significantly indebted to North Korea. A revamped Russia-DPRK "blood alliance" stands alongside another "blood alliance" in the form of the DPRK-PRC alliance, the latter pair having been jointly involved in the dormant Korean War since the signing of the armistice treaty while also having retained their mutual defense treaty from the Cold War (a commitment most recently renewed in 2021).<sup>167</sup>

Faced with the unprecedented sea changes in the North Korea situation presented by the new Russia-DPRK alliance treaty and its first application via the unprecedented entry of the DPRK into the Ukraine War, the South Korean Yoon administration asserted its red lines regarding Russia-DPRK cooperation in the field of military technology, with the ROK threatening countermeasures such as direct

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<sup>166</sup> 도미엔, 2019.

<sup>167</sup> Vu, Khang, Alexandre Dayant, Hugh White, and Jeffrey Robertson. 2021. "Why China and North Korea Decided to Renew a 60-Year-Old Treaty." Lowy Institute, July, 30, 2021. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/why-china-north-korea-decided-renew-60-year-old-treaty>.

provision of weapons to Ukraine since the signing of the 2024 Russia-DPRK treaty. South Korea again floated the direct provision of weapons to Ukraine, with the specification that the exercise of such provisions as well as the content of such provisions will be part and parcel of a “phased countermeasures” approach to military cooperation between Russia and Ukraine.<sup>168</sup> An interesting feature of the Yoon administration’s sequential approach to countermeasures is the ad hoc specification of so-called “defensive weapons” and “lethal weapons,” which concomitantly forms the conceptual basis for a three-stage framework for countermeasures against Russia and the DPRK (i.e., diplomatic means, provision of “defensive weapons,” and provision of offensive “lethal weapons” as a third and final deterrence option).<sup>169</sup>

Regarding the meaning of “defensive weapons,” which is a point of debate amongst other national suppliers of weapons to Ukraine,<sup>170</sup> a high-ranking official of the ROK Office of the President delivered the opinion that such air defense and surface-to-air (SAM) missile systems as THAAD and Patriot missiles could be seen as exclusively defense-oriented weapons.<sup>171</sup> This would open the way for transfers of South Korean surface-to-air missiles systems, such as LIG Nex1 and Hanwha’s Korean Medium-range Surface-to-Air Missile (KM-SAM) “Cheongung I and II” batteries (which are deployed alongside the ROK’s latest acquisitions of Lockheed Martin’s MIM-104F Patriot Advanced Capacity-3 missiles),<sup>172</sup> to Ukraine. Yoo Yong-won, a lawmaker of the ruling People Power Party (PPP) and member of the

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<sup>168</sup> 김경필. 2024. “정부 ‘러·북 협력에 단계적 대응... 우크라이에 공격용 무기 지원 고려.’” *조선일보*, October 22, 2024. <https://www.chosun.com/politics/diplomacy-defense/2024/10/22/55G76MDWN5HWTPTAKLTKNUTNVM/>.

<sup>169</sup> 양낙규. 2024. “정부의 우크라이나 살상무기 지원카드는 [양낙규의 Defence Club].” *아시아경제*, October 30, 2024. <https://www.asiae.co.kr/article/2024103106534160062>.

<sup>170</sup> Biddle, Stephen. 2022. “Is It Possible to Send Only ‘defensive’ Weapons to Ukraine?” *The Washington Post*. Washington Post, April 28, 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/04/28/ukraine-russia-military-warfare-offensive-defensive-weaponry/>.

<sup>171</sup> 박현주, 조수진. 2024. “우크라이나 무기 지원?... “한국, 교전국 된다” ‘칼 안 뽑아야 더 위력.’” *중앙일보*, November 1, 2024. <https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/25288794>.

<sup>172</sup> Kim, Brian. 2022. “South Korea to Buy More Patriot Missiles, Upgrade Launchers.” *Defense News*, August 18, 2022. <https://www.defensenews.com/global/asia-pacific/2022/06/06/south-korea-to-buy-more-patriot-missiles-upgrade-launchers/>.

National Assembly's national defense committee, suggested that retired Cold War-era MIM-23 Hawk missiles (the retired US predecessor to the Patriot missile systems) could be provided in lieu of newer models to intercept Russian UAVs and cruise missiles (following in the trend of countries like Poland which have used Ukraine to clear out their Cold War-era stockpiles).<sup>173</sup> The Yoon administration further upped the ante in terms of possible countermeasures against Russia's behavior by claiming the right to send ROK military observers directly to the battlefield in Ukraine. The reason provided was the need to observe North Korean military capacities,<sup>174</sup> reasoning that highlights how the Ukraine War constitutes a proxy confrontation of two Koreas increasing aligning away from the other (a confrontation complete with South and North Korean armaments on either side of the Ukraine-Russia battlefield).

However, there are clear limitations to the ROK attempts to deter post-Ukraine military cooperation between Russia and the DPRK. First, there is a distinct lack of political consensus between Korean progressives and conservatives regarding the Yoon administration's aforementioned approach to Russia-DPRK military cooperation and the Ukraine War in general, which stems from the political dynamics of autonomy/alignment as explained above, but which is also exacerbated by legal and logistical issues. Korea's Foreign Trade Act only allows exports of "strategic assets" in cases in which they are used for peaceful purposes and do not negatively affect "international peace and national security" (although there are ways for the executive branch to circumvent this via legal interpretation), and the opposition parties have pointed to other legal provisions pertaining to weapons management and logistics as constituting other obstacles to weapons transfers to Ukraine.<sup>175</sup> The opposition has also attempted to mandate the National Assembly's

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<sup>173</sup> 박응진. 2024. "창고에 쌓아둔 '호크 미사일'...'北 파병 맞불' 우크라 지원되나." 뉴스 1, October 30, 2024. <https://www.news1.kr/politics/diplomacy-defense/5584658>.

<sup>174</sup> 김태준, 이세영. 2024. "盧정부도 보냈는데... 우크라 참관단을 '파병'이라는 野." 조선일보, November 1, 2024.

[https://www.chosun.com/politics/politics\\_general/2024/11/01/YRUFZKFKGFCJLMMICZ75FQCUBM/](https://www.chosun.com/politics/politics_general/2024/11/01/YRUFZKFKGFCJLMMICZ75FQCUBM/).

<sup>175</sup> 이재호. 2024. "'군 대비 태세 구명 내면서까지 우크라이나 무기 지원한다고?'" 프레시안, October 30, 2024.

<https://www.pressian.com/pages/articles/2024103013443134204>.

approval for even individual-level deployments as a countermeasure against the government's position that it could make such individual deployments without legislative approval.<sup>176</sup> Second, as is evident in Russia's U-turn vis-à-vis its whilom equidistant policy and embrace of North Korea's burgeoning "two hostile states" narrative of inter-Korean relations, the *prima facie* regional consensus regarding the Korea question that Snyder highlighted in 2018 is no longer operative in the aftermath of the Ukraine War, with the interests of certain actors regarding the Korean peninsula becoming increasingly liable to bloc politics and inimical to the ROK's *sui generis* goal of national reconciliation and reunification.

Finally, the agency of South Korea regarding inter-Korean relations as well as the efficacy of its policies, which have had some consensus across conservative and progressive administrations have contracted significantly after Ukraine. For example, the current administration's North Korea plan, the "Audacious Initiative" or "Audacious Plan," initiated during Yoon Suk-yeol's inauguration speech and buttressed by subsequent policy speeches and documents (including a dedicated publication and a section within Yoon's NSS), consists of an updated amalgamation of the North Korea plans of previous administrations, especially Lee Myung-bak's "Vision 3000: Denuclearization and Openness Plan."<sup>177</sup> Yoon's plan centers around the basic promise of the Vision 3000: an economic boon for North Korea with promises of massive food aid in the form of a food-for-mineral resources exchange program, infrastructure projects for power generation and transportation, improvements in public welfare, and the opening of global finance to North Korea. To this, Yoon added some compromises (e.g., tit-for-tat denuclearization instead of preconditional denuclearization, inter-Korean political and military cooperation, restoration of détente between North Korea and the US as seen during the first Trump

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<sup>176</sup> 계승현. 2024. "추미애, '개인단위 軍 파병도 국회 동의' 법안 발의." 연합뉴스, November 6, 2024. <https://en.yna.co.kr/>.

<sup>177</sup> DePetris, Daniel R., John Erath, and Gilbert Rozman. 2022. "President Yoon's 'Audacious Plan': Neither Audacious nor a Plan, but Still Right." 38 North, October 28, 2022. <https://www.38north.org/2022/10/president-yoons-audacious-plan-neither-audacious-nor-a-plan-but-still-right/>.

administration) while emphasizing the decidedly conservative methodology of the 3Ds (deterrence, dissuasion, and dialogue) as a guiding principle.<sup>178</sup>

Russia-DPRK alignment threatens the core tenets of this plan. Regarding Yoon's Resources-Food Exchange Program (R-FEP) and joint agricultural cooperation proposals, the US and South Korea have been alleging that food-for-munitions exchanges have been occurring since the war, with the most recent transfers of foodstuffs consisting of wheat flour, corn, and livestock.<sup>179</sup> Also, in 2024, the DPRK has dispatched several delegations to Russia to discuss such topics as food imports, production of vegetables and grains, seed breeding, the fishing industry, and training of DPRK farmers in Russia (in violation of UN sanctions barring hosting of DPRK workers).<sup>180</sup> In addition, Russia has helped North Korea to circumvent the stringent UN limit of 500,000 barrels of oil imports, while also unfreezing \$9 million of the DPRK's assets in Russia and facilitating its access to the global financial system.<sup>181</sup> It was the interaction between the maximum pressure campaign of the Trump administration and political willingness by Pyongyang that catalyzed the pre-COVID détente and summits between the two countries. With the decreased viability of a renewed pressure campaign and with the US and the DPRK engaged in a proxy war in Ukraine that has been couched in terms of a moral crusade in defense of a rules-based international order by the Biden administration and a fight against "neo-colonialist imperialism" by Russia and the DPRK, Yoon's pledge to revive this historical moment of détente between the US and North Korea seems anachronistic and less than probable.

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<sup>178</sup> 임을출. 2022. "윤석열 정부의 '담대한 구상': 주요 내용, 특징 및 법적 과제." 한국법제연구원, 통일법제 이슈페이퍼 Vol. 6.

<sup>179</sup> 김지수, 조진우. 2024. "러, 북에 매년 염소 1 천마리씩 3 년간 수출 계약." Radio Free Asia, August 29, 2024. [https://www.rfa.org/korean/in\\_focus/food\\_international\\_org/goat\\_export-08292024155149.html](https://www.rfa.org/korean/in_focus/food_international_org/goat_export-08292024155149.html).

<sup>180</sup> Sokolin, Anton. 2024. "Russia Exports 2k Tons of Flour and Corn to North Korea amid Signs of Shortages: NK News." NK News - North Korea News, May 7, 2024. <https://www.nknews.org/2024/05/russia-exports-2k-tons-of-flour-and-corn-to-north-korea-amid-signs-of-shortages/>.

<sup>181</sup> Bowen, Andrew S., Mark E. Manyin, and Mary Beth D. Nikitin, 2024.

Finally, regarding deterrence and dissuasion and their role in effectuating dialogue per the 3D's formula, South Korea's reliance on conventional counterforce and countervalue capabilities (i.e., the three-axis system) is limited by the asymmetry that exists between the preemptive capability of such systems versus the strike capabilities of nuclear armaments. In short, the hit rate (i.e., number of preemptive strikes and accurate interceptions) of such systems will need to be exponentially larger than the hit number (presumably one) that North Korea would need to accomplish with its nuclear warheads in the event of a Korea contingency.<sup>182</sup> Any Russia-sponsored addition or advancement of such armaments for the DPRK could thus be game changing. Conversely, regarding Russia, South Korea's available instruments for deterrence and dissuasion are also limited, given the limited economic leverage that South Korea possesses vis-à-vis Russia when compared with the economic leverage possessed by Europe, for example. Likewise, South Korea's avowed phasal military countermeasures have been greatly hampered in the production of a desired deterrence effect, as seen above.

There is also the added variable of a shifting democratic mandate that is absent in dictatorial regimes; put simply, the democratic mandate in US and NATO aligned countries for continued support of Ukraine may wane with the burgeoning of war fatigue and economic populism (as shown by the surge of populist parties in the EU and by Trump's decisive return to the presidency in the US). In South Korea, there is a divided mandate for governance in which a conservative surge in 2022 saw Yoon's election victory, but rapid shifts in public opinion mostly pertaining to domestic politics have since seen liberals (who have far less of an appetite for South Korea's involvement with or support for Ukraine) dominate the legislative elections in 2024. The deterrence credibility of a South Korean countermeasure or other response will inevitably be diluted by the phenomenon of dual democratic legitimacy and a constantly shifting electoral mandate.

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<sup>182</sup> Bowers, Ian, and Henrik Stålhane Hiim. 2024. "Lousy Deterrence Options on the Korean Peninsula." War on the Rocks - Texas National Security Review, October 25, 2024. <https://warontherocks.com/2024/10/lousy-deterrence-options-on-the-korean-peninsula/>.

In sum, it seems likely that the Ukraine War has simultaneously accelerated the disarming of a multilateral sanctions regime, the opening of new economic opportunities for the DPRK independent from South Korea and its allies (and reliant on another economic pariah, Russia), the advancement of North Korea's ballistic missile and nuclear arms programs, the endangerment of an effective deterrence mechanism, and a political/ideological bifurcation (i.e., bloc politics) that endangers the possibility of future inter-Korean dialogue. Much still depends on the political will of Moscow, though, especially in the interpretation of Russia's new mutual defense obligations (as seen above) and in the provision of substantive assistance for North Korea's advanced military capabilities. Nevertheless, if bloc formation continues at its current trajectory, it will be unlikely that either the preferred inter-Korean strategy of progressives (confidence building measures and institutionalization of inter-Korean intercourse and peace) and conservatives (economic carrots and sticks backed up by an aggressive deterrence mechanism and alliance coordination) will continue to be as feasible as it was in previous years. Ultimately, if the political will and means existed amongst involved parties and regional powers for South Korea's grand strategic goal of reunification and reconciliation before the Ukraine War, it is clear that the requisite political consensus and practical means for realizing the ROK's *sui generis* grand strategic end have been greatly attenuated in the post-Ukraine world order.

## 2. Regarding Alignment and a New Cold War Paradigm

As discussed in Chapter 3, a fundamental tension that exists within South Korea's pursuit of its grand strategic ends is the perennial tension between autonomy and alignment vis-à-vis the US and its allies. This bifurcation in policy direction was again placed on full display throughout the duration of the Ukraine War. During the outbreak and initial phases of the conflict, which coincided with the 2022 ROK presidential election, both conservatives and progressives went on the record with their takes on the causes of the war and its significance for South Korea. Progressives were quick to draw parallels between the strategic choices that faced Ukraine during the leadup to war and the equivalent choices facing South Korea within a similar geopolitical and security hotspot. During a four-way presidential debate on February 25, 2022, the Democratic Party of Korea's (DPK) presidential candidate (and its current leader) Lee Jae-myung highlighted the agency of Ukraine in the escalation of the conflict, stating that it was combination of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's political inexperience (which Lee sought to compare and equate with Yoon's lack of experience in the political arena) and his explicit attempts at one-sided alignment (with the US and NATO) that provoked Russia's invasion.<sup>183</sup> Zelenskyy did openly state Ukraine's strategic objectives to join the EU and NATO in his 2020 NSS document, statements of intent which were judged at the time to be more explicit than those contained in Ukraine's previous NSS document.<sup>184</sup>

Lee's criticisms of Zelenskyy were echoed by such other DPK politicians as Justice Minister Park Beom-gye and Korea National Diplomatic Academy (KNDA) head Hong Hyun-ik, the latter blaming the shortsightedness of Ukraine as the "main

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<sup>183</sup> 김은중, 노석조. 2022. "'초보 정치인이 러 자극' 이재명 발언 논란." 조선일보, February 28, 2022.

[https://www.chosun.com/politics/politics\\_general/2022/02/28/RCAD4W3XANBPLACQT5VXDNDQM4/](https://www.chosun.com/politics/politics_general/2022/02/28/RCAD4W3XANBPLACQT5VXDNDQM4/).

<sup>184</sup> Getmanchuk, Alyona. 2020. "Russia as Aggressor, NATO as Objective: Ukraine's New National Security Strategy." Atlantic Council, September 30, 2020.

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/russia-as-aggressor-nato-as-objective-ukraines-new-national-security-strategy/>.

reason” for the war and stating that South Korea should learn the lesson that non-great powers cannot pursue rash diplomatic initiatives.<sup>185</sup> Former Justice Minister Choo Mi-ae made the connection between Ukraine and South Korea in more explicit terms, stating that a similar crisis and failure of diplomacy could occur in the Korean peninsula, given the latter’s similar geopolitical position in between a new Cold War contest between the US and China.<sup>186</sup> She criticized the provocative deterrence policies and hawkish rhetoric of ROK conservatives as contrary to the preferences of both China and the US as well as inimical to regional stability and peace. In sum, the aforementioned progressive politicians all emphasized that it was Ukraine’s decision to pursue a one-sided diplomatic track and to concomitantly attempt a longshot bid to enter NATO that provoked conflict for the country in 2022. Their contentions mirror closely the interpretations of the Ukraine War proffered by Jeffrey D. Sachs<sup>187</sup> and John J. Mearsheimer,<sup>188</sup> who both interpreted the West and Ukraine’s overreach regarding NATO enlargement as the cause of conflict genesis. This view is in contradiction to the mainstream view amongst Western scholars, who note that there were signs of Russian coercion vis-à-vis Ukraine prior to 2014, that the Maidan Revolution was not an artificial, Western-sponsored coup, and that it was Russia’s avarice that pushed Ukraine towards alignment with the EU and NATO, and not vice-versa.<sup>189</sup>

On the other hand, conservatives such as Yoon gleaned the exact opposite lesson from the war in Ukraine, emphasizing the importance of explicit alignment with

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<sup>185</sup> 전수진. 2022. “‘우크라 비극은 인류의 위기’ 유발 하라리 걱정하고 꼬집었다 [뉴스원샷].” 중앙일보, February 25, 2022. <https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/25051306>.

<sup>186</sup> 권준영. 2022. “추미애 ‘코미디언 출신 대통령, 노골적으로 나토 가입 공언...감당 못할 위기 자초.’” 디지털타임스, February 27, 2022.

<sup>187</sup> Sachs, Jeffrey D. 2023. “The War in Ukraine Was Provoked-and Why That Matters to Achieve Peace.” Common Dreams, May 23, 2023. <https://www.commondreams.org/opinion/the-war-in-ukraine-was-provoked-and-why-that-matters-if-we-want-peace>.

<sup>188</sup> Mearsheimer, John J. 2014. “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin.” *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5: 77–89. <https://www.mearsheimer.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Why-the-Ukraine-Crisis-Is.pdf>

<sup>189</sup> Driedger, Jonas J. 2023. “The Stopping Power of Sources: Implied Causal Mechanisms and Historical Interpretations in (Mearsheimer’s) Arguments on the Russo-Ukrainian War” *Analyse & Kritik* 45, no. 1: 137-155. <https://doi.org/10.1515/auk-2023-2006>

allies as a method of effective deterrence over the left-wing preference for a diplomatic balancing act. Yoon posted his position on the conflict to social media prior to the debate in which he stated that Ukraine should have joined NATO with greater celerity and that by entering into an alliance treaty relationship Ukraine could have obtained effective deterrence against Russia.<sup>190</sup> The Ukraine War in Yoon's words demonstrated the "diplomatic sorrow of a non-aligned country without allies." Finally, he emphasized the superiority of military deterrence capabilities and treaty alliances over diplomatic concessions and political promises, noting how Ukraine gave up its only *bona fide* security guarantee, its venerable nuclear arsenal (the third largest stockpile in the world at the time), over the ultimately unrequited promises of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum. Yoon's claims represented an exaggeration of Ukraine's agency in the making of its current predicament (e.g., Ukraine's initial attempts to join NATO failed due to rejection by the West prior to 2014 and not due to internal ambivalence).<sup>191</sup> However, Yoon's basal point regarding the blatant noncompliance of the 1994 Memorandum by its signatories and the concomitant ramifications of the Ukraine War in lessening the credibility of liberal internationalist tools in IR (e.g., security assurances, diplomatic guarantees, and compliance via peer-pressure) while highlighting the importance of realist means (e.g., strategic assets and codified *casus foederis* obligations) mirrors the points made by some scholars who have been observing the causes and implications of the conflict.<sup>192</sup>

As an analysis by the conservative-leaning Asan Institute for Policy Studies points out, the war in Ukraine exposed the limitation of economic interdependence

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<sup>190</sup> 권지원. 2022. "윤석열, 러 '우크라 침공'에 '종전선언, 한반도 평화 보장하지 않아.'" 뉴시스, February 24, 2022.

[https://www.news1.com/view/NISX20220224\\_0001772279](https://www.news1.com/view/NISX20220224_0001772279).

<sup>191</sup> Taylor, Adam. 2014. "That Time Ukraine Tried to Join NATO - and NATO Said No." The Washington Post, September 4, 2014.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2014/09/04/that-time-ukraine-tried-to-join-nato-and-nato-said-no/>.

<sup>192</sup> Budjeryn, Mariana. 2014. "The Breach: Ukraine's Territorial Integrity and the Budapest Memorandum." NPIHP Issue Brief #3, Wilson Center.

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/Issue%20Brief%20No%203--The%20Breach--Final4.pdf>.

as a deterrent for war waged in pursuit of a nation's perceived political interests.<sup>193</sup> The institute notes that Russia decided to risk an invasion of Ukraine despite the obvious vulnerability of the Russian economy to Western economic sanctions, as the EU constituted its largest trading partner and the US its 9<sup>th</sup> largest export and 3<sup>rd</sup> largest import partner prior to the invasion. Conversely, per 2020 trade statistics, Russia was only ranked as the 36<sup>th</sup> largest export and 22<sup>nd</sup> largest import destination for the US and the 15<sup>th</sup> largest export and 19<sup>th</sup> largest import destination for Germany. Thus, in purely economic terms, the comparative losses that would be suffered by Russia in the event of a Ukraine contingency dwarfed the damage that would be suffered by the US and its European allies. Additionally, as shown above, Russia's "Turn to the East" regional strategy for the Asia-Pacific rested on fostering joint geoeconomic interests with East Asian democracies, most crucially with the middle powers of Korea and Japan, for the facilitation of a regional energy and transportation grid and a counterbalance against overreliance on the PRC. Thus, every tangible economic impediment to war was extent in the case of Russia vis-à-vis Ukraine, which supports the Asan Institute's main takeaway that economic deterrence is not an effective substitute for military deterrence. The institute's report blamed the lack of military deterrence capabilities in Ukraine and a reluctance to foster such Ukrainian capacity building by Western nations due to fears of diplomatic costs for causing Russia to underestimate the risks of an invasion and to carry it out. The policy recommendations suggested for Korea were the enhancement of deterrence capabilities per institutionalized alliance coordination (per the Biden administration's idea of "integrated deterrence"), the building of South Korea's native deterrence capabilities in the event of US abandonment, and the moving away from reliance on economic engagement (e.g., the Sunshine Policy as a security guarantor vis-à-vis North Korea). Overall, the institute's assessment represents a refined distillation of the general narrative of Korean conservatives regarding the Ukraine War and its implications for South Korea's grand strategy.

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<sup>193</sup> 고명현. 2022. "우크라이나 전쟁의 전략적 함의: 억지력 개념 중심으로." 아산정책연구원, May 6, 2022. <https://www.asaninst.org/contents/우크라이나-전쟁의-전략적-함의-억지력-개념-중심으/>

The policy direction of the Yoon administration during his tenure has largely comported with the policy prescriptions outlined above, focusing on alignment with allies and mutual enhancement of military deterrence capabilities to counter an increasingly negative security environment after the Ukraine War. As seen in Chapter 3, the emphasis on deterrence and alliance cooperation is mostly endemic to the policies of conservative administrations. For example, it was in February 2013, during the tail end of the Lee Myung-bak administration and immediately prior to the DPRK's third nuclear test, that South Korea's Ministry of Defense unveiled its "Kill Chain" strategy, based on the principle of preemptive self-defense (along with a strategy for the organization of "Korea Air and Missile Defense" or "KAMD" based on conventional self-defense).<sup>194</sup> Kill Chain, as one of the constituent axes of what is now called the "three-axis system" or "3K system" consists of rapid identification and preemptive strike capabilities against such threats as missile silos for DPRK ballistic missiles and WMDs.<sup>195</sup> During the Park Geun-hye administration, deterrence tactics were widened to encompass second-strike and deterrence-by-retaliation capabilities, with the unveiling of the KMPR (Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation) strategy in September 2016.<sup>196</sup> In its current iteration, KMPR involves such weapons systems as Hanwha's multiple rocket launcher system (MRLS) K238 Cheonmu (hosting a tactical ballistic missile payload), Lockheed Martin's surface-to-surface short range ballistic missile (SRBM) the MGM-140 Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) (also launched from MRLS platforms), Boeing Defense's air-to-surface precision attack missile the AGM-84H/K SLAM-ER, and Raytheon's laser-guided bunker busting bomb, the GBU-28. KMPR constitutes a second-strike decapitation strategy, aiming to eliminate the DPRK's political leadership within and without the vicinity of

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<sup>194</sup> 오종택. 2016. "[국방부 업무보고] 서해 감시·정찰 능력확충... 킬체인·KAMD 연내 기본시스템 구축." 뉴시스, December 27, 2016.

[https://www.newsis.com/view/?id=NISX20130401\\_0011965014](https://www.newsis.com/view/?id=NISX20130401_0011965014).

<sup>195</sup> Jung, Doyeong. 2023. "South Korea's Revitalized 'Three-Axis' System." Council on Foreign Relations, January 4, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/south-koreas-revitalized-three-axis-system>.

<sup>196</sup> 하이영. 2016. "군, '대량응징보복' 개념 전격공개...실제 효과는 의문." 한겨레, September 11, 2016. [https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/politics\\_general/760983.html](https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/politics_general/760983.html).

Pyongyang (including potential bunker hideouts for Kim Jong-un) as well as its command-and-control architecture.

The last axis of KAMD is operationalized by the Patriot and Cheongung medium-range surface-to-air missiles (M-SAMs) that were, as seen above, described by Yoon administration officials as potential “defensive weapons” that could constitute munitions transfers to Ukraine in the event of further military cooperation between the DPRK and Russia. A major component of KAMD was added in 2016 following the DPRK’s fourth nuclear test, when the Park Geun-hye administration announced its joint intention with the US government to deploy Lockheed Martin’s Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in South Korea. THAAD, while a domestically and geopolitically controversial addition (South Korea being the first such deployment of THAAD in East Asia), is seen by some analysts and deterrence hawks as an essential addition to South Korea’s deterrence capabilities, as it constitutes the only weapons system in the ROK capable of intercepting medium-range, high altitude missiles during their terminal (final) stage of flight.<sup>197</sup> As a naval extension of KAMD, the ROK navy’s Aegis destroyers, including the newly commissioned KDX-III Batch-II Jeongjo the Great class destroyers, are outfitted with SM-2 ballistic missile interceptors, with the current administration pushing for procurement of SM-3 and SM-6 upgrades.<sup>198</sup> Attempts to develop native components of KAMD have borne fruit as well. Integration of South Korea’s Low Altitude Missile Defense (LAMD), which will now be completed by 2029, ensures for the ROK the equivalent of an “Iron Dome” deterrence architecture, with capabilities to intercept the DPRK’s long-range artillery.<sup>199</sup> For higher-altitude interception of longer-range weapons, South Korea is adding onto its native

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<sup>197</sup>양옥. 2024. “사드(THAAD)의 배치 현황과 한반도 미사일 방어에의 함의.” 아산정책연구원, April 3, 2024. <https://www.asaninst.org/contents/사드 THAAD 의-배치-현황과-한반도-미사일-방어에의-함의/#13>.

<sup>198</sup> Cha, Eunhyuk. 2024. “South Korea Approves Procurement of SM-3 for Ballistic Missile Defense.” Naval News, April 26, 2024. <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2024/04/south-korea-approves-procurement-of-sm-3-for-ballistic-missile-defense/>.

<sup>199</sup> 정영교, 정혜정, 이유정. 2024. “‘한국형 아이언돔’ 전력화 앞당긴다...2029년부터 北 장사정포 대응.” 중앙일보, October 31, 2024. <https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/25287698>.

production of medium-range surface-to-air missiles with a domestically produced long-range surface-to-air missile (L-SAM), with full-scale deployment expected by 2028.<sup>200</sup> The ROK is currently seeking to heighten the interception altitude and range of its domestic L-SAM and M-SAM arsenals, with the Block II update of L-SAM, scheduled to be completed by 2034, being touted by official government media as the South Korean equivalent to THAAD.<sup>201</sup>

For mainstream South Korean liberals, whose strategic preference for autonomy posits indigenization of weapons procurement as a welcome alternative to overreliance on the US alliance and its assets, such developments, though conservative in its focus on heightened deterrence capabilities vis-à-vis North Korea, were generally welcomed as positive. DPK leader Lee Jae-myung, who has advocated for South Korea's "autonomous national security" capability and "military sovereignty" vis-à-vis the United States, welcomed L-SAM development as a win for an autonomous national defense policy for Korea and a potential hedge against costly proposals for additional deployments of US THAAD assets in South Korea.<sup>202</sup> It should be noted, however, that given the current limitations of the ROK's native M-SAMs and L-SAMs when compared with their US counterparts (e.g., shorter ranges and lower altitudes, reliance on more far-reaching yet less precise S-band radar guidance systems, and lack of performance data when compared with more well-established Patriot and THAAD systems), the current recommendation of some military experts in both South Korea and the US is to treat ROK assets as complements to US assets within a combined deterrence arsenal and not as replacements for US assets within an entirely autonomous KAMD system.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> 배재성. 2024. "北 미사일 더 빨리 요격...'한국형 사드' I-Sam 개발 완료." 중앙일보, May 25, 2024. <https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/25251763>.

<sup>201</sup> KTV 국민방송. 2024. "L-SAM·M-SAM 요격고도 높인다...미사일 방어 강화." May 30, 2024. [https://m.ktv.go.kr/news/latest/view?content\\_id=702507](https://m.ktv.go.kr/news/latest/view?content_id=702507).

<sup>202</sup> 조명아. 2022. "이재명, 'L-SAM' 시험 발사 성공에.."자주 국방이 훨씬 이로워"." MBC NEWS, February 24, 2022.

[https://imnews.imbc.com/news/2022/politics/article/6344603\\_35666.html](https://imnews.imbc.com/news/2022/politics/article/6344603_35666.html).

<sup>203</sup> Kim, Jeongmin. 2023. "Why South Korea's New Indigenous Missile Interceptor Can't Replace THAAD." KOREA PRO, October 6, 2023. <https://koreapro.org/2023/10/why-south-koreas-new-indigenous-missile-interceptor-cant-replace-thaad/>.

In contrast to the deployment of its Korean L-SAM equivalents and its largely positive reception, US THAAD deployments constituted somewhat of a position issue within South Korea's political valence of national security between liberals pursuing 'autonomy' or 'balanced diplomacy' and conservatives pursuing greater alliance alignment. After Park Geun-hye's request for the system were actualized by initial THAAD deployments in 2017, further deployments were halted by the Moon Jae-in administration as part of what the Chinese government (and Moon's conservative critics) called the "three noes policy"; as detailed by MOFA minister Kang Kyung-wha in October 2017, South Korea would say "no" to further deployments of THAAD units, participation in a US-led missile defense system, and a trilateral military alliance with the US and Japan.<sup>204</sup> The Chinese government, which interpreted THAAD deployment as being part and parcel of South Korea's participation in a US-led containment strategy, interpreted the "three noes" as a binding statement of government policy, and even claimed during the Yoon presidency that the Moon-era "promise" to China constituted a "three noes, one restriction policy," which allegedly included restrictions on even the use of existing THAAD batteries.<sup>205</sup> The Moon administration had denied allegations by Korean conservatives and foreign observers from the US and China that the "three noes" constituted an ROK agreement with the PRC government (while denying the validity of the "one restriction" claim full stop) as well as further allegations that his administration was stonewalling the release of the environmental impact assessment in order to prolong the THAAD base's status as a "temporary" installation. However, suspicions of such a tacit hedging policy by the ROK regarding THAAD have grown with the inauguration of a conservative government in 2022 and the contemporaneous rise of anti-Chinese sentiment in Korea, with the current ruling party uncovering an internal Moon-era Ministry of Defense document clearly stating the "three noes" as an "existing promise between Korea and China" as well as an

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<sup>204</sup> 연합뉴스. 2017. "한중 사드 '3 불 원칙' 내용은...양날의 칼?" 연합뉴스, October 31, 2017. <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/MYH20171031020300038>.

<sup>205</sup> 최현준. 2022. "중국 '한국, 사드 운용 제한 선서했다'...'3 불' 이어 '1 한'까지 주장." 한겨레, August 10, 2022. [https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/international/international\\_general/1054302.html](https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/international/international_general/1054302.html).

“agreement”<sup>206</sup> (similar documents have been uncovered that refer to the existence of the “one restriction” policy as well).<sup>207</sup> Liberals counter by noting that the “three noes” were not pledges endemic to the Moon administration, but was the continuation of standard military praxis dating from the Park Geun-hye administration, with the Park administration having distanced itself from connotations between THAAD and a “US missile defense system” in Korea.<sup>208</sup>

Whatever the political reality of the previous administrations’ THAAD policies, the post-2022 Yoon administration made the goal of “THAAD normalization” a key political slogan and semiotic element of his national security policy. In 2023, the Yoon executive branch cleared the environmental impact report for the final approval and finishing of the Seongju THAAD base,<sup>209</sup> and opposition to the project by local and progressive citizens groups have continued to progressively decline since then.<sup>210</sup> Per its extended deterrence obligations, the US has reciprocated by updating its dated THAAD and Patriot systems and implementing a three-stage Joint Emergent Operational Need (JEON) update to integrate THAAD with medium range PAC-3 missiles (i.e., use of THAAD radar for Patriot missiles and integration of Patriot missiles into THAAD launchers). As part of the upgrades of THAAD in particular, a remotely controlled THAAD launcher was implemented and tested for the first time in 2023 by US Forces Korea.<sup>211</sup> This upgrade makes it possible to

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<sup>206</sup> 조희원. 2023. “사드 3 불 합의 문건 나왔다’..국방부 문건 공개에 공방.” MBC NEWS, July 20, 2023.

[https://imnews.imbc.com/replay/2023/nwdesk/article/6505922\\_36199.html](https://imnews.imbc.com/replay/2023/nwdesk/article/6505922_36199.html).

<sup>207</sup> 김승재. 2023. “[단독] 3 不 없다더니...국방부 문서엔 ‘韓·中 間 約 속, 2017 년 10 월.’” 조선일보, July 20, 2023.

<https://www.chosun.com/politics/assembly/2023/07/20/IFR6U7SA5VDSXE2KDJKH7UEP4/>.

<sup>208</sup> Kim, Jong-dae. 2022. “Outmoded as Security System, THAAD Retains Rhetorical Utility in Korea.” Hankyoreh, September 25, 2022.

[https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_national/1059976.html](https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/1059976.html).

<sup>209</sup> 권혁철. 2023. “사드 기지 환경평가 마무리...주민들 ‘전자파 측정 인정 못해.’”

한겨레, June 21, 2023. [https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/politics\\_general/1096955.html](https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/politics_general/1096955.html).

<sup>210</sup> 김규남. 2024. “성주 사드문제 끝 보이냐?... 초전면 소성리 마을회관 앞 시위대 천막 철거.” 아주경제, June 19, 2024.

<https://www.ajunews.com/view/20240618235939770>.

<sup>211</sup> United States Forces Korea. 2023. “USFK THAAD Training Completed.” March 24, 2023. <https://www.usfk.mil/Media/Press-Products/Press-Releases/Article/3339705/>.

expand the effective deployment and range of interception of a single THAAD battery (i.e., launchers + complement unit) by untethering truck-mounted THAAD launchers from the need to be physically attached to a complement unit consisting of a Tactical Fire Control Center and a radar unit (thus freeing deployment of launcher-only units outside of Seongju). This could be seen as a win for deterrence hawks and conservatives who have advocated for the need to include the Seoul Metropolitan Area and other metropolitan areas within the umbrella of THAAD to provide overlapping deterrence coverage (over the opposition of liberals who claim the military redundancy of the weapons while emphasizing diplomatic costs with China and North Korea as a result of such deployments).<sup>212</sup>

In addition to the highly politicized campaign to “normalize” US THAAD deployment in the ROK, Yoon also contributed to South Korea’s emerging deterrence rhetoric by formalizing and highlighting the three-axis concept within his administration’s key pieces of security/foreign policy literature. For example, the three-axis system of deterrence appears as a key concept within his “Audacious Plan” initiative vis-à-vis North Korea, his 2022 Defense White Paper, and his June 2023 National Security Strategy (NSS). In particular, in the last NSS document, a statement of the fundamental components of the Yoon administration’s strategic thinking, the Three-Axis System was listed as the first item in the section dedicated to inter-Korean relations titled “Building Peace on the Korean Peninsula and Normalizing Inter-Korean Relations.”<sup>213</sup> The main implication is clear; deterrence is seen as a prerequisite of Yoon’s policy for managing inter-Korean relations, instead of the dialogue-first, confidence-building measures-first approach of the Moon administration (the latter having borne some fruit in the form of the 9.19 Comprehensive Military Agreement, an annex to the Pyongyang Joint Declaration of 2018 which operationalized the previous Panmunjom Declaration in the military

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<sup>212</sup> 양-욱, 2024.

<sup>213</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea. 2023b. “The Yoon Suk Yeol Administration’s National Security Strategy: Global Pivotal State for Freedom, Peace, and Prosperity.” June 8, 2023. <https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/viewer/skin/doc.html?fn=20230621040037933.pdf&rs=%2Fviewer%2Fresult%2F202501>.

domain). In light of the fact that preemptive deterrence (i.e., Kill Chain) and retaliatory deterrence (i.e., second-strike capabilities and KMPR) were not mentioned in South Korea's defense white papers as recently as 2012,<sup>214</sup> it is a fair assessment to say that the Overton window regarding deterrence policy has shifted towards a decidedly more conservative direction especially under the post-2022 Yoon administration (even while diplomatic engagement with North Korea remains a *prima facie* consensus across parties). As seen above, these policies comport with the interpretation of the Ukraine War crisis by mainstream conservatives as constituting proof of the superiority of military deterrence and alliance alignment over diplomatic and economic deterrence measures.

While the basal paradigm of conservative deterrence and liberal balanced diplomacy and accommodation remains relevant to conversations regarding South Korea's current strategic orientation, it also does not behoove an observer to overstate the differences between liberals and conservatives regarding the ROK's deterrence posture vis-à-vis North Korea. For example, it was the Moon Jae-in administration that negotiated the historic termination of the 1979 bilateral "Ballistic Missile Range Guidelines" with the Biden administration in May 2021, capping decades of negotiations by progressive and conservative administrations towards complete "missile sovereignty" that led to four revisions of the classified guidelines and its eventual abolition.<sup>215</sup> The termination has now paved the way for South Korea's utilization of a more diverse deterrence arsenal, including land-attack cruise missiles (LACMs) and short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) which could play a crucial role in the ROK's KMPR capabilities. In September 2021 and April 2022, towards the tail end of the Moon administration (which coincided with a perceptible policy shift by the Moon administration towards Biden's emphasis on value-based alignment and deterrence institutionalization) the ROK Navy completed the first and

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<sup>214</sup> Cho, Sungmin. 2024. "South Korea's Offensive Military Strategy and Its Dilemma." CSIS, February 29, 2024. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/south-koreas-offensive-military-strategy-and-its-dilemma>.

<sup>215</sup> Wright, Timothy. 2021. "US and South Korea Scrap Ballistic-Missile Range Limits." The International Institute for Strategic Studies, June 2, 2021. <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis//2021/06/us-south-korea-ballistic-missile-range-limit>.

second successful test-firing of South Korea's native submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), the Hyunmoo-IV-4 (a variant of the Hyunmoo class of land-based SRBMs).<sup>216</sup> Thus, development of both SRBMs and SLBMs have been given new initiative via the missile guidelines abolition. The revision and eventual abolition of the missile guidelines also paved the way for South Korea's space program,<sup>217</sup> which could concomitantly enhance the advanced telemetry capabilities crucial to the advancement of any effective native deterrence arsenal.

For his part, Lee Jae-myung, the current face of the Democratic Party of Korea (DPK), addressed concerns during the Trump administration of US abandonment of South Korea per a foreign policy doctrine of isolationism, while simultaneously addressing long-standing contradictory concerns that an expansion of the US role within the Indo-Pacific, per the doctrine of post-Cold War offensive realism, would transform the US Forces Korea (USFK) into an "rapid deployment force" for the whole of Northeast Asia or the Indo-Pacific (both options having the effect of attenuating the USFK's traditional role as a stationary force tasked with constituting a "tripwire" guarantor of Korean security).<sup>218</sup> Lee downplayed the importance of the USFK on both counts, noting that it is the US nuclear umbrella and not the conventional forces of the USFK that serves as deterrence for North Korea's nuclear arsenal and mentioning the idea of rotational deployment of US nuclear weapons.<sup>219</sup> This latter point references the ongoing debate regarding potential redeployment, rotational deployment, or nuclear sharing *à la* NATO of the US's tactical nuclear arsenal (i.e., nuclear warheads for battlefield use with a lower yield and without the radioactive fallout of a strategic nuclear weapon) after thirty years of absence from

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<sup>216</sup> Lee, Juho. 2022. "South Korea Conducts Second SLBM Test from KSS-III Submarine." Naval News, April 24, 2022. <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2022/04/south-korea-conducts-second-slbm-test-from-kss-iii-submarine/>.

<sup>217</sup> 양혜원, 유근환. 2022. "한미 미사일 지침 해제 과정 분석과 함의". 사회융합연구 6 (2). Taegu Science University Defense Security Institute: 71–81. doi:10.37181/JSCS.2022.6.2.071.

<sup>218</sup> For more on the post-Cold War reconceptualization of the USFK and the US Forces Japan (USFJ) see 임기훈. 2021. "탈냉전기 주한미군과 주일미군의 역할 변화" 한국과 국제정치 37, no.4: 73-106.doi: 10.17331/kwp.2021.37.4.003

<sup>219</sup> 김태규. 2017. "이재명 '미군 방위비 분담금 낮춰야...자주국방도 대비.'" 한겨레, January 3, 2017. <https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/polibar/777120.html>.

the Korean Peninsula,<sup>220</sup> a debate which has only burgeoned along with the advocacy for a native nuclear arsenal (and thus withdrawal from the NPT) which increased with North Korean provocations and post-Ukraine military cooperation with Russia.<sup>221</sup> While Lee has since clarified his position against redeployment or sharing of US tactical nuclear weapons,<sup>222</sup> his policy stance does not seem inimical to the concept of otherwise strengthening a deterrence posture against North Korea. For example, Lee and senior members of the DPK, including DPK national security expert Kim Byeong-ju, have put forward the Moon administration's pet project of ROK development of nuclear-powered submarines as a policy proposal during the last presidential election.<sup>223</sup> In sum, South Korea's center-left has proven not to be outright opposed to advancing military deterrence and internal balancing despite being more hesitant in certain areas. The more accurate dichotomous paradigm between Korea's right and left remains the dyad between the liberal focus on autonomy and military sovereignty (weaning away from reliance on the US-ROK alliance) and the conservative emphasis on alliance alignment and integration.

For example, the Moon/Lee push to develop nuclear-powered submarines constituted a critique of the US's persistent restriction of South Korea's native deterrence capabilities via the 1972 "Agreement for Cooperation Between the Government of the Republic of Korea and the Government of the United States of America Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy," which, like the missile guidelines, have undergone salami slicing revisions since its original signing (most

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<sup>220</sup> 박휘락. 2021. "나토 "핵공유(nuclear sharing)" 체제의 현황과 동북아시아 도입에 관한 시론적 분석" 국가전략 27, no.1: 103-128.doi: 10.35390/sejong.27.1.202102.004

<sup>221</sup> 유지혜, 박현주, 정영교. 2024. "북·러 밀월에 '한국 핵무장' 분출... '공포의 착시효과'가 부채질." 중앙일보, June 27, 2024.

<https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/25259358>.

<sup>222</sup> 김지현. 2021. "이재명 '野 주자들 전술핵 재배치, 위험천만 포폴리즘.'" 뉴시스, August 28, 2021.

[https://www.newsis.com/view/?id=NISX20210828\\_0001563684&pc\\_view=1](https://www.newsis.com/view/?id=NISX20210828_0001563684&pc_view=1).

<sup>223</sup> Nam, Hyun-woo, Seung-woo Kang, and Da-min Jung. 2021. "[Q&A] Lee Jae-Myung to Promote Fair Distribution to Bolster Growth." The Korea Times, December 31, 2021.

[https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2024/11/113\\_321429.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2024/11/113_321429.html).

recently in 2015).<sup>224</sup> Liberals have been quick to point out the double standard of US provision of nuclear-powered submarine technologies to Australia (as per its AUKUS Pact and Indo-Pacific strategy to contain China) and US restrictions on those same technologies in the case of South Korea. As shown above, liberals' limited support for a proactive deterrence posture is predicated on the hope of weaning away from overreliance on the US for security guarantees and of replacing US deterrence assets with native alternatives. The only blanket opposition to South Korea's emerging deterrence capabilities (whether domestic or American in origin) within South Korea's current political scene stems from the pacifist, pro-arms-reduction, anti-alignment left, which has consistently opposed native deterrence assets such as the DPK's proposed nuclear-powered submarines<sup>225</sup> as well as US-sponsored deterrence assets.<sup>226</sup>

Along with "THAAD normalization," another major strategic initiative by the Yoon administration is complete alignment with the Biden administration's strategy of integrated deterrence. As I have noted in a previous paper, the strategic concept of "integrated deterrence" exists within a larger ecosystem of deterrence rhetoric that has largely been muted following the end of the Cold War but has since seen a revival in recent years amongst the US and its allies per the return of great-power competition.<sup>227</sup> The Biden administration highlighted integrated deterrence as a strategic centerpiece concept within its 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS), in which integrated deterrence was described as the state of "working seamlessly across warfighting domains, theaters, the spectrum of conflict, all instruments of U.S.

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<sup>224</sup> "대한민국 정부와 미합중국 정부 간의 원자력의 평화적 이용에 관한 협력 협정." 법제처 국가법령정보센터, November 25, 2015.

<https://www.law.go.kr/trtyInfoP.do?mode=4&trtySeq=11419&chrClsCd=010202>.

<sup>225</sup> 강경훈. 2022. "[단독] 이재명의 핵잠수함 구상, 무모하고 위험하고 실익도 없다." 민중의소리, February 2, 2022. <https://vop.co.kr/A00001608307.html>.

<sup>226</sup> 참여연대 평화군축센터. 2022. "한미안보협의회의, 군사동맹 강화에만 매달려 한반도 평화를 위한 현실적인 해법은 없었다." November 7, 2022. <https://www.peoplepower21.org/peace/1918958>.

<sup>227</sup> Kim, Andrew Soohwan and Tae Gyun Park. 2023. "Expanding Horizons: Reciprocal Access Agreements, the Japan-Australia Special Strategic Partnership, and Japan's Novel Security Cooperation" *Journal of International and Area Studies* 30, no.2: 65-92. doi: 10.23071/jias.2023.30.2.65.

national power, and our network of Alliances and partnerships.”<sup>228</sup> In short, the strategy constituted an eclectic, multi-domain approach to countering threats in all domains, both conventional and novel (gray-zone conflicts, cybersecurity, and space security in the case of the latter) and involving all instruments (military, economic, and political means, *inter alia*) of US national power and all combined capabilities of the US and its network of aligned powers (e.g., combined deterrence capabilities and interoperability of allied forces). For the US and the Biden administration, such a strategy subsumes the dual virtues of pragmatism and ideological legitimacy. In term of pragmatism, it provides a blueprint for sustainable hegemony that accounts for the end of the US’s unipolar moment after the end of the Cold War; as the Biden administration’s NSS itself acknowledges, the “post-Cold War era is definitively over” and the outcomes of major power competition would “shape what comes next.”<sup>229</sup> The NSS outlines the rise of multipolar competition in explicit terms, singling out China as the most prominent of a group of revisionist powers and as the only global power that possesses both the intent and the power to “reshape the international order.” In the wake of waning US hegemony, US alliances and partnerships within an enmeshed, integrated “lattice-work” serve the roles of what US leadership, borrowing from military parlance, have termed as “force multipliers,”<sup>230</sup> which effectively ‘multiply’ the tools (means) open to the US in the pursuit of its national goals. In terms of ideological legitimacy, integrated deterrence is a natural concomitant of Biden’s personal contribution to US foreign policy thinking, having sought to distinguish himself from what seemed to be a Trump

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<sup>228</sup> U.S. Department of Defense. 2022. “National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Including the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review and the 2022 Missile Defense Review.” <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF>.

<sup>229</sup> White House. 2022. “National Security Strategy.” October 12, 2022. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>.

<sup>230</sup> Blinken, Antony, and Lloyd James Austin III. 2021. “America’s Partnerships Are ‘Force Multipliers’ in the World.” Washington Post, March 14, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/03/14/americas-partnerships-are-force-multipliers-world/>.

foreign policy untethered by predictability or principles by positing an ideologically rigid world order divided between liberal democracies and illiberal autocrats.<sup>231</sup>

South Korea's alignment with the Biden administration's alliance-based security initiative of integrated deterrence has proven to be a flashpoint within South Korea's contested grand strategy. Yoon's pronouncements on foreign policy, from his early contribution to *Foreign Affairs* prior to his election (an early statement of intent regarding foreign policy which mirrored Biden's 2020 pre-election article in *Foreign Affairs*), revolved around the idea of pursuing an expansion of the horizons of South Korea's foreign policy predicated thoroughly on alliance alignment and values-based diplomacy (and away from a perceived singularity of focus on the Korean Peninsula), a vision expressed explicitly in Yoon's exhortation that the ROK should become a "global pivotal state" that "advances freedom, peace, and prosperity through liberal democratic values and substantial cooperation."<sup>232</sup> Regarding the US-ROK alliance, which has since been revamped under the slogan of a "global comprehensive strategic alliance," Yoon pronounced that a "deeper alliance with Washington should be the central axis of Seoul's foreign policy."<sup>233</sup> Such a policy stance comports with Snyder's aforementioned identification of "alliance-enabled internationalism" as a key tenet of the strategic orientation of conservative South Korean administrations. Yoon's stance also comports neatly with the Biden administration's aforementioned integrated deterrence initiatives.

In aligning with the US's preferred strategic track of values-based alignment and integrated deterrence, Yoon administration also highlighted partnership with other aligned powers, with special emphasis given to advancing bilateral cooperation with Japan. This is a salient point as, regarding the ROK's domestic strategic debate between greater autonomy vs. greater alignment, one of the most contentious position issues within the Yoon administration's recent foreign policy initiatives has

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<sup>231</sup> Biden, Joseph R. 2020. "Why America Must Lead Again." *Foreign Affairs*, January 23, 2020. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again>.

<sup>232</sup> Yoon, Suk-yeol. 2022. "South Korea Needs to Step Up." *Foreign Affairs*, February 8, 2022. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/south-korea/south-korea-needs-step-yoon-suk-yeol>.

<sup>233</sup> Yoon, Suk-yeol, 2022.

proven to be its alignment with US-led efforts to institutionalize trilateral security cooperation amongst the US, Japan, and South Korea. As one study of trilateral security cooperation points out, of three theoretical levels of commitment to such a trilateral (labelled as trilateral “maximum,” “medium,” and “minimum,” respectively), the ROK’s longstanding attitude towards such cooperation involving Japan was marked with the overall hesitation and shallow commitment endemic to a preference for a “trilateral minimum” framework.<sup>234</sup> This is in contrast to a preference for “trilateral maximum” (i.e., comprehensive alignment and integration) by the US Biden administration, which chose South Korea and Japan as the sites of the administration’s first cabinet-level overseas trip and which obtained Japan’s first explicit acknowledgement that “trilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea” is “critical” for Indo-Pacific security in its 2021 “2+2” Security Consultative Committee (SCC) joint statement with Japan.<sup>235</sup>

Previous ROK administrations have floated the concept of trilateral security cooperation, with the Kim Dae-jung administration jointly announcing with Japan in the 1998 “Kim Dae-jung-Obuchi Joint Declaration” bilateral security cooperation in tandem with the two countries’ alliance arrangements with the US and multilateral dialogue for the “peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region” (a geographical precursor to the “Indo-Pacific” ubiquitous in trilateral policy documents today).<sup>236</sup> The Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) was also launched the following year and is cited as the closest predecessor to the 2024 US-Japan-South Korea Trilateral Secretariat formed in the aftermath of the 2023 Camp David Summit.<sup>237</sup> However, as Sakata Yasuyo points out, early trilateral frameworks such

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<sup>234</sup> Yasuyo, Sakata. 2021. “The US-Japan-ROK Trilateral in the Indo-Pacific Era: Strategic Alignment or Still in Flux?” The Asan Forum, July 18, 2021. <https://theasanforum.org/the-us-japan-rok-trilateral-in-the-indo-pacific-era-strategic-alignment-or-still-in-flux/#20>.

<sup>235</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2021. “Joint Statement of the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee (2+2)” March 16, 2021. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100161035.pdf>.

<sup>236</sup> “21 세기 새로운 한·일 파트너십 공동선언 (전문).” 대한민국 정책브리핑, October 12, 1998. <https://www.korea.kr/news/policyNewsView.do?newsId=148746505>.

<sup>237</sup> Cha, Victor. 2024. “The Legacy of Camp David: The United States, South Korea, and Japan to Establish a Trilateral Secretariat.” CSIS, September 25, 2024.

as the TCOG and later conservative additions such as GSOMIA had focused solely on the Korean peninsula and the North Korea issue, serving as tools of Korea's pursuit of inter-Korean reconciliation.<sup>238</sup>

In contrast, the Yoon administration has been willing to expand the institutional and conceptual scope of trilateral security cooperation, aligning with potentially sensitive geopolitical and security issues that are endemic to the regional order of the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) concept first proposed by Japan and now ubiquitously adopted by the US and its allies. Early in his administration, Yoon Suk-yeol released his own version of an "Indo-Pacific" strategy titled a "Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region." Despite hesitation in adopting the exact phraseology of FOIP, South Korea's "free, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific" adopts some of the same hallmarks of the "free and open Indo-Pacific," mentioning partnership with "like-minded countries that share the values of freedom, rule of law, and human rights as well as international norms" in building a "regional order based on norms and rules."<sup>239</sup> Yoon's regional strategy contrasts with the previous Moon administration's "New Southern Policy" (NSP) which has been assessed as South Korea's initiative to exercise autonomous middle-power influence by diversifying its economic and diplomatic portfolio beyond a narrow focus on its larger neighbors (Japan and China) and its major power ally (the US) and towards new partners such as ASEAN and India.<sup>240</sup> Whereas the NSP focused on economic and development cooperation while avoiding the geopolitical and security content of the US/Japan FOIP, Yoon's Indo-Pacific strategy married the two, fusing a continuing focus on official development assistance (ODA) and economic cooperation with ASEAN (subsumed under the modifier of a "prosperous" Indo-Pacific) with geopolitical statements of intent calling for security cooperation (in

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<https://www.csis.org/analysis/legacy-camp-david-united-states-south-korea-and-japan-establish-trilateral-secretariat>.

<sup>238</sup> Yasuyo, Sakata. 2021.

<sup>239</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea. 2022. "Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region." December 28, 2022.

[https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5676/view.do?seq=322133](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5676/view.do?seq=322133).

<sup>240</sup> Choe Wongi. 2021. "New Southern Policy": Korea's Newfound Ambition in Search of Strategic Autonomy, *Asie.Visions*, No. 118, Ifri, January 2021.

maritime and novel domains), “freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea,” and “peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.” Within its “Action Plan” for the realization of this regional order, the Yoon administration highlighted the ROK-US-Japan triad as a chief example of “minilateral cooperation” that could be leveraged in dealing with regional issues (NATO and the “Indo-Pacific Four” or “IP4,” and another potential ROK-US-Australia triad are also explicitly mentioned).<sup>241</sup> This de facto marriage between South Korea’s regional initiatives and the US/Japan FOIP was further buttressed by the inauguration of the trilateral Indo-Pacific Dialogue in January 2024, during which the trio affirmed a common position on opposing “any unilateral attempts to change the status quo or coercion anywhere in the waters of the Indo-Pacific” (an effective endorsement of the main geopolitical initiatives of FOIP).<sup>242</sup>

In addition to expanding the purview of trilateral security cooperation with Japan and the US beyond a parochial focus on the Korean peninsula, a major change in this conceptual triad during the Yoon administration is its institutionalization. Per the pledges made in the Camp David Summit and the Yoon administration’s reiteration of these pledges within the action plan of his Indo-Pacific strategy, the three countries agreed to formalize a trio of annual ministerial-level summits: the Trilateral Ministerial Meeting (TMM) amongst the ministers of defense, the Trilateral Chiefs of Defense meeting (Tri-CHOD), and the Defense Trilateral Talks. The first formal TMM held independently of international meetings and within one of the three member countries was held in Japan on July 27, 2024.<sup>243</sup> During this meeting, the three ministers signed a “Memorandum of Cooperation on the Trilateral Security Cooperation Framework” (TSCF), the first document of its kind codifying trilateral

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<sup>241</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea. 2023a. “The Action Plan for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific (Republic of Korea).” “The World and Japan” Database, December 2023. <https://worldjpn.net/documents/texts/FOIP/20231200.O1E.html>

<sup>242</sup> U.S. Department of State. 2024b. “Joint Statement on the Trilateral United States-Japan-Republic of Korea Indo-Pacific Dialogue.” January 6, 2024. <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-the-trilateral-united-states-japan-republic-of-korea-indo-pacific-dialogue/>.

<sup>243</sup> 박혜리. 2024. “한미일 국방장관, ‘프레임워크’ 서명…안보협력 제도화.” Korea.net, July 29, 2024. <https://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/policies/view?articleId=255827&koreanId=255823>.

security cooperation (albeit in a non-legally binding memorandum format), which institutionalized cooperation in “senior-level policy consultations, information sharing, trilateral exercises, and defense exchange cooperation.”<sup>244</sup> The aforementioned ROK Indo-Pacific action plan included commitments to norm enforcement in both maritime and novel domains, the latter including emerging technologies, “space security,” and multilateral trade. Regarding the emergent domain of cybersecurity, a trilateral working group on the DPRK’s cyber activities was inaugurated in December 2023 in Japan<sup>245</sup> and a second and third meeting in 2024 was hosted in the US and South Korea, respectively (this working group still featuring a topical focus on North Korea compared to the general cybersecurity dialogue inaugurated in 2024 by the Japan-Philippines-US or JAPHUS triad).<sup>246</sup> Regarding “space security,” a trilateral dialogue on space security was inaugurated in December 2023.<sup>247</sup>

In the economic domain, the US recruited both South Korea and Japan in its derisking and friendshoring initiatives, including both as key partners within its post-2022 “Minerals Security Partnership” (MSP) and “Chip 4 Alliance,” both initiatives aiming to extricate China from crucial rare earth and semiconductor supply chains. In the summer of 2024, the ROK was selected to chair both the MSP<sup>248</sup> and the Crisis Response Network of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework’s (IPEF) Supply Chain

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<sup>244</sup> U.S. Department of Defense. 2024. “Japan-United States-Republic of Korea Trilateral Ministerial Joint Press Statement.” July 27, 2024. <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3852146/japan-united-states-republic-of-korea-trilateral-ministerial-joint-press-statem/>.

<sup>245</sup> U.S. Department of State. 2023b. “Inaugural United States-Japan-Republic of Korea Trilateral Diplomatic Working Group Meeting on Democratic People’s Republic of Korea Cyber Activities.” December 7, 2023. <https://www.state.gov/inaugural-united-states-japan-republic-of-korea-trilateral-diplomatic-working-group-meeting-on-democratic-peoples-republic-of-korea-cyber-activities/>.

<sup>246</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2024g. “The 1st Japan-U.S.-Philippines Cyber-Digital Dialogue.” October 21, 2024. [https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite\\_000001\\_00661.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite_000001_00661.html).

<sup>247</sup> U.S. Department of State. 2023c. “Joint Statement on the Japan-ROK-U.S. Trilateral Dialogue on Space Security.” November 8, 2023. <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-the-japan-rok-u-s-trilateral-dialogue-on-space-security/>.

<sup>248</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea. 2024. “Korea Assumes Chairmanship of Minerals Security Partnership (MSP).” June 27, 2024. [https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m\\_5676/view.do?seq=322611](https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5676/view.do?seq=322611).

Council (the IPEF focusing on trade, supply chain reliability, and standards enforcement vis-à-vis the unnamed threats constituted by China and Russia).<sup>249</sup> South Korea also joined a similar initiative, the Resilient and Inclusive Supply-Chain Enhancement (RISE) initiative, led by Japan and the World Bank.<sup>250</sup> Efforts related to economic security as a general topic were institutionalized in a trilateral format for the first time in February 2023, with the inauguration of the Trilateral Economic Security Dialogue.<sup>251</sup> After the loss of the Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) lower house majority in Japan and the re-election of Trump in the United States, the trilateral announced a further step towards institutionalization during the November 2024 APEC Summit with the establishment of the US-ROK-Japan Trilateral Secretariat, which opened in Seoul on November 20, 2024.<sup>252</sup> Judging by the staying power of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat amongst Korea, Japan, and China over consecutive administrations, this move seems to be a way of ensuring the continuation of trilateral security and deterrence cooperation amongst "like-minded" partners past the electoral mandates of the main proponents of such cooperation and of FOIP.

Crucially, such trilateral cooperation, informed by a New Cold War paradigm deepened by the Ukraine War, has also manifested in force projection in the security hotspot of Northeast Asia. Per the Camp David Summit pledge to hold "annual, named, multidomain" trilateral military exercises explicitly to counter North Korea and to institute "peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific," Freedom Edge exercises

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<sup>249</sup> Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy. 2024. "Korea Elected as Inaugural Chair of IPEF Crisis Response Network." July 30, 2024.

<https://english.motie.go.kr/eng/article/EATCLdfa319ada/1972/view>.

<sup>250</sup> World Bank Group. 2023. "World Bank and Japan to Boost Mineral Investments and Jobs in Clean Energy." October 11, 2023. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/10/11/world-bank-and-japan-to-boost-mineral-investments-and-jobs>.

<sup>251</sup> The White House. 2023a. "Readout of the Trilateral United States – Japan – Republic of Korea Economic Security Dialogue." February 28, 2023.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/02/28/readout-of-the-trilateral-united-states-japan-republic-of-korea-economic-security-dialogue/>.

<sup>252</sup> 외교부. 2024b. "한미일 사무국 출범 회의(11.20.) 개최." November 20, 2024.

[https://www.mofa.go.kr/www/brd/m\\_4080/view.do?seq=375651&page=1&pitem=10](https://www.mofa.go.kr/www/brd/m_4080/view.do?seq=375651&page=1&pitem=10).

were held twice in 2024 near Jeju Island.<sup>253</sup> This is especially pertinent to US-led extended and integrated deterrence initiatives as the exercises involved US aircraft carriers (a key strategic asset), an ROK Navy (ROKN) Aegis destroyer (key to the aforementioned KAMD strategy), a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) Aegis destroyer, and a Hyūga-class helicopter destroyer. JMSDF's helicopter destroyers, specifically of the Izumo-class, are undergoing modifications that will transform them into light aircraft carriers, and the Izumo-class in particular has been deployed in other joint exercises in the Indo-Pacific (especially in tandem with the US Navy's F-35B fighters).<sup>254</sup> As the US Indo-Pacific Command has announced the trilateral intent to expand Freedom Edge going forward, it remains an open possibility that such de facto strategic assets of the JMSDF could feature in future iterations of Freedom Edge.

As the East Sea has served as the operational arena for Russia's Pacific Fleet as well as the nexus of its post-Ukraine cooperation with North Korea (and as the trilateral now regularly include condemnations of Russia-North Korean military cooperation in their statements regarding the latter), Russia have responded aggressively against these trilateral exercises with their own force projection, sending ships north through the Tsushima Strait into the East Sea.<sup>255</sup> The first Freedom Edge exercise coincided with simultaneous 10-day naval exercises (including many of the same anti-missile, antisubmarine training conducted in Freedom Edge) in waters including the East Sea (part and parcel of Russia's

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<sup>253</sup> U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. 2024b. “-Trilateral Statement- First Execution of Multi-Domain Japan - ROK - U.S. Exercise FREEDOM EDGE.” June 27, 2024. <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/3819042/trilateral-statement-first-execution-of-multi-domain-japan-rok-us-exercise-free/>; U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. 2024a. “Japan-ROK-U.S Conduct Second Exercise Freedom Edge.” November 12, 2024. <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/3962934/japan-rok-us-conduct-second-exercise-freedom-edge/>.

<sup>254</sup> Takahashi, Kosuke. 2024c. “US Navy F-35B Successfully Lands Aboard JS Kaga for the First Time.” Naval News, October 22, 2024. <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2024/10/a-us-navy-f-35b-successfully-lands-aboard-js-kaga-ddh-184-for-the-first-time/>.

<sup>255</sup> 갈태웅. 2024. “‘프리덤 에지 대응’ 러 함정 3 척, 동해로 전격 북상.” OBS 경인 TV, July 23, 2024. <https://m.news.nate.com/view/20240723n38230?mid=m01>.

increased force projection vis-à-vis South Korea and Japan after the Ukraine War).<sup>256</sup> In addition, prior to the exercises, Russia made it clear through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs that it believed that Freedom Edge proves the formation of a trilateral “military alliance” aimed at strategic deterrence of not just North Korea but also Russia and China.<sup>257</sup>

Although Korea’s “progressive nationalist” left has been sending mixed or positive signals regarding enhancement of native deterrence capabilities as shown above, it has been staunchly opposed to US-ROK-Japan trilateral alignment and security cooperation. Regarding trilateral military exercises, which took the form of intermittent missile warning/search and tracking exercises and anti-submarine drills since the aftermath of North Korea’s fourth nuclear test in 2016, the liberal Moon administration limited such exercises after 2017 (except for a secret June 2018 trilateral missile search and tracking exercise in Hawaii), decided to end the Park-era GSOMIA intelligence-sharing agreement (a termination later delayed), and terminated the ROK-Japan bilateral, biannual search and rescue exercises (SAREX) which have been conducted since 1999.<sup>258</sup> In contrast, the Yoon administration formalized trilateral missile search and tracking drills a month into his presidency, initiated anti-submarine trilateral exercises in the East Sea in September 2022, agreed preventative measures for preventing radar lock-on incidents between Korea and Japan (which had caused a diplomatic spat in 2018), “normalized” GSOMIA cooperation, and operationalized a three-way, real-time DPRK missile data-sharing system by December 2023. Trilateral exercises were especially controversial, with DPK leader Lee Jae-myung arguing that such exercises involving Japan’s SDF belied a “extreme pro-Japanese national defense” policy and a de-facto acknowledgement by the ROK of the SDF as the legitimate armed forces of Japan

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<sup>256</sup> AFP. 2024. “Russia to Hold Naval Drills in Pacific Ocean, Sea of Japan.” The Moscow Times, June 18, 2024. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/06/18/russia-to-hold-naval-drills-in-pacific-ocean-sea-of-japan-a85445>.

<sup>257</sup> 최인영. 2024. “러, 9·19 군사합의 효력정지에 ‘한반도 안보악화 우려’(종합).” 연합뉴스, June 7, 2024. <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20240607113552080>.

<sup>258</sup> 권혁철. 2024. “한·미·일 훈련 차이?...문 정부 때 △△은 하고 ▽▽는 안했다.” 한겨레, October 11, 2024. <https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/defense/1062252.html>.

(which Korean liberals vehemently oppose).<sup>259</sup> Along with invocations of Japan's revisionist attitudes regarding historical issues and the symbolic significance of inviting the SDF to waters close to the disputed Dokdo Islands, Lee and the DPK channeled concerns regarding Cold War-style bloc politics and entrapment, with Lee stating that a trilateral military alliance would mean making the Korean peninsula the frontline of a rising confrontation between a DPRK-PRC-Russia bloc and a ROK-US-Japan trilateral.<sup>260</sup>

In sum, within the above debates regarding deterrence capabilities and alignment with US-led alliance networks, a through line could be traced within the arguments of Korea's "progressive nationalists": a clear preference for greater military and diplomatic autonomy over alignment and possible entrapment in costly bloc politics. The post-Ukraine foreign policy debate in South Korea over bloc formation and the rise of a new Cold War paradigm has been further catalyzed by what can be characterized as "costly signals" sent by the Yoon administration to Russia, the DPRK, and China. The concept of "costly signals," as explained by David C. Kang in his 2017 book on US grand strategy and East Asian security,<sup>261</sup> constitutes a mainstay concept of bargaining theory and war studies as explicated by such scholars as J.D. Fearon.<sup>262</sup> Citing Fearon's work, Kang defines "costly signals" as "signals of intention" or "threats that are rendered credible given 'the act of sending it incurs or creates some cost that the sender would be disinclined to incur or create if he or she were in fact not willing to carry out the threat.'"<sup>263</sup> The scholarship on costly signals, as narrated by Kang, makes it clear that such signals encompass military, economic, diplomatic actions, both *ex-ante* and *ex-post* commitments, and both costly supportive signals and hostile ones. Since its launch after the outbreak of the

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<sup>259</sup> 김남권. 2022. "이재명 '한반도에 옥일기 걸릴 수도'... 한미일 훈련 거둬 비판." 연합뉴스, October 10, 2022. <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20221010040300001>.

<sup>260</sup> 김남권. 2022.

<sup>261</sup> Kang, David C. 2017. *American Grand Strategy and East Asian Security in the 21st Century*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>262</sup> Fearon, James D. 1997. "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands versus Sinking Costs." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41 (1). 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320: Sage Publications: 68–90. doi:10.1177/0022002797041001004.

<sup>263</sup> Kang, 2017, 17.

Ukraine War, the Yoon administration has been sending costly (or at least mixed) signals against all three authoritarian countries, in the process strengthening bloc politics and a new Cold War paradigm.

For example, regarding the war's main antagonist, Russia, South Korea has been sending costly signals by engaging in historic alignment with NATO. The US had pushed its Asia-Pacific allies, including South Korea, Japan, and Australia (all current members of NATO's IP4), to participate in the 2006 NATO summit in Riga (only to be denied at that time by NATO members' opposition to such expanded cooperation).<sup>264</sup> Since then, both NATO and its Asia-Pacific partners (grouped under the label of the "AP4" and more recently the "IP4") have been far more proactive in their mutual cooperation, with such cooperation between South Korea and NATO formalized under the "Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme" framework since 2012 (which has since been upgraded to an "Individually Tailored Partnership Programme" or ITPP in July 2023). The Ukraine War served as the direct catalyst for unprecedented institutionalization of this relationship, with Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong attending a NATO foreign ministerial session in April 2022 to discuss, *inter alia*, humanitarian aid to Ukraine, becoming the first ROK foreign minister to attend such a session in history.<sup>265</sup> President Yoon became the first Korean president in history to receive an invitation to attend a NATO summit (along with the other heads of the IP4) ahead of the 2022 Madrid Summit, which he attended along with the following Vilnius and Washington Summits in 2023 and 2024, respectively. Following the Ukraine War, NATO and the ROK also agreed to designate the latter's embassy in Brussels as its diplomatic mission to NATO (which opened in November 2022).<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> 이수형. 2024. "한국-나토 안보협력의 전략적 구상과 추진 방향." INSS 전략보고 No. 255, 국가안보전략연구원 (March 2024)

<https://www.inss.re.kr/upload/bbs/BBSA05/202403/F20240306150724337.pdf>

<sup>265</sup> Eun-jung, Kim. 2022. "S. Korean FM Joins NATO Meeting on Ukraine, Reaffirms Support for Ukraine." Yonhap News Agency, April 8, 2022.

<https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20220408002300325>.

<sup>266</sup> NATO. 2022b. "Republic of Korea Opens Diplomatic Mission to NATO." NATO, November 23, 2022. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_209320.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_209320.htm).

Per the ITPP agreement signed during the Vilnius Summit, 11 areas of cooperation were specified, of which cyber defense cooperation is considered a notable development. North Korea's use of cyberwarfare has allowed the pariah country to illicitly procure the nuclear information and pecuniary resources (via bank and crypto theft) needed for the acceleration of its nuclear and missile programs.<sup>267</sup> In May 2022, South Korea became the first Asian country to join NATO's Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE), the organization's cyber defense arm and organizer of the world's largest cyber exercise "Locked Shields," which South Korea participated in since 2018.<sup>268</sup> Yoon also pushed for Korea's entry into NATO's Battlefield Information Collection and Exploitation System (BICES) and real-time, selective information sharing between the two by connecting the issue of North Korea's missile program to the security of Europe<sup>269</sup> (North Korea's provision of arms and now soldiers to the Ukraine War further highlighting this linkage). Information sharing has become a particularly salient point amidst the Ukraine War given the information linkage between NATO and Ukraine, Ukraine's recent request for South Korean intelligence regarding North Korea following the DPRK's troop deployment,<sup>270</sup> and President Yoon's aforementioned proposal to send military personnel to observe North Korean military operations in Ukraine.

In addition, the need for replenishing of arms stockpiles per the Tallinn Pledge and the donation of existing stockpiles to Ukraine (including mass handovers of Cold War-era holdover equipment in such cases as Poland) dovetailed with the Yoon

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<sup>267</sup> Horschig, Doreen. 2024. "How Are Cyberattacks Fueling North Korea's Nuclear Ambitions?" CSIS, July 31, 2024. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/how-are-cyberattacks-fueling-north-koreas-nuclear-ambitions>.

<sup>268</sup> Lee, John. 2023. "As Seoul Joins NATO Cyber Group, Chinese Propagandist Threatens Ukraine 'Path.'" KOREA PRO, April 5, 2023. <https://koreapro.org/2022/05/as-seoul-joins-nato-cyber-group-chinese-propagandist-threatens-ukraine-path/>.

<sup>269</sup> 대한민국 대통령실. 2023. "'유럽과 아시아의 안보 따로 구분될 수 없어...더욱 확고하게 연대해 나가야 할 것.'" July 12, 2023. <https://www.president.go.kr/president/speeches/nmq4uMUn>.

<sup>270</sup> Polonska, Sofia. 2024. "Kyiv Urges NATO to Share Intelligence on North Korean Troops in Ukraine." Espresso Global, October 18, 2024. <https://global.espresso.tv/russia-ukraine-war-ukraine-calls-on-nato-to-share-intelligence-on-north-korean-troops-participation-in-war-umerov>.

administration's stated goal to expand Korea's defense industry to the fourth largest in the world by 2027.<sup>271</sup> Per South Korea's post-Ukraine boon in arms exports, NATO announced its recognition of the ROK's domestic airworthiness certification for manufactured aircraft, NATO's first such arrangement with an Asian country.<sup>272</sup> The defense industry in particular constituted a powerful incentive for ROK alignment with Europe, with the aforementioned Poland deals, as well as new smaller scale deals with Estonia, Latvia, Finland, and Romania contributing to a win-win relationship. European nations can seek internal balancing amidst an unprecedented security crisis by procuring cutting-edge, NATO compatible weapons from a nation which has expanded development amidst perennial security crises. In turn, South Korea has been elevated to a top ten global arms exporter per data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).<sup>273</sup> Such windfalls for South Korea's defense industry could be said to have buttressed the elements of national power which constitute the means of the nation's grand strategy. President Yoon also sought to utilize his upgraded ties with NATO and the incumbent issue of the Ukraine War to maximize the ROK's discourse power regarding South Korea's grand strategic goal of inter-Korean reconciliation. In July 2024, the IP4 jointly adopted a statement denouncing post-Ukraine military cooperation between Russia and North Korea as "illicit" and inimical to "peace and stability to the Indo-Pacific and Europe" (thus echoing emerging NATO discourse explicitly marrying the ongoing conflict in Ukraine with potential conflicts in the Korean Peninsula and the Indo-Pacific).<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Lee, Hojeong. 2022. "Korea Aims to Become World's No. 4 Arms Exporter." Korea JoongAng Daily, November 24, 2022. <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2022/11/24/business/economy/KAI-Defense-export/20221124151307176.html>.

<sup>272</sup> NATO. 2024a. "NATO and the Republic of Korea Sign Airworthiness Agreement." July 11, 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_228070.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_228070.htm?selectedLocale=en).

<sup>273</sup> Wezeman, Pieter D., et.al. 2023. "TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS, 2023." Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, March 2024. [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/fs\\_2403\\_at\\_2023.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/fs_2403_at_2023.pdf).

<sup>274</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2024d. "Joint Statement of the Leaders of New Zealand, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Australia," July 11, 2024. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100696803.pdf>.

In addition to alignment with NATO, President Yoon’s 2023 visit of Ukraine, use of sanctions, and weapons backfilling practices constituted costly signals vis-à-vis Russia, albeit ones that did not seem to cross Russia’s diplomatic red lines. As explained above, it was South Korea’s threats to directly provision Ukraine with “defensive” and even “offensive” weapons that were taken by Russia to be offensive costly signals. It should be noted that the South Korean left-wing vehemently opposed efforts to pursue high-profile diplomacy with NATO after the Ukraine War or to link European security to the west of Russia with Indo-Pacific security to its east. The DPK pronounced that President Yoon’s presence in NATO summits, where the topic of discussion was often military strategy vis-à-vis the Ukraine War, was an act that would *per se* “revive a new Cold War in Northeast Asia” and mistakenly promote an “overly US-centered, one-sided diplomacy.”<sup>275</sup> The DPK has also started to popularize the catchphrase of pro-Japan “submissive diplomacy” (*guljong waegyō*) in official party statements throughout the Yoon administration to criticize alignment with Japan in the Indo-Pacific front. The rhetoric by the opposition became more pointed, especially in the aftermath of the ROK’s preemptive restoration of Japan to its trade ‘white list,’ the ROK’s compensation plan for Japanese forced laborers, Japanese administrative pressure to Line Yahoo to review its financial relationship with Naver Corporation, and South Korea’s greenlighting of the designation of the Sado Island gold mines as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Regarding North Korea, while the *prima facie* policy of the Yoon administration remains a commitment to reconciliation and an openness to resumption of talks without preconditions, the ROK has also sent several costly signals to its northern counterpart. For example, one can point to the Yoon administration’s resumption of the US-ROK Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group meetings (after such meetings were halted after January 2018), the establishment of the Nuclear Consultation Group in 2023, and the resultant July 2024 signing of the classified

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<sup>275</sup> 최형원. 2022. “민주당 ‘윤 대통령 나토 회의 참석, 신냉전 부활-경제 충격 줄 수도.’” KBS 뉴스, June 28, 2022.  
<https://news.kbs.co.kr/news/pc/view/view.do?ncd=5496270>.

“Guidelines for Nuclear Deterrence and Nuclear Operations on the Korean Peninsula” (which set out guidelines for integration of US nuclear weapons with South Korea’s conventional arsenal in the event of a Korea contingency, constituting the first such guidelines signed by the US with a non-nuclear power) as all constituting costly signals to North Korea. In July 2023, per the US’s stated commitments regarding extended deterrence, the USS Kentucky, a nuclear ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) docked in South Korea, the first time a nuclear-armed submarine made such a tour to South Korea since 1981.<sup>276</sup> Nuclear-powered submarines (which unlike the USS Kentucky lack nuclear armaments and are thus not considered to be nuclear assets) have also docked in Korea with greater frequency, with the DPRK responding by labelling even these nuclear-powered submarines as “nuclear strategic assets” (thus demonstrating that North Korea sees extended deterrence actions that involve both nuclear and certain non-nuclear assets as equally constituting nuclear provocations).<sup>277</sup> Trilateral security cooperation, especially Exercise Freedom Edge, constitutes another costly signal. Other costly signals more directly catalyzed by the Ukraine crisis include threats to directly provision weapons to Ukraine, which could now be used against DPRK troops, information sharing with NATO and Ukraine regarding intelligence on North Korea, and joint statements condemning post-Ukraine War Russia-DPRK military cooperation by the IP4 and NATO. It should be noted that these costly signals have been preceded and reciprocated by hostile signals from North Korea which had followed the destruction of the inter-Korea liaison office during the COVID-19 pandemic, and which include the propagation of the hostile two-state line, abrogation of the 2018 Comprehensive Military Agreement, hostile updating of its nuclear doctrine, and overt military cooperation with Russia.

Finally, South Korea’s post-Ukraine behavior constituted costly signals against China. The 2022 NATO Strategic Concept, which was adopted during the postwar

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<sup>276</sup> Office of the President Republic of Korea. 2023. “President Yoon Makes Historic Tour of US Missile-Armed Submarine.” Office of the President Republic of Korea, July 21, 2023. <https://eng.president.go.kr/briefing/k2puHMVS>.

<sup>277</sup> Kwon, Hyuk-chul. 2024. “Kim Yo-Jong, These US Submarines Aren’t the ‘Nuclear Strategic Assets’ You’re Looking For.” Hankyoreh, October 1, 2024. [https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_northkorea/1160565.html](https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/1160565.html).

2022 Madrid Summit amidst the historic attendance of the leaders of the IP4, formalized an unprecedented codification of China as a revisionist power in NATO's strategic literature, with NATO equating the norm-breaking behavior of Russia in Ukraine with the behavior of China in maritime domains and supply chains.<sup>278</sup> The 2024 Washington Summit Declaration, the main policy declaration of yet another NATO summit attended by President Yoon, further declared that the PRC has become a "decisive enabler of Russia's war against Ukraine" and thus a threat to Euro-Atlantic security.<sup>279</sup> This directly responds to China's own behavior and reciprocal costly signals to the Western bloc during the war, including a 60 percent rise in exports to Russia, exports of dual-use technologies totaling \$300 million in value,<sup>280</sup> and force projection in Russia's eastern and western frontiers (including a joint military exercise with Belarus held just five kilometers from the Polish border during the 2024 NATO Summit and only a few days after Belarus's formal entry into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization).<sup>281</sup> In addition to attending these geopolitically fraught NATO summits, the ROK government's trilateral deterrence initiatives facilitated the sending of diplomatically sensitive messages regarding China. For example, the trilateral 2023 Camp David Statement affirmed the ROK's condemnation of China's "unlawful maritime claims" in the South China Sea, its endorsement of the July 2016 South China Sea arbitration ruling by an arbitral tribunal of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), and its view that peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait constituted an "indispensable element of security and prosperity in the international community."<sup>282</sup> It seems that the pressure of the

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<sup>278</sup> NATO. 2022a. "NATO 2022 Strategic Concept." June 29, 2022.

<https://www.act.nato.int/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/290622-strategic-concept.pdf>.

<sup>279</sup> NATO. 2024e. "Washington Summit Declaration." July 10, 2024.

[https://www.nato.int/cps/ar/natohq/official\\_texts\\_227678.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ar/natohq/official_texts_227678.htm).

<sup>280</sup> Sher, Nathaniel. 2024. "Behind the Scenes: China's Increasing Role in Russia's Defense Industry." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 6, 2024.

<https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2024/05/behind-the-scenes-chinas-increasing-role-in-russias-defense-industry?lang=en>.

<sup>281</sup> Jochecová, Ketrin. 2024. "China and Belarus Hold Joint Drills near Polish Border Ahead of NATO Summit." POLITICO, July 8, 2024. <https://www.politico.eu/article/china-belarus-polish-border-nato-summit-drill-ukraine-russia-war-defense-aggression-fight-ministry/>.

<sup>282</sup> The White House. 2023b. "The Spirit of Camp David: Joint Statement of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States." The White House, August 18, 2023.

Biden administration (and not a simple change in the incumbent ROK administration from liberal to conservative) played the determining factor in Korea's sending of this diplomatic costly signal, as similar statements were made in a May 2021 Moon-Biden joint statement;<sup>283</sup> nevertheless, Yoon's trilateral statement went further than this seminal signal in that it explicitly mentioned both the PRC and the 2016 arbitration ruling.

In sum, the post-Ukraine ROK government sent costly signals that signified South Korea's participation in the reification of bloc politics and a new Cold War paradigm in global politics. An equally notable trend is the shift in South Korea's Overton window following the Ukraine War, which reified a similar paradigm in domestic Korean politics. Prior to the Ukraine War, as seen above, both conservative and liberal policymakers in South Korea were empowered to pursue a positive, cooperative relationship with Russia that facilitated its support in the inter-Korean reconciliation process. This contrasted with the US and its other allies, including Japan, which did not recently register a net favorable opinion of Russia, according to the Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Survey. According to that survey's trendline data, which was collected from 2007 to the present (2024), Japan's highest favorability rating vis-à-vis Russia was a just 30% in 2010 (the year of the Democratic Party of Japan's historic electoral breakthrough against the Liberal Democratic Party) and its lowest was a mere 5% in 2023, after the war in Ukraine.<sup>284</sup> In the case of Korea, despite a small dip after the 2014 invasion of Crimea, positive views of Russia were stable and even peaked in 2018 at 54%, during the height of the inter-Korean reconciliation process. However, the 2022 Ukraine War catalyzed a sea change in South Korea's public perception of Russia, which collapsed to levels

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<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/08/18/the-spirit-of-camp-david-joint-statement-of-japan-the-republic-of-korea-and-the-united-states/>.

<sup>283</sup> The White House. 2021. "U.S.-ROK Leaders' Joint Statement." May 22, 2021.

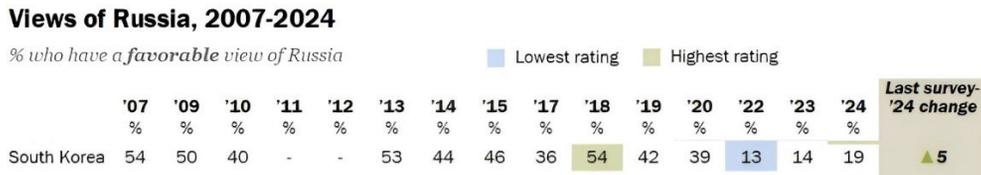
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/05/21/u-s-rok-leaders-joint-statement/>.

<sup>284</sup> Fagan, Moira, Sneha Gubbala, and Jacob Poushter. 2024. "Appendix A: Views of NATO, Russia and Putin over Time." Pew Research Center, July 2, 2024.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2024/07/02/appendix-a-views-of-nato-russia-and-putin-over-time/>.

that reflect the oppositional views that the South Korean public have regarding the other authoritarian countries of North Korea and China.

**Figure 2:** Trendline of South Korean Views of Russia

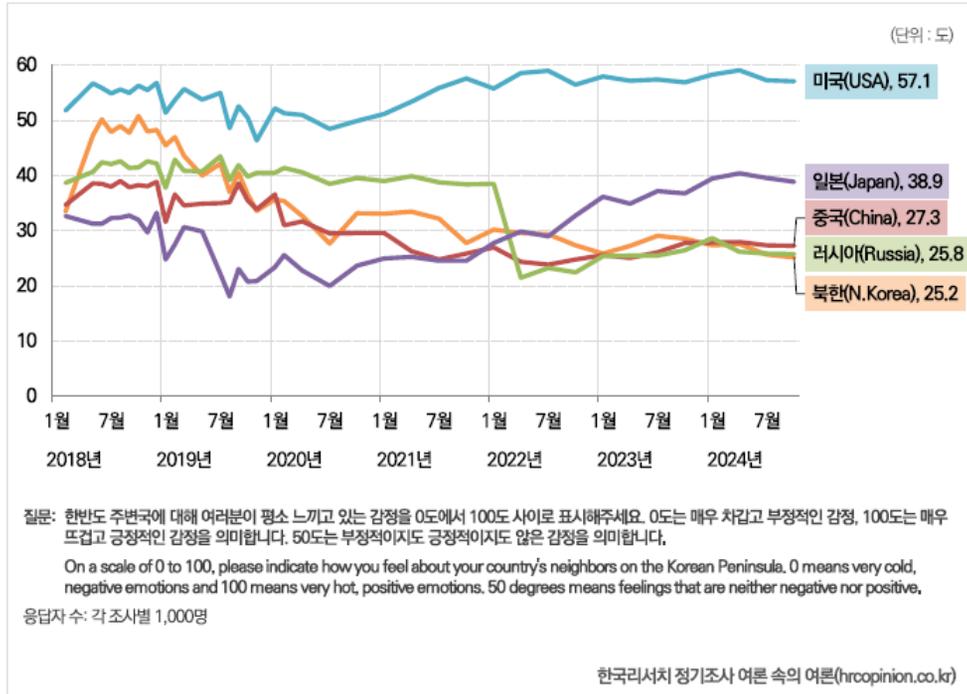


Source: Pew Research Center Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey<sup>285</sup>

As shown by trendline data by Hankook Research in Figure 3 below, Korean perceptions regarding the so-called “five neighboring countries” (Korea’s larger neighbors and its ally, the US) had not reflected bloc politics or a new Cold War paradigm prior to the Ukraine War. Although the US has consistently maintained its status as the most favored “neighbor” amongst the Korean public, during the height of inter-Korean détente in 2018, views of North Korea approached majority favorability, strengthening the political narrative of the “progressive nationalists” who emphasize autonomous ethnic unity. Though the same historic rise of anti-China sentiment seen across high-income democracies after the rise of Xi Jinping was also acutely visible in South Korea, until 2022, China was seen more favorably than Japan in South Korea, a point that David Kang used in his aforementioned 2017 book to explain why South Korea would not send costly signals to China and why it would not follow US strategic priorities with regards to China and ROK alignment with Japan. However, since the Ukraine War, this trend has reversed, with positive views of Japan registering consistently higher than the positive views of all three countries of the “authoritarian bloc,” which, unlike before, are roundly disfavored with remarkable uniformity (demonstrating an increasingly ideological appraisal of foreign relations in South Korea).

<sup>285</sup> Fagan, Moira, Sneha Gubbala, and Jacob Poushter. 2024.

**Figure 3:** Trendline of South Korean Views of the “Five Neighboring Countries”



Source: Hankook Research, 2024<sup>286</sup>

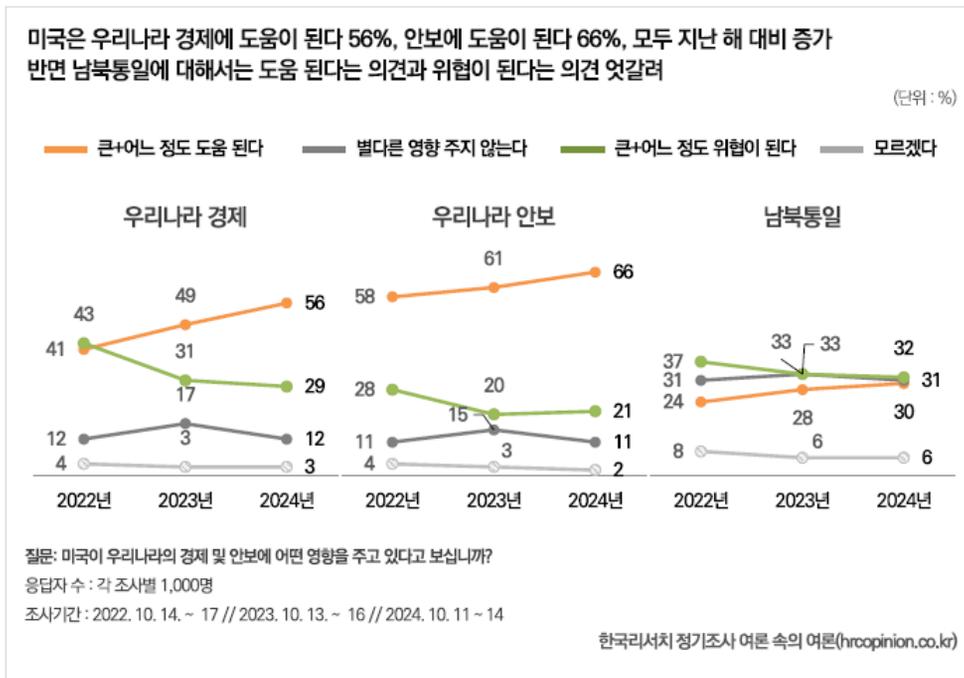
Within South Korea’s grand strategic dilemma between autonomy and alignment, this climate abets a path of greater alignment; this also shown by the ROK Ministry of Defense’s polling which indicated a marked increase in support both for trilateral security cooperation amongst the US, South Korea, and Japan and for trilateral military exercises (both being supported by around eight in ten South Koreans in 2024).<sup>287</sup> This also seen in the Hankook Research trendline polling, which demonstrates sharp increases since the Ukraine War in 2022 in the perception that the US is a positive partner not just for South Korea’s security (reflecting the US’s

<sup>286</sup> 이동한. 2024b. “[주변국 호감도 - 2024년 10월] 북한 호감도 25.2도, 다시 한 번 역대 최저치 경신.” 한국리서치 정기조사 여론속의 여론, October 23, 2024. <https://hrcopinion.co.kr/archives/31171>.

<sup>287</sup> 양지호. 2024. “[단독]국민 10명 중 8명 ‘한미일 안보협력 강화 지지.’” 조선일보, July 30, 2024. <https://www.chosun.com/politics/diplomacy-defense/2024/07/30/LPAQ77BRB5EWFE22YEGDCQIO7E/>.

traditional role for its allies as a security guarantor) but also for the ROK economy and inter-Korean relations (although views regarding the last issue remain mixed and contested).

**Figure 4:** Trendline Increases in Positive Views Regarding US Alignment in South Korea Since 2022



Source: Hankook Research, 2024<sup>288</sup>

In sum, the post-Ukraine period for South Korea was marked by movement towards alliance alignment over autonomy both as a matter of geopolitics and domestic political consensus. This is seen in the privileging of integrated and trilateral deterrence policies and the sending of costly signals to all three authoritarian neighbors, despite fierce opposition by “progressive nationalists” who disfavor both potential entrapment costs resulting from alignment policies and

<sup>288</sup> 이동한. 2024a. “[2024 대미인식조사] 한미관계 현황과 전망.” 한국리서치 정기조사 여론속의 여론, October 29, 2024. <https://hrcopinion.co.kr/archives/31244>.

security cooperation with Japan. Domestically, shifts in public opinion have sharply turned in the aftermath of the Ukraine War, shifting the Overton window in ways that privilege the dynamics of bloc politics and a new Cold War paradigm.

## Chapter V. Japan's Grand Strategy

Like the case of South Korea, it is fair to categorize Japan as a middle power in global politics. As seen in Chapter 3, scholars of middle powers have attempted to categorize nations as belonging to the conceptual category of a “middle power” per the realist and constructivist perspectives in IR studies. The realist perspective categorizes nations as middle powers per an assessment of power hierarchies and a state's material and geopolitical conditions. In contrast, the constructivist perspective places emphasis on the formation of a middle power identity within a country and especially within its policymaking class. As an academic exercise, the application of “middle power” to the case of Japan also requires confirmation of the term's usage as a categorical descriptor of Japan in existing literature.

Examining existing literature, it becomes clear that the categorization of Japan as a middle power, per both realist and constructivist perspectives, is justified. First, regarding the realist calculation of national capabilities, it has been noted in Giacomello and Verbeek's recent typological analysis of middle powers that Japan constituted a specific type of middle power (an “aspiring global power”) within global politics, exercising considerable economic and financial power and aspiring to increase its influence in the realm of high political issues (i.e., diplomacy and military power) to comport with its already significant influence in low political issues.<sup>289</sup> Another analysis by Son Key-young identifies both South Korea and Japan as middle powers by analyzing their behavioral patterns, which Son notes are indicative of the two “identity norms” of security dependency (on the US) and middle power activism (i.e., regional initiatives that harken to Pacheco Pardo's point that middle power's grand strategies have a predominantly regional geographical focus).<sup>290</sup> Son notes that Japan can be assessed as a middle power due to unique

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<sup>289</sup> Giacomello Giampiero and Bertjan Verbeek. 2024.

<sup>290</sup> Son, Key-young. 2014. “Middle Powers and the Rise of China: ‘Identity Norms’ of Dependency and Activism and the Outlook for Japan–South Korea Relations Vis-à-Vis the Great Powers.” *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 15, no. 1: 91–112. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1468109913000364>.

historical constraints on the exercise of its hard power, comprehensive reliance on the US-Japan alliance, and the geopolitical reality of having larger and more populous neighbors such as the UNSC's P5 members China and Russia.

Per the constructivist perspective as well, a certain middle power identity can also be identified in the thinking of Japan's policymaking class. In the case of South Korea, it was noted above that ROK policymakers have been using the phraseology of "middle power" to describe the nation's international status since the tenure of President Roh Tae-woo. Such historical precedents also exist in the case of Japan. For example, PM Nakasone Yasuhiro, who made the seminal step of carrying out the drafting and publication of Japan's first Defense White Paper in 1970, had explained during its publication that Japan constituted a "non-nuclear middle power" in the global order.<sup>291</sup> Likewise, Key-young Son's aforementioned analysis constitutes a study of how modern Japan has been socialized to behave in international relations according to middle power identity norms, suggesting that the reification of Japan's middle power identity is also occurring as a factor of external socialization via international relations.

In light of this documented usage of "middle power" as a categorization for Japan, I therefore apply Pacheco Pardo's middle power grand strategy model to the case of Japan. As I did with South Korea, I make a few adjustments to the generic model to reflect the unique circumstances that are endemic to the specific case of Japan. First, with regards to the "geographic scale" of Japan's grand strategy, Pacheco Pardo's model makes it clear that middle powers make aspirational attempts to influence the realities of global politics while often lacking the influence to do so, but are mostly tethered by virtue of necessity to regional initiatives and regional focal points for their grand strategies. In the case of modern-day Japan, it has been made abundantly clear, both through the stated goals of Japan's policymaking class (especially the late Abe Shinzō) and by the academic commentary on these foreign policy statements,

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<sup>291</sup> Mori, Satoru. 2020. "Nakasone Yasuhiro's "Autonomous Defense" and the Security of Japan," *Asia-Pacific Review*, 27:1, 50-79, DOI: 10.1080/13439006.2020.1766827.

that the regional focus of Japan's grand strategy is the Indo-Pacific, the arena of its signature regional initiative the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) vision.

In his 2022 book on the topic of Japan's grand strategy in the Abe Shinzō era, Michael J. Green outlines the Indo-Pacific region as the geographical arena of Japan's grand strategy.<sup>292</sup> Green directly cites Yamagata Aritomo's 1890 Diet speech in which Yamagata claimed that the two ways to "secure national independence and defense" is to protect the "line of sovereignty" or *shukensen* (i.e., the nation's borders and the *naichi*) and the "line of advantage" or "line of interest" or *ri-ekisen* (i.e., the "area closely related to the safety of that line of sovereignty").<sup>293</sup> Green outlined how the *ri-ekisen* (or the geographic scope) of Japan's grand strategy shifted away from a well-advised maritime line of advantage featuring alignment with other maritime trading powers such as the US and the UK and towards a continental focus that eventually met its ignominious end in China.<sup>294</sup> This dovetails with previous scholarship which noted how the grand strategy of Japan's military fascists prior to WWII defined Manchuria, subsequently reorganized into Manchukuo, as Japan's "lifeline" or "line of survival" (*seimeisen*).<sup>295</sup> In this way, using a widely-understood metaphor for the geographical scope of Japan's grand strategy, Green posits the modern, post-Abe iteration of Japan's grand strategy as featuring the Indo-Pacific as its *ri-ekisen*, outlining the completion of alignment with the (now like-minded) maritime powers that had failed to materialize earlier in Japan's history. As Green notes, "while the two most important pieces in Japan's new strategy are China and the United States, the chessboard upon which the game is being played is the Indo-Pacific."<sup>296</sup> Japan's emphasis on this regional scope for

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<sup>292</sup> Green, Michael. 2022. *Line of Advantage: Japan's Grand Strategy in the Era of Abe Shinzō*. 1st ed. New York: Columbia University Press. doi:10.7312/gree20466.

<sup>293</sup> "施政方針演説 / 山縣有朋内閣総理大臣." データベース「世界と日本」, Accessed November 11, 2024. <https://worldjpn.net/documents/texts/pm/18901206.SWJ.html>.

<sup>294</sup> Parker, David. 2024. "Line of Advantage: Japan's Grand Strategy in the Era of Abe Shinzō." *Social Science Japan Journal*. doi:10.1093/ssjj/jyae027.

<sup>295</sup> Mimura, Janis. 2017. "Military Fascism and Manchukuo, 1930–36." In *Planning for Empire*, 41–69. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. doi:10.7591/9780801460852-004.

<sup>296</sup> Green, Michael, 2022, 105.

its grand strategy is such that in an earlier article, Green asked the question of whether FOIP, *pars pro toto*, constitutes Japan’s grand strategy itself<sup>297</sup> (regarding this question, a consensus view of FOIP that represents a through line in Green’s analyses and the analysis of this current study would posit FOIP as a key regional strategy or initiative staged within a geographic focal point for Japan’s grand strategy).

In a previous study, I have demonstrated how the Free and Open Indo Pacific concept was crucial to Japan’s salami slicing expansion in the exercise of its hard power outside of Japan (operationalized as the overseas deployment of the Self-Defense Forces).<sup>298</sup> In short, per the postwar restrictions that uniquely bind Japan’s military capabilities in the modern era, Japan had to rely on ad hoc, incremental legal measures that coincided with major events in world politics to carve out new international arenas outside Japan in which the Japan’s SDF could constitute a legitimate participant (e.g., legal codification of SDF participation in UN PKO activities after the ending of the Cold War, the sending of SDF personnel to Iraq per the “Iraq Special Measures Law” amidst the Iraq War in 2003). As shown in Table 5 below, I argued that FOIP constituted another conceptual arena that served to justify the utilization of the SDF abroad in cooperative activities with “like-minded countries” (the preferred terminology of the Japanese government) such as Japan’s ally, the US, its “quasi-ally” Australia, and other security partners. Thus, FOIP as a concept is inextricably tied to Japan’s current global exercise of hard power and thus its influence in the realm of international relations and high politics.

**Table 5:** FOIP as an Arena of Engagement for the SDF Abroad

Arena	Detailed Operations	Legal Framework
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<sup>297</sup> Green, Michael J. 2018. “Japan’s ‘Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy’ as Grand Strategy.” JapanGov - The Government of Japan, Spring 2018.

[https://www.japan.go.jp/tomodachi/2018/spring2018/contributed\\_article.html](https://www.japan.go.jp/tomodachi/2018/spring2018/contributed_article.html).

<sup>298</sup> Kim, Andrew Soohwan and Tae Gyun Park, 2023.

United Nations PKOs	9 PKOs (out of 11 listed by MOFA) involved the SDF (Cambodia, Mozambique, UNDOF, East Timor, Timor-Leste, Nepal, Sudan, Haiti, South Sudan) (1992 - ) (Gaimushō, May 2015)	Legal codification of PKO activities “centered on the UN” [SDF Law ( <i>Jieitaihō</i> ) Article 3] [PKO Law ( <i>Kokusai heiwa kyōryokuhō</i> )] (1992 - )
“War on Terror”	Japan SDF Iraq Reconstruction and Support Group ( <i>Jieitai iraku fukkō shiengun</i> ) (2004-2008)	Iraq Special Measures Law ( <i>Iraku tokusohō</i> ) (2003-2009) First deployment of SDF abroad, required SDF to stay within “noncombat zones”
“Free and Open Indo-Pacific”	Operations endemic to the Special Strategic Partnership with Australia  Malabar Exercises amongst Quad partners  Various other joint exercises and activities with Japan’s ally, the US, and other security partners	US-Japan Alliance  RAAs and various other security cooperation agreements between Japan and Australia  Expanding security cooperation and agreements with other partners
Other PKOs	MFO assistance (SDF officers) (Gaimushō, April 2019)	Revision of the PKO Law ( <i>Kokusai heiwa kyōryokuhō</i> ) (Sept. 2015): non-UN peacekeeping operations now included.

Source: Kim and Park, 2023<sup>299</sup>

Regarding the ends (goals) of Japan's grand strategy, I make two additions to Pacheco Pardo's generic model. First, with regards to the ubiquitous question of autonomy endemic to the condition of middle powers, it is clear that Japan's grand strategy, by virtue of its postwar legacy (in which Japan's security is guaranteed by its erstwhile Pacific rival, the United States, which dominates Japan's postwar order to the extent that it drafted Japan's current "Peace Constitution"), has been uniquely predicated on alliance alignment as a precondition of its autonomy. The gist of the Yoshida Doctrine, which defined Japan's postwar grand strategy, was the outsourcing of Japan's security responsibilities to the United States and a simultaneous emphasis on the postwar economic recovery and maximizing Japan's economic power; with regards to military issues, a minimalist policy allowed for the existence of the SDF (although the SDF still remains outside explicit recognition in Japan's constitution) and the erstwhile consensus of "exclusively defense-oriented policy" (*senshubōei*). This unique formula of positing comprehensive alignment with the United States as a compatible aspect or even a precondition of national autonomy, which is a constant of both the Yoshida Doctrine and the so-called "Abe Doctrine," is why I adapt Pacheco Pardo's original delineation of "autonomy" as a singular goal of middle powers to "autonomy-cum-alignment" or "autonomy with alignment" in the case of Japan's grand strategy.

That is not to say that there have not been episodes within Japan which seemed to belie an "autonomy vs. alignment" paradigm that is endemic to the case of modern-day South Korea. Anti-mainstream conservatives such as Kishi Nobusuke and Nakasone Yasuhiro emphasized a more equal alliance and a more proactive role for Japan in its Cold War alignment with the US. Mori Satoru, in his scholarship of Nakasone Yasuhiro's "autonomous defense" theory, notes how Nakasone initially chafed at the inequality of the original security treaty and even entertained the prospect of phasing out the US Forces Japan (directly contradicting a key tenet of the mainstream Yoshida Doctrine) before eventually moderating to a pro-US

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<sup>299</sup> Kim, Andrew Soohwan and Tae Gyun Park, 2023, 70.

alignment position.<sup>300</sup> The ideological progeny of autonomous nationalism or anti-American sentiment on the right has been recently exemplified in modern-day Japan by such figures as Ishihara Shintarō and Nishibe Susumu.<sup>301</sup> On the political left, two periods of non-LDP governments emerged during the entirety of Japan's postwar period. Western scholars of both episodes had fretted over Japan's perceived moves towards "leaving the West and entering Asia" or *Datsu-Ō Nyū-A Ron* (a cultural phenomenon in Japan during the 90s)<sup>302</sup> or "leaving America and entering Asia" or *Datsu-Bei Nyū-A Ron* (in other words a rebellion against strict Cold War era alignment with the US hub and spokes alliance system).<sup>303</sup> Like Korea, the impulse of autonomy and balanced diplomacy vis-à-vis the continent of Asia rather than strict alignment with the alliance was endemic to the thinking of the political left-wing in Japan (especially at a time when global opinions of China had not seen the sharp declines that occurred after Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream of National Rejuvenation"). The Hatoyama Cabinet's "Basic Plan," published on September 16, 2009, described Japan's strategic goals as "independent diplomacy" (*jiritsu shita gaikō*), "autonomous diplomacy" (*shutaitekina gaikō*) and "close and equal US-Japan relations" (*kinmitsu katsu taitōna Nichi-Bei kankei*),<sup>304</sup> terms that closely mirror the nearly contemporaneous Roh Moo-hyun administration's "autonomous diplomacy" and "regional balancer" concepts.

However, after the rise of the second Abe administration and the comprehensive fall of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in 2012, the pendulum shifted from autonomy to alignment. As Giacomello and Verbeek noted, "middle power

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<sup>300</sup> Mori, Satoru, 2020.

<sup>301</sup> Envall, H. D. P. 2020, "The 'Abe Doctrine': Japan's new regional realism," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Volume 20, Issue 1, January 2020, Pages 31–59, <https://doi-org-ssl.libproxy.snu.ac.kr/10.1093/irap/icy014>.

<sup>302</sup> Chan, G. 1999. "Levels of Analysis: The Inter-state Level." In: *Chinese Perspectives on International Relations*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 114. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230390201\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230390201_8).

<sup>303</sup> Green, Michael J., and Gregory B. Poling. 2020. "Suga in Southeast Asia: Japan's Emergence as a Regional Security Hub." CSIS, October 27, 2020. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/suga-southeast-asia-japans-emergence-regional-security-hub>.

<sup>304</sup> 国立国会図書館. 2009. "日米同盟をめぐる諸課題と今後の展望." 調査と情報, No. 664, November 26, 2009. [https://dl.ndl.go.jp/view/download/digidepo\\_1000529\\_po\\_0664.pdf?contentNo=1](https://dl.ndl.go.jp/view/download/digidepo_1000529_po_0664.pdf?contentNo=1).

aspirations” are not just the product of shifts in capabilities but are also determined by corresponding shifts in “internal and external role conceptions.”<sup>305</sup> Abe set the agenda for Japan’s external role conception in one of his first acts as returning PM in 2012, delivering a speech to CSIS in which he declared that Japan “is not, and will never be, a Tier-two country.”<sup>306</sup> What is important to remember is that Abe was directly responding to a CSIS report which asked the question of whether Japan would be a tier-two country or a tier-one nation and in which the position of a “tier-one nation” was posited not as one of autonomy vis-à-vis the US but as a “full partner on the world stage where she (Japan) has much to contribute.”<sup>307</sup> Thus, for Japan’s aspirational pursuit of global power status, alignment with the US is not a bug but an essential feature. Japan thus shares the same basal vision as President Yoon’s “global pivotal state” concept in that it attempts to synergize its greater alignment with the US with an increased global leadership role.

Several inflection points have been influential in catalyzing this strategy of globalizing Japan’s influence while still aligning thoroughly with the US. Scholars have pointed to the failure of Japan’s “checkbook” diplomacy during the First Gulf War, labelled at the time as Japan’s “Iraqi Shock,”<sup>308</sup> as constituting a moment of punctuated equilibrium in accelerating Japan’s pursuit of hard military power as a junior partner of the US. However, the most influential background for Japan’s current grand strategy is the need to balance a rising China, which Michishita Narushige labels as a major objective for Japan’s grand strategy.<sup>309</sup> Granted, there are those who label Japan’s policy vis-à-vis China as an example of dual hedging, in

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<sup>305</sup> Giacomello Giampiero and Bertjan Verbeek, 2024, 528.

<sup>306</sup> Abe, Shinzō. 2013. “Japan Is Back.” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, February 22, 2013. [https://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/abe/us\\_20130222en.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/abe/us_20130222en.html).

<sup>307</sup> Armitage, Richard L., and Joseph S. Nye. 2012. “The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Anchoring Stability in Asia.” CSIS, August 15, 2012. [https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/publication/120810\\_Armitage\\_USJapanAlliance\\_Web.pdf](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/120810_Armitage_USJapanAlliance_Web.pdf).

<sup>308</sup> Purrington, Courtney. 1992. “Tokyo’s Policy Responses During the Gulf War and the Impact of the ‘Iraqi Shock’ on Japan.” *Pacific Affairs* 65, no. 2 (1992): 161–81. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2760167>.

<sup>309</sup> Michishita, Narushige, Saadia M Pekkanen, and Robert J Pekkanen. 2022. “Japan’s Grand Strategy for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics*, 493–514. Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190050993.013.27.

which Japan also hedges against the US (its former trade rival) via its economic and trade diversification with China.<sup>310</sup> However, Adam Liff points out that Japan’s dual hedging has not been operative during the post-Abe era, which is instead marked by a track of “unambivalent alignment.”<sup>311</sup> Koga Kei makes the same conclusion, arguing that balancing (including both external and internal balancing), not hedging, constituted Japan’s consistent strategy towards China, that Japan’s widening diplomatic profile constituted “alliance burden-sharing” (i.e., the geopolitical aspect of FOIP), and that Japan pursues bandwagoning and security hedging (to prepare for diminishing US security commitments) vis-à-vis the US.<sup>312</sup> As H.D.P. Envall points out, “short of abandonment by the US, Japan now appears to view a more autonomous deterrence capacity as offering ever fewer benefits in the face of the country’s diminishing ‘economic and strategic weight,’”<sup>313</sup> a stance that contrasts with South Korea where liberals (and some conservatives advocating for autonomous nuclear capabilities) openly espouse autonomous deterrence capabilities over overreliance on the US alliance and where liberals (or “progressive nationalists”) openly warn against the entrapment costs of alignment stemming from South Korea’s economic reliance on China and the need to solve its *sui generis* goal of national reunification.

In addition to realist considerations, Japan’s views on China are acutely negative, even for developed democracies, and, unlike most high-income nations, had bottomed out due to the Senkaku-Diaoyu Islands dispute even before the advent of Xi Jinping.<sup>314</sup> As shown above, this contrasts with the case of South Korea, which

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<sup>310</sup> Krauss, Ellis, and Brad Glosserman. 2021. “Double Trouble for Japan’s Dual Hedge on China and the US.” *Global Asia*, September 2021. [https://www.globalasia.org/v16no3/feature/double-trouble-for-japans-dual-hedge-on-china-and-the-us\\_ellis-kraussbrad-glosserman](https://www.globalasia.org/v16no3/feature/double-trouble-for-japans-dual-hedge-on-china-and-the-us_ellis-kraussbrad-glosserman).

<sup>311</sup> Liff, Adam P. 2019. “Unambivalent alignment: Japan’s China strategy, the US alliance, and the ‘hedging’ fallacy, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Volume 19, Issue 3, September 2019, Pages 453–491, <https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcz015>

<sup>312</sup> Koga, Kei. 2018. The Concept of “Hedging” Revisited: The Case of Japan's Foreign Policy Strategy in East Asia's Power Shift, *International Studies Review*, Volume 20, Issue 4, December 2018, Pages 633–660, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/vix059>

<sup>313</sup> Envall, H.D.P., 2020, 48.

<sup>314</sup> See trendline polling in: Silver, Laura, Christine Huang, and Laura Clancy. 2023. “China’s Approach to Foreign Policy Gets Largely Negative Reviews in 24-Country

saw increases of negative views of China in line with the rest of developed countries and which viewed Russia, China, and North Korea (the authoritarian bloc) more positively than Japan prior to the Ukraine War. Also, crucially, while a largely two-party political system in Korea gives voice to both those favoring greater autonomy from the US and those favoring greater alliance alignment, thus making the autonomy vs. alignment paradigm a prominent electoral issue, the continuing dominance of the LDP in the face of an, as of yet, discredited and divided opposition stifles a similar political paradigm in Japan. Per Green's analysis of the policy pronouncements of prominent non-Abe politicians (e.g., Kishida Fumio, Ishiba Shigeru, Kōno Tarō, Koike Yuriko, Edano Yukio), it becomes clear that there are only scant differences regarding Japan's alignment trajectory, especially within the LDP and even outside of it<sup>315</sup> (especially with moderate conservative and relative China hawk Noda Yoshihiko becoming the leader of the largest opposition party, the Constitutional Democratic Party or CPD). Unlike South Korea, the most controversial aspect of the current US-Japan alliance, the relocation of Okinawa's Futenma base to Henoko-Oura Bay, also has a distinctively regional character (being most fiercely opposed by older islanders in Okinawa Prefecture) that is only remotely felt by the vast majority of Japan's population.

Finally, like South Korea, I note that Japan has a *sui generis* grand strategy goal that is a unique extension of its national circumstances: a goal that I phrase as "overcoming the legacy of the postwar era." This goal represents the gist of the main initiatives of the so-called "Abe Doctrine." One of the initiatives endemic to Japan's quest to "overcome the legacy of the postwar period" is the resolution of continuing diplomatic and territorial disputes left over from the Second World War, a process that Abe frequently described as a "general settlement of postwar accounts."<sup>316</sup> This "general settlement" included the signing of a WWII peace treaty with Russia and

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Survey." Pew Research Center, July 27, 2023.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2023/07/27/chinas-approach-to-foreign-policy-gets-largely-negative-reviews-in-24-country-survey/>.

<sup>315</sup> Green, 2022, 221-222.

<sup>316</sup> Hughes, Christopher W., Alessio Patalano, and Robert Ward. 2021, 133.

the settlement of territorial disputes over the so-called “Southern Kurils” or “Northern Territories.”

The more well-known thrust of Japan’s *sui generis* strategic goal is the “normalization” of its military and security policy via the removal of internal obstacles that were established in the aftermath of World War II. Some of the most prominent changes include the continuing centralization of foreign policy around the PM Office (*kantei* diplomacy), the establishment of Japan’s own National Security Council (NSC) and the near-simultaneous publication of Japan’s first NSS document in 2013, and the liberalization of restrictive guidelines on arms exports. Being confronted by the postwar legacy of pacifism which had long fueled Japan’s traditional skepticism of militarism, Abe Shinzō presented his own facilitatory peace philosophy in his 2013 NSS, “proactive pacifism” (*sekkyokuteki heiwashugi*) which excused the flexing of Japan’s diplomatic and military muscle by positing it as an essential part of Japan’s new role as a “proactive contributor to peace” (in contrast to the perceived navel-gazing of “one nation pacifism” or *ikkoku heiwashugi*). In fashioning a new doctrine of pacifism, Abe followed in the example of such previous PMs as Miyazawa Kiichi, who had used an internationalist interpretation of pacifism to justify the overseas participation of the SDF in UN PKOs over fierce opposition from Japan’s now practically defunct socialist left.<sup>317</sup> In the face of the postwar legacy of the “Peace Constitution,” the second Abe administration advocated for constitutional revision and facilitated the 2015 Law on Peace and Security (*Heiwa anzen hōsei*), a legal interpretation which opened the way for Japan to exercise the UN-enumerated right to collective self-defense, but only in certain scenarios affecting “national survival” (*wagakuni no sonritsu*).<sup>318</sup> Finally, Abe also revised the PKO Law to allow the SDF to participate in non-UN PKOs across the world and forged unprecedented security partnerships in the Indo-Pacific (including a “special

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<sup>317</sup> Akimoto, Daisuke. 2022b. Japanese Prime Ministers and Their Peace Philosophy: 1945 to the Present. 1st ed. Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 213-219. doi:10.1007/978-981-16-8379-4.

<sup>318</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2023b. “安全保障法制の整備.” April 5, 2023. [https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/fp/nsp/page1w\\_000098.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/fp/nsp/page1w_000098.html).

strategic partnership” with Australia). In sum, with regards to Japan’s *sui generis* grand strategy end of “overcoming the legacy of the postwar era,” the current post-Abe era has seen efforts to solve leftover diplomatic/territorial disputes, “normalize” Japan’s military policies, and expand the geographic scope of Japan’s influence (i.e., its *ri-ekisen*). As shown below, the Ukraine War has brought major implications for each of these strategic ends.

**Table 6:** Model of Japan’s Grand Strategy

Geographic Scale	Temporal Scope	Types of Ends	Types of means
Global when possible, regional always  Special regional focus on the <b>Indo-Pacific</b> as Japan’s geographic <i>ri’ekisen</i> or “line of advantage” (per Green, 2022)	Long-term thinking influenced by short-term events <sup>319</sup>	<b>Autonomy-cum-alignment</b> , highest political ends  <i>Sui generis</i> goal for Japan: <b>overcoming the legacy of the postwar era</b> (“settlement of postwar accounts” and territorial revanchism, “normalization” of military policy, and the obtaining of political power apposite to Japan’s economic status)	All if possible

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<sup>319</sup> Mention of “short-term events” added by author to highlight the interplay between long-term strategic thinking and short-term inflection points and political actors, per the scholarship of Nina Silove and others as outlined in Chapter 2.

Source: Compiled by author by adapting Pacheco Pardo's middle state grand strategy model.

# Chapter VI. The Ukraine War and Japan's Grand Strategy

## 1. Regarding a Japan-Russia Peace Treaty and the Kuril Islands Territorial Dispute

The current territorial dispute over the so-called “Northern Territories” (known in Russia as the “Southern Kurils”), consisting of three inhabited islands, the Etorofu (Iturup per Russian romanization), Kunashiri (Kunashir per Russian romanization), and Shikotan islands, and an uninhabited set of islets known in Japan as the Habomai Islands. This unresolved territorial dispute constitutes the main reason for the absence of a formal peace treaty between Japan and Russia, with the Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration of 1956 having only signified an end to a state of war and a call for a final peace settlement. This means that Japan is in a state of dormant, unresolved conflict with its geographically closest neighbor (a mere two miles separating Hokkaidō’s Cape Nosappu from the closest Habomai islet).<sup>320</sup> After Japan’s imperial expansion and subjugation of the native Ainu populations, three treaties (i.e., the 1855 Shimoda Treaty, the 1875 Treaty of Saint Petersburg, and the 1905 Treaty of Portsmouth) were signed between Russia and Japan, none of which placed the currently disputed territory under Russian jurisdiction.<sup>321</sup> During WWII, the agreement signed at the 1945 Yalta Summit bound the Soviet Union to violating its neutrality pact with Japan and to invading the latter in exchange for territorial concessions including the “Kurile Islands.”<sup>322</sup> The Treaty of San Francisco, which was never signed by a protesting Soviet Union, stipulated in Article 2(c) that Japan renounces the “Kurile Islands, and to that portion of Sakhalin and the islands adjacent to it over which Japan acquired sovereignty as a consequence of the Treaty of

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<sup>320</sup> Bukh, Alexander. 2022. “Japan-Russia Relations.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics* edited by Saadia M Pekkanen and Robert J Pekkanen, 919–36. Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190050993.013.46.

<sup>321</sup> Bukh, 2022, 920-921.

<sup>322</sup> “Yalta Conference Agreement, Declaration of a Liberated Europe.” Wilson Center Digital Archive, February 11, 1945. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/yalta-conference-agreement-declaration-liberated-europe>.

Portsmouth of 5 September 1905.”<sup>323</sup> Similarly, the previous Potsdam and Cairo declarations simply stated that Japan’s territory would extend to “such minor islands as we determine”<sup>324</sup> and territories other than which Japan has “taken by violence and greed,”<sup>325</sup> respectively. Thus, the main crux of the dispute between the Japanese position (supported by the US) and the Russian position involves differing interpretations of the vague wording and circumstances of these wartime and postwar documents. The 1956 Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration reestablished diplomatic relations between the two countries but did not settle the territorial demarcations of the signatories’ borders, with the USSR denying Japan’s demand for the return of the Northern Territories and only promising to transfer the smaller Shikotan and Habomai islands to Japan after the conclusion of a peace treaty.<sup>326</sup>

**Figure 5:** The “Northern Territories” or “Southern Kurils” Dispute

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<sup>323</sup> “Treaty of Peace with Japan.” “The World and Japan” Database, September 8, 1951. <https://worldjpn.net/documents/texts/docs/19510908.T1E.html>.

<sup>324</sup> “Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference), 1945, Volume II.” U.S. Department of State, July 26, 1945. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945Berlinv02/d1382>.

<sup>325</sup> “The Cairo Declaration.” Wilson Center Digital Archive, November 26, 1943. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/cairo-declaration>.

<sup>326</sup> “Joint Declaration by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Japan.” “The World and Japan” Database, October 19, 1956. <https://worldjpn.net/documents/texts/docs/19561019.D1E.html>.



Economist.com

Source: The Economist<sup>327</sup>

After the joint declaration of 1956, the Cold War political paradigm of “*seikei fukabun*” (the perceived “indivisibility between politics and economy”) hindered the diplomatic pursuit of both economic cooperation with Russia and a settlement of the Kuril Islands issue before diplomatic flexibility was restored towards the end of the Cold War with the adoption of a more open policy stance vis-à-vis Russia (*kakudai*

<sup>327</sup> The Economist. 2017. “Japan’s Plan to Resolve a 70-Year-Old Row with Russia Is Failing.” December 14, 2017. <https://www.economist.com/asia/2017/12/14/japans-plan-to-resolve-a-70-year-old-row-with-russia-is-failing>.

*kinkō* or “expanded cooperation”).<sup>328</sup> Alexander Bukh outlines how the narrative of the “Northern Territories” as constituting Japan’s “inherent territory” illegally stolen by the Soviet Union had metastasized within Japan from the late 1960s (e.g., the 1969 establishment of the Association for Countermeasures Related to the Northern Territories) to the end of the Cold War through the sponsorship of an LDP eager to gain political points off of the rival socialists.<sup>329</sup> Early attempts to settle the issue saw the initiation of visa-free exchanges for former Japanese and Russian residents of the islands in 1992 and the signing of the Kawana Proposal by President Yeltsin and PM Hashimoto, which proposed an eventual handover of all four islands after a transition period per Japan’s increasingly hardline nationalist position on the issue.<sup>330</sup>

Immediately prior to the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine War, the second Abe administration, spearheaded by Abe’s foreign policy advisor Imai Takaya, centered the initiative of “settling the postwar accounts” of Russo-Japanese relations and the Kuril Islands issue around the PM Office instead of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>331</sup> Abe’s new policy vis-à-vis Russia featured major diplomatic and economic overtures to the country. On the diplomatic front, Abe met with Putin a total of 27 times during his second stint as prime minister, meeting with the Russian leader more times than with any other foreign leader since 2013.<sup>332</sup> Two prominent meetings included a December 2016 summit, when an agreement leading to an eight-point economic cooperation plan was made, and a November 2018 summit, during which the two sides agreed to negotiate a peace treaty based on the precedent of the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration. The latter point was crucial as it represented an abandonment of the four islands stance put forward by the foreign

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<sup>328</sup> Kuhrt, Natasha. 2007. “Russian Policy towards Japan under Putin.” In *Russian Policy Towards China and Japan*, 149–66. United Kingdom: Routledge.  
doi:10.4324/9780203716885-14.

<sup>329</sup> Bukh, 2022, 927-928.

<sup>330</sup> Nippon.com. 2024. “北方領土交渉をめぐる主な経緯.” nippon.com, April 24, 2024.  
<https://www.nippon.com/ja/features/h00338/>.

<sup>331</sup> Hughes, Christopher W., Alessio Patalano, and Robert Ward. 2021, 145-146.

<sup>332</sup> Walker, Joshua and Azuma Hidetoshi. 2020. “Shinzo Abe’s Unfinished Deal with Russia.” *War on the Rocks*, September 11, 2020.  
<https://warontherocks.com/2020/09/shinzo-abes-unfinished-deal-with-russia/>.

ministry in favor of what Iwashita Akihiro labels as a “two islands” or “two islands plus alpha” solution.<sup>333</sup> This contrasted with Putin’s demands for a treaty “without preconditions,” which would constitute a de facto acknowledgement by Japan of Russia’s sovereignty over the disputed territory prior to a prospective two island settlement and transfer based on the 1956 Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration.

Abe reversed the usage of the longstanding terminology of “inherent territory” (*koyū no ryōdo*), erasing the terminology from Japan’s Diplomatic Bluebook and refraining from referencing the terminology after the November 2018 summit’s invocation of the Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration, in doing so reversing a policy position consistently held from the Cold War era.<sup>334</sup> In February 2019, the Abe administration went as far as to refuse an answer to the question of whether its official position was still that the Northern Territories constituted an inherent territory of Japan (a line maintained by Kishida until the Ukraine War). Japan’s diplomatic overtures were not suspended by the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea. While Japan, like other G7 member states and unlike South Korea, did participate in sanctions against Russia after 2014, all three rounds of Japanese sanctions (e.g., suspension of various militarily sensitive agreements, sanctioning of Ukrainian separatists and undisclosed Russian individuals, an arms embargo) did not cover areas that would deliver a substantial economic cost to Russia and avoided the crucial issue of LNG projects,<sup>335</sup> a key mainstay of Japan-Russia economic cooperation. Japan continued to support Russia’s LNG projects (e.g., JGC Corporation and Chiyoda Corporations’ construction of a modular plant for Yamal LNG, MoUs from government-owned Japan Bank for International Cooperation or JBIC and Japan

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<sup>333</sup> Iwashita, Akihiro. 2020. “Bested by Russia: Abe’s Failed Northern Territories Negotiations.” Translated by Edward Boyle. Wilson Center, November 2020. [https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/KI\\_201105\\_cable%2060\\_v2\\_0.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/KI_201105_cable%2060_v2_0.pdf).

<sup>334</sup> Nobira, Yuichi. 2022. “Kishida Revives Tougher Words with Russia in Dispute over Isles: The Asahi Shimbun: Breaking News, Japan News and Analysis.” The Asahi Shimbun, March 9, 2022. <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14567893>.

<sup>335</sup> Kitade, Daisuke. 2016. “Considering The Effects of Japanese Sanctions Against Russia.” Mitsui Global Strategic Studies Institute, July 2016. [https://www.mitsui.com/mgssi/en/report/detail/\\_\\_\\_icsFiles/afieldfile/2016/10/20/160707m\\_kitade\\_e.pdf](https://www.mitsui.com/mgssi/en/report/detail/___icsFiles/afieldfile/2016/10/20/160707m_kitade_e.pdf).

Organization for Metals and Energy Security or JOGMEC in support of Russia's Arctic LNG projects) and demands for icebreaking LNG-carriers (e.g., Mitsui's investment in ice-tankers serving as groundbreaking transport for Russia's Arctic LNG).<sup>336</sup> Japan turned the page quickly on Russia's Crimea annexation, becoming the first G-7 country to host a state visit for Putin after the invasion (the aforementioned December 2016 summit). Japan also refused to support the West in its condemnation of Russia regarding the attempted assassination of Sergei Skripal in the UK, its legal campaign against Russia over the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 by Russian separatists in the Donbas, and its countermeasures against Putin ally Bashar al-Assad for use of chemical weapons.<sup>337</sup>

Economically, Japan, as was the case with South Korea, attempted to align itself with Russia's Turn to the East initiatives, with Abe (like President Moon) having personally attended Putin's Eastern Economic Forum prior to the pandemic. Abe's aforementioned eight-point economic plan was lauded by Putin as the "only right way" forward for bilateral resolution, and Russia expressed relative eagerness for the prospects of such cooperation, even proposing an extension of the Trans-Siberian Railway to Hokkaidō.<sup>338</sup> Regarding the Kurils in particular, joint economic cooperation was outlined in five areas: aquaculture, greenhouses, tourism, wind energy, and waste recycling.<sup>339</sup>

There seems to have been a geopolitical calculation in Abe's policy, especially towards the end of his tenure and closer to the outbreak of the Ukraine War. A year

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<sup>336</sup> Shagina, Maria. 2019b. "Sanctions in Japan-Russia Economic Relations: Impact and Adaption." Institute for Security and Development Policy, June 10, 2019. <https://www.isdp.eu/publication/sanctions-in-japan-russia-economic-relations-impact-and-adaption/>.

<sup>337</sup> Shagina, Maria. 2019a. "How Russia Exploits Japan's Soft Approach." Atlantic Council, April 9, 2019. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/russia-exploits-japan-s-soft-approach/>.

<sup>338</sup> Nakano, Takashi, and Tanaka Takayuki. 2016. "Japan and Russia Chase Different Goals through Economic Cooperation." Nikkei Asia, November 10, 2016. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Japan-and-Russia-chase-different-goals-through-economic-cooperation>.

<sup>339</sup> TASS. 2019. "Japan, Russia Discuss Joint Economic Cooperation on Kuril Islands." April 16, 2019. <https://tass.com/economy/1053851>.

before the global pandemic, Abe pushed for a final resolution with Russia by stating that Japan must avoid a situation in which China and Russia works closely together.<sup>340</sup> He went on to state that this was because the Japan-US alliance will continue to serve as a cornerstone of Japan's security, but with the decline of US strength, the alliance might not be able to contend with Sino-Russian alignment. The timing of Abe's remarks (during negotiations between the Trump administration and North Korea leading up to the Hanoi Summit) as well as the similarity of his sentiment to those of South Korean liberals and President Trump, who have all criticized the utility of bloc politics is striking. It should be noted that Abe delineated the southern first island chain facing China as a security priority while positing Japan's northern border facing Russia as a site for diplomatic cooperation and resolution (such a selective military focus for Japan could be seen in the militarization of the Ryūkyū Islands). Abe's new approach went as far as to institute confidence building measures with Russia in the realm of security, including the unprecedented establishment of a bilateral dialogue on security cooperation (in the form of a 2+2 diplomatic and defense ministerial meeting) with Russia.<sup>341</sup> Abe also controversially pushed for the G7's re-engagement with Russia early in 2016 during his term as chair of the G7 in the aftermath of Russia's ignominious exit from the former G8 after its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.<sup>342</sup> These decisions are indicative of attempts to prevent a paradigm of bloc politics involving Russia which would be inimical to Japan's geopolitical interests.

The Ukraine War greatly affected the diplomatic, economic, and geopolitical circumstances that underpinned this new approach by Abe in handling Russo-

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<sup>340</sup> 産経新聞. 2019. “「中露が手を組む事態だけは避けねば」 安倍首相が目指す日露新時代とは.” January 23, 2019. <https://www.sankei.com/article/20190123-SW72VPRMOJNULCOXYF463W2QPI/>.

<sup>341</sup> Abiru, Taisuke. 2021. “Japan-Russia Relations in the Post-Abe Era.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 18, 2021. <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2021/03/japan-russia-relations-in-the-post-abe-era?lang=en>.

<sup>342</sup> Barber, Lionel, and Robin Harding. 2016. “Japan's Abe Calls for Putin to Be Brought in from the Cold.” Financial Times, January 17, 2016. <https://www.ft.com/content/988d04c2-bcd3-11e5-846f-79b0e3d20eaf>.

Japanese relations and the settlement of the territorial dispute. Like the case of South Korea (e.g., The Presidential Commission on Northern Economic Cooperation), there were ongoing efforts by Japan to plan conducive economic cooperation with Russia's Far East region until the start of the war, including an August 2021 bilateral discussion between the two parties regarding the Kuril Island joint economic projects.<sup>343</sup> Like the case of South Korea, there were also arguments against a hardline on Russia at the outset of the war. Instead of staking a middle ground between the G7 line on sanctions and neutrality as Japan did in 2014, PM Kishida announced that Japan would align with the G7 sanctions regime (including alignment with consensus export controls, asset freezes, sanctions on Russian banks, and, controversially, personal sanctions against Putin, Medvedev, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, *inter alia*).<sup>344</sup> During the cabinet meeting prior to the announcement, some LDP members have been reported to have opposed what one senior official claimed amounted to “cutting off all ties from the negotiations” with Russia, but Kishida pressed forward, stating that “we are no longer able to maintain the same former relationship with Russia” (i.e., the post-Abe approach to Japan-Russia relations).<sup>345</sup> The same press report noted that Kishida notified former PM Abe and received the latter's acceptance of the decision prior to the announcement of sanctions. Japan also sanctioned Russia's proxies in Belarus and the DPR and LPR, while also revoking Russia's “most favored nation” trade status, which Japan had conferred on Russia after the latter's entry into the WTO. In contrast to 2014, Japan also expelled diplomats from the Russian Embassy in Tokyo, citing civilian casualties in Ukraine, precipitating a reciprocal diplomatic expulsion

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<sup>343</sup> Reuters. 2021. “Russia Says It Discussed Plans with Japan for Joint Economic Activity on Kuril Islands.” August 11, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/russia-says-it-discussed-plans-with-japan-joint-economic-activity-kuril-islands-2021-08-11/>.

<sup>344</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2022. “（別添）○資産凍結等の措置の対象となるロシア連邦の個人及び団体” March 1, 2022.

<https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/100308181.pdf>.

<sup>345</sup> The Asahi Shimbun. 2022d. “Six Months into the Job, Kishida Is Rewriting Abe's Russia Playbook: The Asahi Shimbun: Breaking News, Japan News and Analysis.” April 4, 2022. <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14589952>.

of eight Japanese diplomats by Moscow (another diplomatic battle saw reciprocal expulsions of a diplomat by each country later in 2022).<sup>346</sup>

In his November 2020 article, Iwashita claimed that three outcomes for Japan's Russia policy were likely after the resignation of Abe, a return to the pre-Abe approach (i.e., the "four islands" demand with the prospect of a "two islands plus alpha" solution per improvements in diplomatic and economic bilateral relations), Japanese acceptance of Putin's non-conditional treaty formula, and the signing of a peace treaty with a non-demarcated border with Russia. Clearly, the diplomatic situation after the Ukraine War closely resembles the first outcome, but it also represents a more extreme reversion to a Cold War paradigm that limits the feasibility of a "two islands" solution. There had been signs of a potential hardening in Russia's diplomatic stance prior to the war, with its 2020 constitutional revision which precluded actions which compromise Russia's sovereignty and "territorial integrity." However, the same revision made it clear that "delimitation, demarcation, re-demarcation of the state border of the Russian Federation with bordering states" were exempt from this restriction,<sup>347</sup> and peace treaty negotiations and joint cooperative activities involving the disputed territories continued until the 2022 war.

After the Ukraine War and Japan's subsequent sanctions, however, Russia responded quickly and decisively, labelling Japan as an "unfriendly country" and personally sanctioning PM Kishida, senior members of his cabinet, activists calling for the return of the "Northern Territories," and even members of Japan's opposition parties.<sup>348</sup> It unilaterally pulled out of the ongoing peace treaty negotiations and suspended economic cooperation activities involving the Kuril Islands, which had

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<sup>346</sup> The Asahi Shimbun. 2022a. "Japan Plans to Expel Russian Diplomat in Tit-for-Tat Move." October 4, 2022. <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14734611>.

<sup>347</sup> "THE CONSTITUTION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION." Codices - Council of Europe, July 1, 2020. <https://codices.coe.int/codices/documents/constitution/01140d12-b6dd-480a-813b-9f96f7e517d7>.

<sup>348</sup> Abe, Akiyoshi. 2022. "Kishida: Russia's Entry Ban on 63 Japanese 'Simply Unacceptable.'" The Asahi Shimbun, May 5, 2022. <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14614170>.

all continued up until the war.<sup>349</sup> Russia suspended 1991 and 1999 agreements which had allowed former residents of the disputed territory to visit their former homes via a visa-free visitation program.<sup>350</sup> It negated another 1998 agreement that had allowed for Japanese fishing in the waters around the disputed territory (in exchange for pecuniary compensation) in the interest of protecting Japanese fishing vessels from potential arrests and shootings (Russia has since rejected Japanese requests to renegotiate on this issue).<sup>351</sup> A representative organization of former Japanese islanders, the Kuril Islands Residents Association or *Chishima Renmei*, which had been active throughout the postwar period and had facilitated people-to-people exchanges on the islands, was banned as a hostile organization from entering Russia in April 2023, and even regional exchanges at the subnational level (e.g., between Hokkaidō and Sakhalin) have been all but halted.<sup>352</sup> In the summer of 2023, Russia hoisted its flag and the cross of the Russian Orthodox Church on an old Japanese lighthouse on an Habomai islet visible from the naked eye from Hokkaidō, emphasizing its control on territory formerly up for negotiation.<sup>353</sup>

For its part, Japan revived its old diplomatic stance from the Cold War, reviving the “inherent territory” terminology in its 2022 Diplomatic Bluebook for the first time since before the second Abe administration, with the Bluebook also claiming that the disputed territory had “illegally been occupied” for the first time in 19 years.<sup>354</sup> Discourse regarding the Kuril Islands has similarly reverted to nationalism

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<sup>349</sup> Teslova, Elena. 2022. “Russia Halts Peace Talks with Japan over Kuril Islands.” Anadolu Ajansı, March 22, 2022. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/russia-ukraine-war/russia-halts-peace-talks-with-japan-over-kuril-islands/2541702>.

<sup>350</sup> The Asahi Shimbun. 2022c. “Russia Revokes Agreements on Visits to Northern Territories.” September 6, 2022. <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14712176>.

<sup>351</sup> The Asahi Shimbun. 2023b. “Russia Rules out Talks with Japan on Fishing near Disputed Islands.” January 29, 2023. <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14826786>.

<sup>352</sup> 松尾一郎. 2023. “千島連盟「北方四島と連絡取れない」 ロシアのウクライナ侵略の影響：朝日新聞デジタル.” 朝日新聞デジタル, October 26, 2023. <https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASRBT6V26RBTIPE005.html>.

<sup>353</sup> 毎日新聞. 2023. “ロシア実効支配の貝殻島灯台に十字架設置か 9年ぶり点灯も確認.” August 27, 2023. <https://mainichi.jp/articles/20230827/k00/00m/040/103000c>.

<sup>354</sup> Akimoto, Daisuke. 2022a. “Japan’s New Diplomatic Bluebook: Revised by the Russia-Ukraine War.” The Diplomat, April 27, 2022. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/04/japans-new-diplomatic-bluebook-revised-by-the-russia-ukraine-war/>.

and bloc politics. Russia claimed that Japan's support of Ukraine signified its second alignment with a Nazi regime in less than a century (thus invoking both Japan's WWII Axis alliances and Russia's current Nazi/Banderite narrative regarding Ukraine).<sup>355</sup> Russian state media also pushed historical narratives that delegitimized Japanese sovereignty of not only the Kuril Islands but also Hokkaidō, including the assertion that Japan committed a genocide against the Ainu peoples.<sup>356</sup> Both Russia and Japan received support for their competing territory claims from countries from their respective blocs after the war. In March 2023, China, Russia's "no-limits" partner, reversed its Mao-era policy stance dating from 1964 which held that the disputed territory "occupied" by Russia should be returned to Japan.<sup>357</sup> Within the opposing Western bloc, Ukraine's legislature voted in October 2022 to support Japan's position regarding the Northern Territories.<sup>358</sup> Ukrainians have also appealed to Japanese nationalism, with Ukraine's ambassador to Japan making statements regarding history that appeals to Japan's far-right (a political group which often posits South Korea as part of the oppositional camp in East Asian bloc politics).<sup>359</sup> Conversely, some Japanese have pointed to the Ukrainian heritage of the current Kuril islanders (allegedly brought to the islands via forced relocation) as a meaningful link for Ukraine to consider in siding with Japan regarding the Kuril Islands dispute.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>355</sup> Brown, James D.J. 2024. "The Accomplice: Japanese Threat Perceptions of Russia." The Asan Forum, August 13, 2024. <https://theasanforum.org/the-accomplice-japanese-threat-perceptions-of-russia/#6>.

<sup>356</sup> Brown, James D.J., 2024.

<sup>357</sup> South China Morning Post. 2023. "Xi Told Putin China No Longer Supports Japan's Claim to Russian-Held Islands, Source Says, in Shift from Mao's Position." April 4, 2023. <https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/east-asia/article/3215910/xi-told-putin-china-no-longer-supports-japans-claim-russian-held-islands-source-says-shift-maos>.

<sup>358</sup> NHK ニュース. 2022. "ウクライナ議会 '北方領土は日本の領土と確認する決議' 採択." October 26, 2022.

<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/news/html/20221008/k10013852651000.html>.

<sup>359</sup> 송치훈. 2024. "'독도가 분쟁지역?' 신사 참배했던 주일 우크라 대사, 이번엔...' 동아일보, September 26, 2024.

<https://www.donga.com/news/Inter/article/all/20240926/130105992/2>.

<sup>360</sup> Goble, Paul A. 2018. "Japanese Expert: Ethnic Ukrainians Form 60% of Northern Territories' (Kuriles') Population." Euromaidan Press, June 13, 2018.

In terms of economic cooperation, Japan has pursued a mixed policy, hedging some of its bets especially regarding oil and gas projects (which constituted a core component of Abe's economic plans with Putin), and has not consistently adhered to a policy approximating *seikei fukabun*. For example, Japan had declared in May 2022 that it would phase out imports of Russian coal and oil in order to align with G7 coordination.<sup>361</sup> This accelerated a shift in alternative energy sources, such as nuclear energy production, which had controversially ground to a halt after the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant disaster.<sup>362</sup> However, despite its role in G7 sanctions and the Oil Price Cap (OPC) coalition, Japan has retained its involvement in and reliance on several key Russian oil and gas projects. For example, ExxonMobil invoked *force majeure* in its exit from the Sakhalin-1 project, precipitating its transfer to a new Russian operator; Japan has chosen to retain its 30% stake in the project via the Sakhalin Oil and Gas Development Co (SODESCO), a consortium of Japanese firms, helping to ensure a swift recovery in terms of oil output for the project by 2023.<sup>363</sup> Similarly, the Sakhalin-2 LNG project saw an almost identical shakeup with the exit of Shell plc immediately after Russia's invasion, which was followed by the decision of Japan's stakeholders Mitsui and Mitsubishi to keep their stakes in the project (having been urged to do so by the Japanese government).<sup>364</sup> As a result of Japan's continued involvement with the Sakhalin projects, the US Office of Foreign Assets Control has consistently

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<https://euromaidanpress.com/2018/06/13/japanese-expert-ethnic-ukrainians-form-60-of-northern-territories-kuriles-population/>.

<sup>361</sup> The Asahi Shimbun. 2022b. "Japan to Take Time Phasing out Russian Oil Imports, Kishida Says." May 9, 2022. <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14616499>.

<sup>362</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA). 2024. "Nuclear Reactor Restarts in Japan Have Reduced LNG Imports for Electricity Generation." U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), February 8, 2024.

<https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=61386>.

<sup>363</sup> Verma, Nidhi. 2023. "Russia's Sakhalin-1 near Full Oil Output after Exxon Exit - Source." Reuters, January 9, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/russias-sakhalin-1-near-full-oil-output-after-exxon-exit-source-2023-01-09/>.

<sup>364</sup> Kyodo News. 2022b. "Mitsui, Mitsubishi to Keep Stakes in Russia Sakhalin 2 Energy Project." Kyodo News+, August 25, 2022.

[https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2022/08/314390ffe22b-mitsui-mitsubishi-to-keep-stakes-in-russia-sakhalin-2-energy-project.html#google\\_vignette](https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2022/08/314390ffe22b-mitsui-mitsubishi-to-keep-stakes-in-russia-sakhalin-2-energy-project.html#google_vignette).

exempted Sakhalin-2 byproduct from OPC restrictions via general license renewals provided that the “byproduct” (crude oil) was solely meant for export to Japan.<sup>365</sup>

Regarding Russia’s ambitious new focus on Arctic LNG projects, a consortium of Mitsui and JOGMEC retained its stake in the Arctic-2 LNG project; however, the project has suffered greatly from the impact of US sanctions, especially regarding the procurement of icebreaking vessels, and Mitsui decided to withdraw its staff from the project in December 2023.<sup>366</sup> US sanctions have forcibly halted lucrative deals for Hanwha Ocean and Samsung Heavy Industries for icebreaking LNG carriers and shuttle tankers, while also causing problems for Mitsui’s commissioning of these vessels for Arctic-2.<sup>367</sup> Despite what appears to be some hedging behavior by Japan in keeping its stakes in Russian projects, the overall impact of the war includes diversification in Japan’s energy sources (renewables and nuclear energy) as well as diversification of its LNG import markets (e.g., the LNG Canada project and speculative projects in the US to be encouraged by the incoming Trump administration),<sup>368</sup> two trends which will decrease reliance on Russian energy sources going forward. For its part, Russia has remedied the impact of bloc politics on their LNG ambitions by pivoting focus to the Murmansk LNG project,<sup>369</sup> which is located outside of ice-covered waters, and by friendshoring icebreaking projects with China, which posited the energy sector and unlimited Arctic entry as key aspects

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<sup>365</sup> Office of Foreign Assets Control. 2024. “Russian Harmful Foreign Activities Sanctions Regulations 31 CFR Part 587 GENERAL LICENSE NO. 55C Authorizing Certain Services Related to Sakhalin-2.” November 21, 2024.

[https://ofac.treasury.gov/media/933621/download?inline=.](https://ofac.treasury.gov/media/933621/download?inline=)

<sup>366</sup> TASS. 2023. “Mitsui to Recall Employees from Arctic LNG 2 Project — Newspaper.” December 27, 2023. <https://tass.com/economy/1726697>.

<sup>367</sup> Humpert, Malte. 2024a. “Arctic LNG 2 Facing Vessel Shortage as Zvezda Shipyard Delays Delivery, Japanese MOL Exits Charter Contract.” High North News, November 6, 2024. <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/arctic-lng-2-facing-vessel-shortage-zvezda-shipyard-delays-delivery-japanese-mol-exits-charter>.

<sup>368</sup> Golubkova, Katya, and Yuka Obayashi. 2024. “Rival LNG Supplies, Sakhalin’s Depleting Fields Give Japan an Exit from Russian Gas | Reuters.” Reuters, December 11, 2024. <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/rival-lng-supplies-sakhalins-depleting-fields-give-japan-an-exit-russian-gas-2024-12-11/>.

<sup>369</sup> Humpert, Malte. 2024b. “No Shipments from Russia’s Arctic LNG 2 Until March as Sanctions Block Delivery of LNG Carriers.” High North News, February 14, 2024. <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/no-shipments-russias-arctic-lng-2-until-march-sanctions-block-delivery-lng-carriers>.

of its postwar partnership with Russia and which launched an important icebreaker mission to the Arctic in the summer of 2024.<sup>370</sup>

Along with the vast changes to the diplomatic and economic contexts of Japan-Russia relations, the Ukraine War has brought about serious geopolitical implications (namely new obstacles) for a prospective bilateral resolution between Japan and Russia. Prior to the war, Putin had increasingly voiced geopolitical concerns in discussions of a peace treaty with Abe, stating in 2019 that the US-Japan alliance constituted an obstacle to peace negotiations.<sup>371</sup> This comports with Gilbert Rozman’s assessment mentioned above in Chapter 4-1 that Russian leadership had seen a gradual shift in its conceptions of South Korea and Japan from “Turn to the East” partners to potential Cold War style adversaries during the 2010s. Russia had already initiated some upgrades to its military presence on the disputed territory prior to the war, having added Soviet era SAMs to the Kurils in 2015, Bastion anti-ship missile battalions to Etorofu and Kunashiri in 2017 (with Russia claiming that the measures constituted retaliation against regional US missile deployments including THAAD), and S-300V4 SAMs to Etorofu and Kunashiri in 2020 (which were later relocated to the Ukraine front after the war).<sup>372</sup> In 2021, during Russia’s military buildup and preparation for invasion, Russia announced a vast military infrastructure project in the Kuril Islands and new Bastion deployments to Matua Island to the north of the disputed territory.<sup>373</sup>

After the Ukraine War, Russia designated the Okhotsk Sea and the Kuril Straits as strategically important zones for Russia’s security in its 2022 Maritime Doctrine

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<sup>370</sup> Grady, John. 2024. “Chinese Icebreaker Mission to Arctic ‘Clear Signal’ of Beijing’s Polar Ambitions, Says Expert.” USNI News, September 3, 2024. <https://news.usni.org/2024/09/03/chinese-icebreaker-mission-to-arctic-clear-signal-of-beijings-polar-ambitions-says-expert>.

<sup>371</sup> Ishikawa, Yohei, and Shogo Kodama. 2019. “Putin Calls US-Japan Alliance an Obstacle to Peace Treaty.” Nikkei Asia, September 5, 2019. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Putin-calls-US-Japan-alliance-an-obstacle-to-peace-treaty>.

<sup>372</sup> Barrash, Ike. 2022. “Russia’s Militarization of the Kuril Islands.” CSIS, September 27, 2022. <https://www.csis.org/blogs/new-perspectives-asia/russias-militarization-kuril-islands>.

<sup>373</sup> Barrash, Ike. 2022.

and stated an intention to “ensure their protection firmly and at all costs.”<sup>374</sup> Russia updated its doctrine with language apposite to a new Cold War paradigm, describing domination of the maritime domain by the US and its allies as a paramount threat. After withdrawing from confidence building measures with NATO in 2023, Russia unilaterally suspended a 1993 bilateral treaty with Japan governing joint cooperation in the decommissioning of Russian nuclear weapons, including nuclear submarines.<sup>375</sup> Russia also accelerated its military buildup in the Kurils, deploying Bastion missile systems to another island in the Northern Kurils in late 2022.<sup>376</sup> In May 2024, Defense Minister Shoigu confirmed the construction of surveillance facilities on the Kuril Islands, while also confirming that the facilities and equipment deployed were identical to those deployed by the Black Sea Fleet in the Ukraine War front (a move interpreted to be Russia’s attempt to shore up Pacific surveillance amidst global bloc confrontation in the aftermath of the Ukraine War).<sup>377</sup>

Finally, another major military consequence of the war, and of postwar Russia-China military cooperation in particular, is the unprecedented increases in exercises of force projection in Russia’s eastern frontier and even in the Indo-Pacific region amidst Russia’s ongoing war to the west. For example, Russia and China resumed Vostok-22 multilateral exercises in September 2022 (after a four-year hiatus from the previous Vostok-18 exercises). Whereas Russia had, in the case of Vostok-18, openly stated that it had refrained from holding any drills in the disputed “Northern

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<sup>374</sup> Wilk, Andrzej. 2022. “Russia’s Naval Doctrine.” OSW Centre for Eastern Studies, August 5, 2022. <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2022-08-03/russias-naval-doctrine>.

<sup>375</sup> Kyodo News. 2023. “Russia Suspends Pact with Japan on Decommissioning Nuclear Weapons.” November 10, 2023. <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2023/11/f3a5128762cc-russia-suspends-pact-with-japan-on-decommissioning-nuclear-weapons.html?phrase=Nomura+Research+Institute&words=>.

<sup>376</sup> Reuters. 2022. “Russia Deploys Defence Missile System on Kuril Island near Japan.” December 6, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/russia-deploys-defence-missile-system-kuril-island-near-japan-2022-12-06/>.

<sup>377</sup> Tiwari, Sakshi. 2024. “Russia Boosts Military Presence On Japanese-Claimed Islands As Tokyo May Arm Ukraine With Patriot SAMs.” EURASIAN TIMES, May 10, 2024. <https://www.eurasiantimes.com/warning-to-japan-spy-bases-set-up-near/>.

Territories” at the request of Japan,<sup>378</sup> Russia in 2022 ignored Japan’s protests and staged part of the Vostok-22 exercises within the disputed territory.<sup>379</sup> Also, despite being of an overall humbler scale than Vostok-18, Vostok-22 highlighted novel bilateral cooperation with China in that it was cited by Chinese state media as the first simultaneous deployment of Chinese army, navy, and air forces to the exercise as well as the first deployment of Chinese naval vessels to the East Sea (Sea of Japan) for such cooperative exercises.<sup>380</sup> Since the war, Russia and China have conducted “Northern/Interaction” military drills in 2023 and 2024 (the 2024 exercises coinciding with the “Ocean 2024” exercises which were billed as Russia’s largest global naval exercises in more than 30 years), which involved passage of sensitive straits near Japan (e.g., the Sōya, Tsushima, and Tsugaru straits).<sup>381</sup> Since the war, Russia and China have also regularized their joint aerial patrols involving strategic bombers over the East Sea. Russia-China bilateral force projection has even reached the western tip of the US, with the first bilateral bomber patrol of the Bering Sea occurring in July 2024<sup>382</sup> and the first bilateral coast guard patrol in the Arctic Ocean (via the Bering Strait) occurring in October 2024.<sup>383</sup> Such post-Ukraine War force projection in this region could be easily understood in light of the militarization contest between Russia and NATO occurring in the Arctic Sea,<sup>384</sup> a designated vital

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<sup>378</sup> 毎日新聞. 2018. “露国防相：日本の要請受け、北方領土演習取りやめ.” October 9, 2018. <https://mainichi.jp/articles/20181009/k00/00m/030/085000c>.

<sup>379</sup> TASS. 2022. “Japan’s Calls to Drop ‘Vostok’ Exercise near Kuril Islands Pointless — Russian Envoy.” July 29, 2022. <https://tass.com/politics/1486633>.

<sup>380</sup> 人民網. 2022. “‘東方-2022’ 演習中方參演部隊亮點紛呈.” September 6, 2022. <http://military.people.com.cn/BIG5/n1/2022/0906/c1011-32520514.html>.

<sup>381</sup> Guo, Yuandan, and Xiaoci Deng. 2023. “‘Northern/Interaction-2023’ to kick off soon; joint military exercises between China, Russia in Sea of Japan has clear purpose and actual combat significance.” *Global Times*, July 15, 2023. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202307/1294428.shtml>.

<sup>382</sup> Gozzi, Laura. 2024. “China and Russia Stage First Joint Bomber Patrol near Alaska.” *BBC News*, July 25, 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cz9x22k5qv2o>.

<sup>383</sup> McCarthy, Simone. 2024. “China’s Coast Guard Claims to Have Entered the Arctic Ocean for the First Time as It Ramps up Security Ties with Russia.” *CNN*, October 3, 2024. <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/10/03/china/china-russia-coast-guard-arctic-ocean-intl-hnk/index.html>.

<sup>384</sup> Gronholt-Pedersen, Jacob, and Gwladys Fouche. 2022. “Dark Arctic: NATO Allies Wake up to Russian Supremacy in the Region.” *Reuters*, November 16, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/graphics/ARCTIC-SECURITY/zgvobmlrpd/>.

area in Russia's naval doctrine and a geoeconomic hub for its "no-limits" partnership with China.

In sum, like the case of inter-Korean reconciliation, significant diplomatic, economic, and geopolitical headwinds stemming from the Ukraine War obstruct Japan's ability to end the postwar legacy in its relations with Russia and in the territorial issue. Although a peace resolution involving a highly unlikely acknowledgement by Japan of Russia's sovereignty over the entire disputed territories as a precondition of a settlement involving Russian territorial concessions remains theoretically possible, it is becoming an increasingly difficult calculus for each party. Especially for Russia, there seems to be little incentive for land concessions given its domestic political climate and given that alliance alignment between Japan and the US, which Russia had stated as its primary reservation to a peace treaty, has deepened significantly since the Ukraine War. There has also been an Overton window shift in Japanese politics regarding Japan's Russia policy since the Abe era and especially after the Ukraine War. A once-prominent pro-Russia lobby has found itself limited to a handful of controversial fringe individuals and political pariahs after the war (e.g., ex-PM Hatoyama Yukio, ex-PM Mori Yoshirō, and Suzuki Muneo).<sup>385</sup> The Overton window shift has also manifested in Japan's public opinion, with those expressing positive views of Russia bottoming out at 5% in 2023 (a sharp decline from 30% in 2010).<sup>386</sup> Given how shifts in public opinion after the Senkaku/Diaoyu crisis were essential to the deracination of the Hatoyama's "East Asian Community" concept and the rise of the Abe Doctrine, it remains within the realm of possibility that the Ukraine War constitutes a moment of punctuated equilibrium that could prolong the logic of bloc politics in Japan-Russia relations going forward.

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<sup>385</sup> Brown, James D.J. 2023. "Japan's Aging Pro-Russia Lobby Is on Borrowed Time." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 12, 2023. <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2023/10/japans-aging-pro-russia-lobby-is-on-borrowed-time?lang=en>.

<sup>386</sup> Fagan, Moira, Sneha Gubbala, and Jacob Poushter. 2024.

## 2. Regarding “Normalization” of Japan’s Military Policy

As mentioned above, another main aspect of Japan’s *sui generis* grand strategic goal of overcoming the legacy of the postwar era is the “normalization” of its military capabilities, which were heavily restricted both as a matter of law and as a matter of political discourse. The shifts in Japan’s defense policy seen during the second Abe administration were sweeping, featuring the attenuation of Japan’s postwar *de jure* orthodoxy of “exclusively defense-oriented policy” (*senshubōei*) via revisions of its constituent policy doctrines. For example, *senshubōei*’s attendant concept in the realm of military posture, “basic defense force” or “basic defense capability” (*kibanteki bōeiryoku*) was revised, after the rise of China, to the enhanced capabilities of “dynamic defense capability” (*dōteki bōeiryoku*) and eventually the “dynamic joint defense force” concept (*tōgōteki bōeiryoku*). The latter concept reflected Japan’s need to diversify its military capabilities to widen the scope of military operations over geographical and sectoral domains (e.g., the creation of a marine force), anti-gray zone contingency capabilities in the East China Sea and other disputed maritime domains, and enhanced deterrence capabilities against China.<sup>387</sup> Per Japan’s autonomy-*cum*-alignment military reliance on the US, such changes were necessarily manifested in a revision of the Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation, which expanded the geographical scope of joint alliance activities beyond just a narrow purview of Japanese territory and the Korean peninsula to a global reach.<sup>388</sup> Other shifts include the revision of the “Three Principles on Arms Exports” (*Buki yushutsu sangensoku*) to a liberalized arms transfer framework under the new legal code of “Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology” (*Bōei sōbi iten sangensoku*). Likewise, the postwar doctrine of the “Three Non-Nuclear Principles” (*Hikaku sangensoku*) has

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<sup>387</sup> 박영준. 2015. "일본 군사력 평가:‘동적 방위력 (dynamic defense force)’에서 ‘통합기동방위력’에로의 행보" 신아세아 22, no.2: 61-86.

<sup>388</sup> National Diet Library Web Archiving Project. 2015. “The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation.” April 27, 2015. [https://warp.da.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/11591426/www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/us/anpo/pdf/shis hin\\_20150427e.pdf](https://warp.da.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/11591426/www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/us/anpo/pdf/shis hin_20150427e.pdf).

recently faced increasing scrutiny by Japan’s policymaking class, including by the late Abe Shinzō himself.

Ten months after the Ukraine War, Japan released a trio of security documents (Japan’s NSS, its National Defense Strategy or NDS, and Defense Buildup Program) under the Kishida administration, just the second time in history that a “National Security Strategy” document was published by the Japanese government (after the Abe administration’s seminal publication in 2013). As O’Shea and Maslow noted, expert panels for the drafting of the 2022 NSS and the other documents occurred from January to July 2022 and were greatly influenced from an early stage by the outbreak of the Ukraine War in February.<sup>389</sup> The war has been pointed to as the catalyst for the vast revisions endemic to the late-2022 security documents, with the discussions leading up to the publication of the NSS echoing the interpretations of the Ukraine War that were provided by South Korean conservatives as discussed in Chapter 4 above. In one of the latter deliberations in October 2022, Defense Minister Hamada Yasukazu explained the reason for the outbreak of the Ukraine War in terms that directly mirrored the views of President Yoon and the Asan Institute as mentioned in Chapter 4-2, stating that “Ukraine did not have sufficient defense capabilities nor enough allies nor a nuclear umbrella” and thus “could not deter a Russia that had a massive military arsenal and a clear intention to invade”<sup>390</sup> (thus implying the need for greater alignment with the US and other security partners, internal balancing, and a nuclear deterrent for Japan). Hamada also went on to say that the world would only help those who would first help themselves. The same Japanese media report also noted that almost no debate was held regarding the diplomatic efforts that might be needed to prevent a Ukraine War scenario in East Asia, which strongly suggests a shift away from trust in Japan’s traditional methods of influencing regional and global politics as a middle state (e.g., checkbook

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<sup>389</sup> O’Shea, Paul, and Sebastian Maslow. 2024. “Rethinking Change in Japan’s Security Policy: Punctuated Equilibrium Theory and Japan’s Response to the Russian Invasion of Ukraine.” *Policy Studies* 45 (3–4): 653–76. doi:10.1080/01442872.2024.2309218.

<sup>390</sup> The Asahi Shimbun. 2023a. “How the War in Ukraine Has Spurred Japan’s Defense Overhaul: The Asahi Shimbun: Breaking News, Japan News and Analysis.” February 24, 2023. <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14847326>.

diplomacy, Abe's economic and diplomatic confidence-building measures vis-à-vis Russia) and towards a greater focus on hard power. The resulting 2022 NSS stated that Russia's aggression against Ukraine, may occur especially in East Asia in the future" and therefore that "Japan will fundamentally reinforce its defense capabilities" to respond to this security environment,<sup>391</sup> which the NDS claimed was the most severe since WWII.<sup>392</sup> The trio of documents called for an increase in defense spending to two percent of GDP (i.e., the NATO standard) by 2027, an item of policy advocated but never actualized by Abe, and outlined future revisions to core constituent elements of the postwar legacy of *senshubōei*.

Among these constituent elements of postwar *senshubōei*, the greatest change facilitated by the Ukraine War was the fast tracking of Japan's salami slicing towards a normalized defense regime in terms of defense equipment/technology transfers and the arms trade. During the Cold War, the restrictive principle of the "Three Principles on Arms Exports" (*buki yushutsu sangensoku*) was applied by Japan as a legal *modus operandi* regarding arms exports. This principle stemmed from a 1967 policy speech made by then Prime Minister Satō Eisaku to the Budget Committee of the National Diet,<sup>393</sup> through which it was ultimately made clear that Japan prohibited arms exports to member countries of the communist bloc, countries placed under an arms export embargo regime by the UN Security Council, and countries either involved in or likely to be involved in international conflicts.

In February 1976, the Government of Japan under Prime Minister Miki Takeo proclaimed an expansion of this self-enforced embargo via a "collateral policy guideline" that banned Japan from promoting arms exports regardless of the

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<sup>391</sup> Cabinet Secretariat, 2022. "National Security Strategy of Japan." December 16, 2022. <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryou/221216anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf>.

<sup>392</sup> Japan Ministry of Defense. 2022. "NATIONAL DEFENSE STRATEGY." December 16, 2022. [https://www.mod.go.jp/j/policy/agenda/guideline/strategy/pdf/strategy\\_en.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/j/policy/agenda/guideline/strategy/pdf/strategy_en.pdf).

<sup>393</sup> "武器輸出三原則が佐藤栄作総理によって表明された国会質疑." データベース「世界と日本」. April 21, 1967.

<https://worldjpn.net/documents/texts/JPSC/19670421.O1J.html>.

destination.<sup>394</sup> Thus, if anything, the defense policy of early Cold War-era Japan, was marked by movement towards the ideology of “one nation pacifism” (*ikkoku heiwashugi*) instead of the current salami slicing towards “normalized” military and defense capabilities. As was the case with many constituent doctrines in Japan’s postwar pacifism, the only exception to this embargo was the US-Japan Alliance, and the implementation of arms exports to the US was furnished by the 1954 Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement and subsequently reiterated after the 1976 guideline via the 1983 “Exchange of Notes concerning the Transfer of Military Technologies.”<sup>395</sup>

In 2014, under the Abe Shinzō administration, the Japanese government liberalized the erstwhile arms exports embargo under the “Three Principles on Arms Exports” by presenting the new legal code of the “Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology” (*Bōei sōbi iten sangensoku*). This revision capped decades of salami slicing towards the dismantling of the arms transfer ban which had previously culminated in the so-called “Fujimura Announcement” by the DPJ Noda Yoshihiko Cabinet in 2011 (a major event which attested to the existence of some cross-partisan support for such revisions to Japan’s defense policy in recent years).<sup>396</sup> The three principles stated the cases in which transfers of defense equipment and technology are prohibited (the first principle), including when such transfers violates Japan’s obligations per treaties, international agreements, and UNSC resolutions, or when transfers are made to a country party to a conflict. The second principle states that in cases not within the purview of the first principle, a transfer can be made (via careful examination by the NSC) if it contributes to proactive pacifism and Japan’s security. The third principle outlines Japan’s control regarding the extra-purpose (dual) use of transferred goods, obligating the receiving

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<sup>394</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. n.d. “Japan’s Policies on the Control of Arms Exports.” Accessed October 4, 2024. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/disarmament/policy/index.html>.

<sup>395</sup> “Japan-United States: Exchange of Notes on Military Technology Transfer.” *International Legal Materials* 22, no. 6 (1983): 1246–51. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020782900028886>.

<sup>396</sup> Sato, Heigo. 2014. “From the ‘Three Principles of Arms Exports’ to the ‘Three Principles of Defense Equipment Transfer.’” *The Japan Institute of International Affairs*, May 14, 2014. [https://www.jiia.or.jp/en/ajiss\\_commentary/column-217.html](https://www.jiia.or.jp/en/ajiss_commentary/column-217.html).

party to obtaining Japan’s prior consent regarding extra-purpose use and transfer to third parties.

Following the war in Ukraine, a major revamp of Japan’s policy on the defense industry and arms exports was teased in the Kishida administration’s post-Ukraine NSS. The immediate trigger for these revisions was Japan’s role, per the request of the Biden Administration, in backfilling depleted US stockpiles in the aftermath of US military aid to Ukraine, specifically Japan’s provision of Patriot missile inventories to the US to backfill support of Ukraine’s IAMD (integrated air and missile defense) capacities. Following congressional stonewalling of Ukraine aid, the US sought to replenish its domestic arms stockpiles via its network of alliances. As seen above, it was in this context that South Korea had agreed to backfill ammunition (155mm shells) to the US early in 2023. The US also pressured Japan with similar backfilling requests, with NSC advisor Jake Sullivan raising the Patriot missile proposal in June 2023 and President Biden doing so during the trilateral Camp David Summit in August 2023.<sup>397</sup> This necessitated a revision of Japan’s export rules as such backfilling measures would not have been permitted even under Abe’s liberalized guidelines. Following deliberations and recommendations conducted by a working group of the ruling LDP-Kōmeitō coalition, the promised revision and its implementation guidelines were approved and published on December 22, 2023.

Per the new guidelines, outlined in Table 7 below, Japan conducted sweeping liberalization of export rules regarding defense equipment, with differing levels of controls (or relaxing thereof) assigned to five main categories of such equipment: equipment co-developed with other countries (international joint ventures), products licensed by foreign defense firms for domestic Japanese production, equipment parts, equipment outside the category of “arms” (per the government’s interpretation of its

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<sup>397</sup> Nakashima, Ellen, Michelle Ye Hee Lee, and Alex Horton. 2023. Running short on Ukraine Air Defenses, U.S. looks to Japan, December 19, 2023. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2023/12/19/us-japan-patriot-missiles-ukraine/>.

definition in the SDF Law),<sup>398</sup> and “arms related to cooperation in the so-called “5 categories” of activities (rescue, transport, warning, surveillance, and minesweeping). Of these categories, the licensed products category directly pertains to the Patriot missile system backfilling deal with the US, with the former guidelines changed to allow both parts and finished products under foreign license to be exported to the licensing country (a transaction previously only reserved for exports of US licensed parts to the US). It is important to remember that the basal three principles of Abe’s 2014 *Bōei sōbi iten sangensoku* remain valid throughout the Kishida 2023 and 2024 revisions, so re-exports of such products to a third nation would require prior consent (with Japan barring such re-export to nations involved in military conflict, thus constituting an effective end-user restriction that, like the case of South Korea, bars direct re-export of weapons to Ukraine). A \$19.6 million US deal for Mitsubishi Heavy Industries-produced PAC-3 missiles to be used in MIM-104 Patriot air missile systems was concluded in August 2024, following a pledge by Mitsubishi to double its annual production of such missiles the previous month.<sup>399</sup> Per increasing US-Japan efforts to diversify their missile supply per export demand to Ukraine and other countries and per bilateral efforts to shore up Japan’s deterrence and counterstrike capabilities, the two allies announced in July 2024 that Japan will be domestically producing Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAM) under US license.<sup>400</sup> As per the post-Ukraine War guidelines, such licensed products will now be able to be exported to the licensing

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<sup>398</sup> Per the *Bōei sōbi iten sangensoku*’s current implementation guidelines, “Arms under the Self-Defense Forces Law” means “firearms, gunpowder, swords, and other machines, instruments, devices, etc. intended to directly kill or wound people or destroy objects as a means of armed struggle (including, arms such as destroyers, fighter aircraft, tanks, etc., which are inherently equipped with firearms etc. and themselves act directly to kill or wound people or destroy objects as a means of armed struggle, but excluding parts).”

<sup>399</sup> Kusumoto, Hana, and Alex Wilson. 2024. “Japan to Replenish US Patriot Air-Defense Missiles Sent to Ukraine.” Stars and Stripes, August 1, 2024. [https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia\\_pacific/2024-08-01/japan-patriot-missiles-ukraine-14688361.html](https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia_pacific/2024-08-01/japan-patriot-missiles-ukraine-14688361.html).

<sup>400</sup> Harpley, Unshin Lee. 2024. “Japan to Start Making AMRAAMs and Export PAC-3 Missiles.” Air & Space Forces Magazine, August 7, 2024. <https://www.airandspaceforces.com/japan-steps-up-missile-production-in-deal-with-u-s/>.

country and from there be potentially re-exported to third nations per Japan’s prior consent.

**Table 7:** Japan’s Military “Normalization”: Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology

<u>Type of Defense Equipment</u>	<u>Export Regime following the 2014 Abe Revision (subject to three principles)</u>	<u>Current Rules following the 2023 and 2024 Kishida Revisions (still subject to three principles)</u>
Licensed products	Only parts (c.f., finished products) related to products licensed by US defense firms could be transferred to the US, where it could be re-exported to countries where such export is permitted under the US Export Control regime	Parts and finished products (both “arms” and non-arms) under foreign license could be exported to the licensing country and from there to third countries.
Parts	“Parts” were devoid of a legal definition. Transfer banned except for those pertaining to the below “5 Categories,” international joint development projects, or US-licensed products.	Legal definition proposed for “parts” within the 2023 amendment. Transfer of such parts is generally allowed for “countries cooperating with Japan in security area.”
“Arms” related to cooperation in the “5 Categories” (rescue,	Lack of clarification.	Defense equipment (including “arms”) needed for implementation of essential duties (and in some cases for self-protection) related to the “5

transport, warning, surveillance, and minesweeping)		Categories” may be exported to other countries.
Technical services (repairs)	Limited to US forces per the US-Japan Alliance	Expanded to countries other than the US, per Japan’s overseas security cooperation and reciprocal visiting deployments per RAAs (Reciprocal Access Agreements) with “like-minded countries.”
Equipment Outside the Categorization of “Arms”	Utilization of Article 116-3 of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) Law to carve out transfers for Ukraine only.	Per the amended Implementation Guidelines, equipment not categorized as arms under the SDF Law can be transferred to target countries facing “aggression in violation of international law, use of force or threat of force” (selection of countries to be supported being based on the goals of Japan’s NSS).
Equipment co-developed with other countries	Transfer of Japanese supplementary goods (parts) and technology to a third country which a partner country had transferred	Per a March 2024 cabinet decision of the Kishida administration, transfer of finished products from Japan to countries other

	finished products to were permitted.	than partner countries of “international joint development and production” deemed necessary for Japan’s defense buildup is now permitted when such transfers are deemed as required.
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Source: Compiled by author using Japanese government documents.<sup>401</sup>

Parts under the previous guidelines were not clearly defined and were banned from transfer except in the case of cooperation in the so-called “5 Categories” (rescue, transport, warning, surveillance, and minesweeping), international joint development projects, and the US alliance. Afterwards, a definition was provided,<sup>402</sup> and transfers were broadly allowed for “countries cooperating with Japan” in the area of security, subject to the three principles. Regarding “arms” necessary for the implementation of cooperative activities belonging to the 5 categories or for self-defense in certain operational environments, transfer is now allowed, which may have great implications for such operations in gray zone environments. Finally, transfer of defense equipment to new countries entails provisions of related services

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<sup>401</sup> Japan Ministry of Defense. 2024a. “Implementation Guidelines for the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology.” March 26, 2024. <https://www.mod.go.jp/atla/en/policy.html>; Japan Ministry of Defense. 2024b. “Transfer of Finished Products from Japan to Countries Other than Partner Countries of International Joint Development and Production.” March 26, 2024. [https://www.mod.go.jp/atla/en/soubichou\\_gaiyou.html](https://www.mod.go.jp/atla/en/soubichou_gaiyou.html); Japan Ministry of Defense. 2023. “Overview of the Revision of the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology and Implementation Guidelines (December 2023).” December 22, 2023. [https://www.mod.go.jp/atla/en/policy/pdf/rd\\_vision\\_exp20203\\_03.pdf](https://www.mod.go.jp/atla/en/policy/pdf/rd_vision_exp20203_03.pdf).

<sup>402</sup> Per the new implementation guidelines, a “part” means “an item that is incorporated as a part of a finished product. However, it excludes the one that can function as equipment by themselves.”

such as repairs, and these services were made available to countries considered to be security partners of Japan (and not just the US).

Two final areas of revision also pertain to the Ukraine War and the post-Ukraine security environment. The first is equipment outside the categorization of arms (non-lethal defense equipment). Japan wanted early in the war to contribute material support to the war effort in Ukraine, and it utilized a legal loophole in Article 116-3 of the SDF Law to allow grant transfers of unused SDF equipment to Ukraine. This ad hoc loophole carved out only for Ukraine was universalized to cover all equipment not categorized as arms and to apply to transfers to any country facing aggression in violation of international law.<sup>403</sup> Direct Ukraine aid provided by Japan included trucks, material carriers, bulletproof vests, and protective clothing and masks (mirroring South Korea's non-lethal aid provisions to Ukraine of bulletproof vests, helmets, medical supplies, de-mining vehicles, and mini-excavator vehicles).

Regarding the final category of equipment co-developed with other countries in joint projects (or “international joint development and production”),<sup>404</sup> the immediate trigger for this provision was the Global Combat Air Program (GCAP), a highlight of Japan's deepening security ties with NATO countries following the Ukraine War. GCAP involved a December 2022 merger of previously disparate sixth-generation fighter jet development projects, namely the UK-Italy Tempest project and Japan's F-X project. A so-called sixth-generation jet fighter is a

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<sup>403</sup> 杉本 康士. 2022. “装備品提供、ウクライナ支援に制約 法制度に課題.” 産経新聞：産経ニュース, March 8, 2022. <https://www.sankei.com/article/20220308-T4IJKX3LBVJKZAI34P42YIAMGI/>.

<sup>404</sup> Per the new implementation guidelines, “International joint development and production” means “international joint development including international joint research or international joint production in which the Government or Japanese companies participate and includes: (a) International joint development between the Government and a foreign government, (b) Participation by a Japanese company in the development of defense equipment and technology by a foreign government, (c) Production licensed from a foreign country that is carried out by a Japanese company in partnership with a foreign counterpart, (d) Development or production that is carried out by a Japanese company using Japanese and foreign technologies in partnership with a foreign company, (e) Participation in an international system for sharing parts etc., and (f) Provision of technical information or specimens for a feasibility study regarding international joint development or international joint production.”

contested and experimental concept, but the consensus is that such a fighter would feature enhanced speed, stealth, and range capabilities as well as compatibility with so-called “collaborative combat aircraft” or AI-operated drones (drones playing an increasingly important role in the Ukraine War).<sup>405</sup> An arms race has revolved around the development of this upgrade in technology, with China and Russia also in hot pursuit, and those involved with the project have posited this joint development as crucial in countering the growth of both countries.<sup>406</sup>

In March 2024, the Kishida administration added an additional revision to its 2023 slate which enabled the export of finished products of international joint development projects such as GCAP to countries other than the partner countries to the project. With regards to the groundbreaking GCAP precedent, these “other countries” have been specified as those countries which have signed “agreements concerning the transfer of defense equipment and technology” with Japan, essentially giving Japan the power to export certain finished weapons to a pool of like-minded countries. In December 2024, Mongolia became the 16<sup>th</sup> country to sign such an agreement with Japan,<sup>407</sup> and Japan agreed to start negotiations with new NATO member Finland to sign yet another equivalent agreement.<sup>408</sup> Thus, a major breakthrough for Japan’s ability to export finished defense products to third countries has been accomplished. This is especially significant in light of the several post-Ukraine joint development opportunities that have been offered to Japan in addition to the GCAP. In May 2024, the US and Japan signed an arrangement to jointly

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<sup>405</sup> Losey, Stephen. 2024. “How the Sixth-Generation Fighter Jet Will Upend Air Warfare.” Defense News, July 19, 2024. <https://www.defensenews.com/air/2024/07/19/how-the-sixth-generation-fighter-jet-will-upend-air-warfare/>.

<sup>406</sup> Martin, Tim. 2024. “UK ‘Needs’ GCAP Future Fighter to Counter Growth of Russian and Chinese Stealth Jets: Air Chief.” Breaking Defense, December 13, 2024. <https://breakingdefense.com/2024/11/uk-needs-gcap-future-fighter-to-counter-growth-of-russian-and-chinese-stealth-jets-air-chief/>.

<sup>407</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2024e. “Signing of the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of Mongolia Concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology.” December 11, 2024. [https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite\\_000001\\_00809.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite_000001_00809.html).

<sup>408</sup> Kyodo News. 2024a. “Japan, Finland to Negotiate Defense Equipment Transfer Pact.” December 10, 2024. <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2024/12/e1f57e424698-japan-finland-to-negotiate-defense-equipment-transfer-pact.html?phrase=Henoko&words=>.

develop a hypersonic missile interceptor system (Glide Phase Interceptor) to be deployed on Aegis-class destroyers, a direct response to the possession of such weapons by Russia and China and its development by North Korea.<sup>409</sup> Japan has also opened new projects with its “special strategic partner” Australia, including planned joint developments (also involving the US) of military drones<sup>410</sup> and a landmark joint development deal involving general purpose frigates (including a prospective first transfer of a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force ship in history).<sup>411</sup>

Other than wholesale changes to the legal architecture of weapons transfers and cooperation, the Ukraine crisis served as a catalyst for other changes to Japan’s postwar military orthodoxy. For example, the crisis catalyzed a policy move towards an open embrace of the controversial concept of “counterstrike capability” or *hangeki nōryoku*. According to the minutes of the panel discussions leading up to the NSS publication, counterstrike capability was discussed after the Ukraine War in September and November of 2022 and a November 22<sup>nd</sup> report gave the green light to Japan’s possession of the capability.<sup>412</sup> The resulting NSS outlined Japan’s right to counterstrike capability, which was followed by the first mention of the capability in a defense white paper in 2023.<sup>413</sup> Five trillion yen (\$37 billion) were

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<sup>409</sup> Yamaguchi, Mari. 2024. “Japan and the US Move Ahead in Co-Developing Hypersonic Weapons Interceptor as Regional Threats Grow.” AP News, May 17, 2024. <https://apnews.com/article/japan-us-interceptor-hypersonic-weapons-north-korea-55d625f57a041cf7de7ce89bb4c64d3c>.

<sup>410</sup> Moriyasu, Ken. 2023. “U.S. and Australia Agree to Cooperate with Japan on Military Drones.” Nikkei Asia, October 25, 2023. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Indo-Pacific/U.S.-and-Australia-agree-to-cooperate-with-Japan-on-military-drones>.

<sup>411</sup> Takahashi, Kosuke. 2024b. “Japan Allows Joint Development and Production of Australia’s New General Purpose Frigates by Bidding with New FFM.” Naval News, November 29, 2024. <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2024/11/japan-allows-joint-development-and-production-of-australias-new-general-purpose-frigates-by-bidding-with-new-ffm/>.

<sup>412</sup> 高橋杏璃, 佐藤武嗣. 2023. “敵基地攻撃、防衛費増... 有識者会議ではどんな議論が行われたのか?.” 朝日新聞デジタル, March 5, 2023. [https://digital.asahi.com/articles/ASR345JLFR2XUTFK01D.html?\\_requesturl=articles%2FASR345JLFR2XUTFK01D.html&pn=12](https://digital.asahi.com/articles/ASR345JLFR2XUTFK01D.html?_requesturl=articles%2FASR345JLFR2XUTFK01D.html&pn=12).

<sup>413</sup> 東京新聞. 2023. “防衛白書に初めて明記された「敵基地攻撃能力」 行使する際の定義があいまいでは...” July 29, 2023. <https://www.tokyo-np.co.jp/article/266295>.

earmarked for long-range missile deployment from fiscal year 2023 to 2027, with counterstrike investments prioritizing extensions of the range of native surface-to-ship guided missiles, procurement of US Tomahawk cruise missiles, and development of novel technologies such as hypersonic missiles.<sup>414</sup> Such increases in missile procurement demands led to the awarding of \$2.8 billion in windfall contracts to Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.<sup>415</sup> Public opinion shifts since the Ukraine War have supported these shifts, with polling taken around the time of the cabinet decision on counterstrike capabilities suggesting majority approval (even per polling by the liberal-leaning Asahi Shimbun).<sup>416</sup>

The Ukraine crisis has even changed the political conversations of Japanese policymakers with regards to the issue of nuclear weapons. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the security environment after the Ukraine War has led to the signing of new joint nuclear deterrence guidelines between the US and South Korea as well as an increasingly visible discussion of a NATO-style nuclear sharing mechanism amongst South Korean conservatives.<sup>417</sup> A similar discourse has also been catalyzed in Japan following the Ukraine War, with former PM Abe floating the idea of a NATO-style nuclear sharing agreement in a televised debate immediately after the war.<sup>418</sup> Although Kishida, a native of Hiroshima whose policies hew more closely to the

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<sup>414</sup> Kyodo News. 2022a. “Japan to Earmark 5 Tril. Yen for Long-Range Missiles over 5 Years.” Kyodo News+, December 7, 2022.

<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2022/12/83976c4f0bc8-japan-to-earmark-5-tril-yen-for-long-range-missiles-over-5-years.html?phrase=nissan&words=>

<sup>415</sup> Kelly, Tim. 2023. “Japan Awards Mitsubishi Heavy \$2.8 BLN Missile Contracts | Reuters.” Reuters, April 11, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/japan-awards-mitsubishi-heavy-28-bln-missile-contracts-2023-04-11/>.

<sup>416</sup> 朝日新聞デジタル. 2022. “朝日新聞世論調査 質問と回答（12月17、18日実施）.” December 19, 2022.

[https://digital.asahi.com/articles/ASQDM5522QDMUZPS001.html?\\_requesturl=articles%2FASQDM5522QDMUZPS001.html&pn=4](https://digital.asahi.com/articles/ASQDM5522QDMUZPS001.html?_requesturl=articles%2FASQDM5522QDMUZPS001.html&pn=4).

<sup>417</sup> Gallo, William, and Juhyun Lee. 2024. “Under Yoon, Calls for South Korean Nukes ‘Normalized.’” Voice of America, September 9, 2024. <https://www.voanews.com/a/under-yoon-calls-for-south-korean-nukes-normalized/7777068.html>.

<sup>418</sup> Johnson, Jesse. 2022. “Japan Should Consider Hosting U.S. Nuclear Weapons, Abe Says.” The Japan Times, February 27, 2022. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/02/27/national/politics-diplomacy/shinzo-abe-japan-nuclear-weapons-taiwan/>.

“Three Non-Nuclear Principles” (non-possession, non-production, and non-introduction of nuclear weapons) and the overarching concept of the “Four Pillars of Nuclear Policy” (another postwar orthodoxy originating from the policy statements of Satō Eisaku), has pushed back against this idea,<sup>419</sup> a former taboo is becoming increasingly visible in policy discourse. Most notably, PM Ishiba Shigeru has backed the idea in theory. In a Hudson Institute interview taken immediately before his rise to the position of prime minister, Ishiba noted that potential Russia and North Korean nuclear cooperation after their 2024 treaty and China’s strategic nuclear weapons threaten the proper function of US extended deterrence in the region and may necessitate a nuclear sharing agreement on the part of US allies in the region.<sup>420</sup> While still nascent, such trends in policymaking opinion, coupled with the concrete policy changes outlined above mark a significant erosion of postwar *senshubōei*. In sum, the Ukraine War has served as a significant catalyst for Japan’s military normalization, opening new possibilities for weapons development, security capacity building and cooperation with “like-minded” partners, and Japan’s deterrence capabilities.

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<sup>419</sup> Nobumasa, Akiyama. 2023. “Kishida’s Realism Diplomacy: Nuclear Disarmament.” CSIS, June 8, 2023. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/kishidas-realism-diplomacy-nuclear-disarmament>.

<sup>420</sup> Hudson Institute. 2024. “Shigeru Ishiba on Japan’s New Security Era: The Future of Japan’s Foreign Policy.” September 25, 2024. <https://www.hudson.org/politics-government/shigeru-ishiba-japans-new-security-era-future-japans-foreign-policy>.

### 3. Expanding the *Ri-ekisen*? Expanding Horizons of Security Cooperation

A final implication of the Ukraine War for Japan's grand strategy is an expansion of the geographical purview of its influence in the realms of international relations and geopolitics. As stated above in Chapter 5, Michael Green and others posited the modern, post-Abe iteration of Japan's grand strategy as featuring the Indo-Pacific as its primary geographic scope (its *ri-ekisen*). Green in particular highlights Japan's pursuit of alignment with now like-minded maritime powers that had failed to materialize earlier in Japan's history, noting that within the contest of great power politics (i.e., US-China rivalry), for Japan, "the chessboard upon which the game is being played is the Indo-Pacific."<sup>421</sup> The Indo-Pacific is also the site of Japan's signature regional initiative, the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision, which, despite the addition of some items pertaining to economic cooperation, remains fundamentally tethered to issues of geopolitics and security, especially with regards to maritime domains.

As is the case with South Korea, a major shift that occurred for Japan in the aftermath of the Ukraine War is the expansion of security cooperation between Japan and Ukraine-aligned European nations, especially via the medium of NATO. The trajectory of South Korea and Japan's alignment with NATO has followed a remarkably similar track. Like South Korea, Japan has contributed to the Comprehensive Assistance Package for Ukraine, extending checkbook diplomacy to a NATO trust fund project. Japan is also a member of NATO's burgeoning IP4 partnership, and, as such, Japan's prime minister was invited for the first time to join the other IP4 leaders (including President Yoon) in attending the 2022 NATO summit in Madrid. Japan has also regularized its attendance at NATO Foreign Ministers' meetings since 2022.<sup>422</sup> On October 2024, Japan attended a NATO Defense Ministers' Meeting for the first time, where Japan's Defense Minister

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<sup>421</sup> Green, Michael, 2022, 105.

<sup>422</sup> NATO. 2024c. "Relations with Japan." NATO, October 17, 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_50336.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_50336.htm).

Nakatani Gen presented on the topic of increasing China-Russia force projection into Japanese airspace following the Ukraine War.<sup>423</sup>

Japan has also joined NATO's Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) in November 2022, becoming only the second Asian nation to do so (following South Korea's admission in May 2022). The flag raising ceremony marking Japan's entry into the CCDCOE was made symbolically fraught by the simultaneous raising of the flag of Ukraine, another new member of the Tallinn-based COE.<sup>424</sup> It has been noted that the CCDCOE can serve as an intermediary for Japan's cybersecurity capacity building support and information sharing with Ukraine.<sup>425</sup> This is a salient point as Japan, as a G7 member, has committed itself to signing a decade-long security agreement with Ukraine via a joint declaration with the other leaders of the G7 announced during the 2023 NATO summit in Vilnius.<sup>426</sup> Per this agreement, Japan obligated itself to non-lethal equipment transfers to Ukraine (as seen in the previous subchapter), IT and demining support for Ukraine via the Ukraine Defense Contact Group or Ramstein Format (which also counts South Korea as a member), contribution to the NATO-Ukraine CAP Trust Fund (again along with South Korea), treatment for Ukrainian service members (via the Ukraine embassy in Japan),<sup>427</sup> and cooperation in the area of intelligence

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<sup>423</sup> Satomi, Nen. 2024. "NATO Defense Ministers Stress Vitalness of Indo-Pacific Security: The Asahi Shimbun: Breaking News, Japan News and Analysis." The Asahi Shimbun, October 18, 2024. <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/15471029>.

<sup>424</sup> ERR News. 2023. "Four New Member States Join Estonia-Based NATO CCDCOE." May 17, 2023. <https://news.err.ee/1608980384/four-new-member-states-join-estonia-based-nato-ccdcoe>.

<sup>425</sup> Pernik, Piret. 2023. "NATO-Japan Deepening Cooperation in Cybersecurity and Critical Technologies." Japan Up Close, March 24, 2023. [https://japanupclose.web-japan.org/policy/p20230324\\_2.html](https://japanupclose.web-japan.org/policy/p20230324_2.html).

<sup>426</sup> Soldatenko, Mykhailo. 2024. "Getting Ukraine's Security Agreements Right." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 8, 2024. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/07/getting-ukraines-security-agreements-right?lang=en>.

<sup>427</sup> Yuki, Wada. 2024. "Japan Hospitals Treat Former Ukrainian Soldiers Injured in War: NHK World-Japan News." NHK WORLD, July 24, 2024. <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/backstories/3478/>.

capabilities.<sup>428</sup> Japan’s intelligence pledges were actualized in November 2024, with the signing of the Japan-Ukraine Agreement on the Security of Information, an information security agreement that establishes the legal basis for reciprocal use of information, including classified information. The agreement constituted the tenth such agreement on the security of information that Japan has signed (joining equivalent agreements with the US, NATO, France, Australia, the UK, India, Italy, the ROK, and Germany).<sup>429</sup>

Like the other IP4 countries, Japan-NATO cooperation operates under the three-year framework of an Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP), which the two agreed in July 2023. Unlike the ITPP agreements for the other IP4 nations, the Japan-NATO ITPP is made publicly available via an open (possibly redacted version). Although such cooperative planning is still nascent and substantially hidden from public knowledge, the publicly available information highlights NATO’s focus on certain areas in its cooperation with South Korea and Japan, especially with regards to cybersecurity and emerging and disruptive technologies (e.g., weaponization of such novel domains as AI, hypersonic systems, space, etc.). These areas of focus have been presented in 2024 via the truncated format of the NATO-IP4 “Flagship Projects,” which consist of four cooperative projects covering the issues of Ukraine aid, cyber defense, countering disinformation, and technology such as AI.<sup>430</sup> When comparing the 11 items of ITPP cooperation mentioned in South Korean press releases and the 16 items stated in Japan’s ITPP agreement, some minute differences are visible, including the inclusion of counterterrorism for the ROK (a proposed item of cooperation which is absent in the case of Japan).

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<sup>428</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2024a. “ACCORD ON SUPPORT FOR UKRAINE AND COOPERATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN AND UKRAINE.” June 13, 2024. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/100684186.pdf>.

<sup>429</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2024f. “Signing of the Japan-Ukraine Agreement on the Security of Information.” November 16, 2024. [https://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/c\\_see/ua/pageite\\_000001\\_00671.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/c_see/ua/pageite_000001_00671.html).

<sup>430</sup> NATO. 2024d. “Relations with Partners in the Indo-Pacific Region.” NATO, October 24, 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/in/natohq/topics\\_183254.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/in/natohq/topics_183254.htm).

**Table 8:** Areas of Cooperation Proposed by the NATO-South Korea and NATO-Japan ITPPs

ITPP Party	South Korea	Japan
<p>Items of cooperation (arranged by author in alphabetical order)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation</li> <li>• capability development and interoperability</li> <li>• climate change and security</li> <li>• counterterrorism cooperation</li> <li>• cyber defence</li> <li>• dialogue and consultation</li> <li>• emerging and disruptive technologies</li> <li>• practical cooperation for interoperability</li> <li>• public diplomacy</li> <li>• science and technology</li> <li>• women, peace and security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation</li> <li>• capability development and interoperability</li> <li>• climate change and security</li> <li>• cyber defence</li> <li>• dialogue and consultation</li> <li>• emergency management</li> <li>• emerging and disruptive technologies</li> <li>• human security</li> <li>• maritime security</li> <li>• practical cooperation for interoperability</li> <li>• public diplomacy</li> <li>• resilience and civil preparedness</li> <li>• science and technology</li> <li>• space security</li> <li>• strategic communication</li> <li>• women, peace, and security</li> </ul>

Source: Compiled by author using cited sources.<sup>431</sup>

Japan's 16 ITTP items mirror South Korea's in their emphasis on the items endemic to the IP4 flagship projects. Per its cyber and information cooperation pledges, Japan and NATO agreed to establish a confidential information sharing hotline in July 2024.<sup>432</sup> Like South Korea in 2024, Japan held its inaugural "Cyber Dialogue" with NATO in November 2023.<sup>433</sup> Japan and South Korea also both joined in NATO's cyber defense exercises Cyber Coalition and Locked Shields. There are also differences in the areas of cooperation between South Korea and Japan. For example, of Japan's 16 ITTP items, six (strategic communications, space, maritime, emergency management, resilience and civil preparedness, and human security) are absent in the ROK roster, suggesting Japan's wider cooperation with NATO across more domains. Regarding strategic communications, Japan announced its intention during the 2024 NATO Summit to dispatch new personnel to NATO's Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (StratCom COE).<sup>434</sup> Regarding the crucial arena of maritime security, a key aspect of Japan's FOIP concept, Japan and NATO conducted a naval exercise in the Eastern Mediterranean in August 2024 (which followed in the precedent of another passing exercise in the Baltic Sea in 2018).<sup>435</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> Prime Minister's Office of Japan. 2023. "Individually Tailored Partnership Programme between NATO and Japan for 2023 – 2026." July 12, 2023. <https://japan.kantei.go.jp/content/000131075.pdf>.

; Jun, Hae-Won. 2023. "NATO and Its Indo-Pacific Partners Choose Practice over Rhetoric in 2023." Royal United Services Institute, December 5, 2023. <https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/nato-and-its-indo-pacific-partners-choose-practice-over-rhetoric-2023>.

<sup>432</sup> The Yomiuri Shimbun. 2024b. "Japan, NATO Establishing Confidential Info Sharing Line; Prime Minister Kishida to Meet with Secretary General, Finalize Details." July 10, 2024. <https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/defense-security/20240710-197753/>.

<sup>433</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2023a. "The First Japan-NATO Cyber Dialogue." November 24, 2023. [https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e\\_003343.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_003343.html).

<sup>434</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2024c. "Joint Press Occasion and Meeting between Prime Minister Kishida and NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg." July 11, 2024. [https://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/ep/pageite\\_000001\\_00442.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/erp/ep/pageite_000001_00442.html).

<sup>435</sup> NATO. 2024b. "NATO Naval Forces Conduct Exercise with Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force and Allies." August 15, 2024. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_228282.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_228282.htm?selectedLocale=en).

While Japan's post-Ukraine cooperation with NATO basically mirrors the alignment between the other IP4 countries and NATO, Japan's unique contribution to this alignment is the theoretical linkage between an Indo-Pacific security paradigm and a Transatlantic one. As mentioned above, Japan's pursuit of international cooperation and some hard power in its *ri-ekisen* of the Indo-Pacific has been made within the bespoke conceptual framework of a FOIP regional order based on principles that definitionally alienate authoritarian countries such as China (e.g., the "rule of law" and "freedom of navigation"). Even before the war, the US and its aligned nations have been adopting Japan's FOIP concept and adapting it to widen the geographical scopes of their respective national security interests to include the increasingly important Indo-Pacific region. Nations (and supranational organization) that have officially published an Indo-Pacific strategy or have incorporated it into their security literature include France (2018), Germany (2020), the Netherlands (2020), the EU (2021), and the UK (2023).<sup>436</sup> It should be noted that FOIP is a concept that includes a breadth of different interpretations and guises. For example, Kishida's 2023 "New Plan for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific," announced in the context of a policy speech in India (a country which exists in the margins of both the Quad and BRICS), added more conciliatory language such as "inclusivity" and "rulemaking through dialogue."<sup>437</sup> Such sentiments echo the politically-muted norm-setting aspirations of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific.<sup>438</sup>

On the other hand, the interpretation of the chameleon concept of FOIP in Europe has leaned far more into the aspects of FOIP that involve values-based cooperation and tacit containment of revisionist powers such as China. As Pugliese points out in his study of EU views of the FOIP concept and Indo-Pacific alignment, the views of

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<sup>436</sup> Przystup, James J. 2024. "NATO in the Indo-Pacific, Where 'East Is East.'" Hudson Institute, December 11, 2024. <https://www.hudson.org/international-organizations/nato-indo-pacific-where-east-east-james-przystup>.

<sup>437</sup> Guan, Benny Teh Cheng. 2023. "Kicking off Kishida's New Free and Open Indo-Pacific Plan." East Asia Forum, May 11, 2023. <https://eastasiaforum.org/2023/05/11/kicking-off-kishidas-new-free-and-open-indo-pacific-plan/>.

<sup>438</sup> Agastia, IGBD. 2022. "Improving the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific." East Asia Forum, July 28, 2022. <https://eastasiaforum.org/2022/07/28/improving-the-asean-outlook-on-the-indo-pacific/>.

Brussels and other European capitals initially tacked to a third-way interpretation of FOIP during the early years (2016-2019) of its utilization by the Abe administration and the Trump administration.<sup>439</sup> However, European views gravitated towards derisking and containment logic per the global decline in positive views of China by the time of the pandemic and Pugliese noted that the Ukraine War played a key role in accelerating the “geo-economic awakening of Europe.”<sup>440</sup> He goes on to note that the sharp turn in China policy amongst the Baltic states and amongst Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries after the Ukraine War (made more symbolically significant by the hosting of the 2023 NATO summit in Vilnius, a European capital which has spearheaded anti-China, pro-Taiwan initiatives) constituted a factor in the geopolitical shift in the EU’s Indo-Pacific policy. Such an analysis comports with the observable foreign policy behavior of the Baltic and CEE states, including the pro-Taiwan policy stance of the Czech Republic in particular<sup>441</sup> (which released its own version of an Indo-Pacific strategy after the Ukraine War) as well as the aforementioned sharp increases in arms transfer activity between South Korea and Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the Ukraine War. Increased minilateral and bilateral cooperation (including with NATO) by South Korea and Japan are also cited in Pugliese’s study as factors in the Europe’s shifting views of the Indo-Pacific. Regarding this point, one can find the views of NATO (the member states of which largely overlap with those of the EU) on the Indo-Pacific region within its 2023 “Regional Perspective Report on the Indo Pacific,” which notes that the “Indo-Pacific refers to a more geopolitical and security context” than an economic context and that the “main aim of using the ‘Indo-Pacific’ term is to resist or contain China by including India within the definition.”<sup>442</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> Pugliese, Giulio. 2024. “The European Union and an ‘Indo-Pacific’ Alignment.” *Asia-Pacific Review* 31 (1): 17–44. doi:10.1080/13439006.2024.2334182.

<sup>440</sup> Pugliese, Giulio, 2024, 30.

<sup>441</sup> McVicar, Daniel. 2023. “How the Czech Republic Became One of Taiwan’s Closest European Partners and What It Means for EU-China Relations.” Council on Foreign Relations, April 24, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/how-czech-republic-became-one-taiwans-closest-european-partners-and-what-it-means-eu-china>.

<sup>442</sup> NATO Allied Command Transformation. 2023. “REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES REPORT ON THE INDO-PACIFIC.” May 2023. <https://www.act.nato.int/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/regional-perspectives-2022-07-v2-2.pdf>.

Per these shifting views, NATO institutionalized IP4 cooperation and its ITPP with Japan as shown above. The EU, which echoed NATO's geopolitical and geoeconomic concerns regarding the Indo-Pacific in its Indo-Pacific Strategy and post-Ukraine Strategic Compass, has again been mirroring NATO in its security cooperation with Japan. As mentioned in the introduction, the Ukraine War was seen as a catalyst for the "Brusselisation" of the foreign and security policies of the EU, furnishing a new sense of agency for the union which could be seen in the initiation of the first-ever live EU military exercise in October 2023.<sup>443</sup> Per its emerging identity as a bloc with military responsibilities outside its borders, the EU signed a security and defense pact with Japan in November 2024, which represented the first security partnership signed between the EU and an Indo-Pacific nation.<sup>444</sup> This "Security and Defence Partnership" was released during the inaugural EU-Japan Strategic Dialogue held in Tokyo on November 1, 2024. The new partnership agreement highlights future areas of cooperation which are remarkably similar to those outlined by the NATO ITPP, pledging dialogue and cooperation in such domains as maritime security (including joint exercises), space security, cyber issues, hybrid threats (including disinformation), non-proliferation, the defense industry, conflict prevention and crisis management, counterterrorism, and the "women, peace and security" agenda.<sup>445</sup> Again, South Korea and Japan were seen as a complimentary set, and the EU signed an equivalent defense agreement with South Korea just three days after the Japan-EU agreement.<sup>446</sup> It is also notable that Europe is eyeing this same pair, South Korea and Japan, for derisking operations, with Dutch

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<sup>443</sup> Tidey, Alice. 2023. "'A New Page in EU Defence': First-Ever Live EU Military Exercise Kicks Off." Euronews, October 17, 2023. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2023/10/17/a-new-page-in-eu-defence-first-ever-live-eu-military-exercise-kicks-off>.

<sup>444</sup> Euronews. 2024. "Japan and EU Sign New Defence and Security Pact amid Rising Regional Tensions." November 1, 2024. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/11/01/japan-and-eu-sign-new-defence-and-security-pact>.

<sup>445</sup> European Union External Action Service. 2024. "SECURITY AND DEFENCE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND JAPAN." November 1, 2024. <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2024/EU-Japan%20Security%20and%20Defence%20Partnership.pdf>.

<sup>446</sup> De La Feld, Simone. 2024. "EU, South Korea Sign Defence Agreement. Borrell Asks Seoul to Step up Support for Ukraine." Euneews, November 7, 2024. <https://www.euneews.it/en/2024/11/04/eu-south-korea-sign-defence-agreement-borrell-asks-seoul-to-step-up-support-for-ukraine/>.

chipmaker ASML having announced plans to open infrastructure in both Hwaseong<sup>447</sup> and Hokkaidō.<sup>448</sup>

As shown above, Japan's conceptual framework of the "Indo-Pacific" as a coherent geographical reference and its attendant concept of FOIP were adopted by European actors acting within the realm of Transatlantic security, with such concepts taking on increased geopolitical significance and manifesting in unprecedented IP4 security cooperation after the Ukraine War. In the case of Japan, this alignment has been such that Jens Stoltenberg has repeatedly highlighted Japan as constituting NATO's closest and most capable outside partner.<sup>449</sup> However, a glaring limitation exists regarding the conceptual legitimacy of NATO and Europe's security cooperation with such Indo-Pacific powers as Japan. Namely, what was the ideational justification for such organizations, especially a NATO rooted in the arena of Transatlantic security, to engage in high-profile security cooperation with the Indo-Pacific? From an early juncture in the war, Japan sought to answer this question by linking Transatlantic or European security with security crises in East Asia. Since 2022, PM Kishida has repeatedly used the mantra that today's "Ukraine may be East Asia tomorrow" in meetings with Western leaders. Japan's post-Ukraine NSS specifically noted that "unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force are constantly taking place" and that situations such as "Russia's aggression against Ukraine, may occur especially in East Asia in the future."<sup>450</sup> Thus, Japan sought to link the rule-breaking behavior of Russia in continental Europe with potential attempts to "change the status quo by force" on the part of China in the Taiwan Strait, East China Sea, and South China Sea.

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<sup>447</sup> 정진욱. 2024. "ASML, 화성에 초미세반도체 연구지원시설 짓는다." 매일경제, July 4, 2024. <https://www.mk.co.kr/news/society/11058931>.

<sup>448</sup> Swift, Rocky, and Toby Sterling. 2023. "Chipmaker ASML to Set up Base in Japan's Hokkaido to Support New Rapidus Plant." Reuters, September 26, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/technology/asml-set-up-base-japans-hokkaido-support-rapidus-chip-plant-nikkei-2023-09-26/>.

<sup>449</sup> NATO. 2023b. "Secretary General in Tokyo: No NATO Partner Is Closer or More Capable than Japan." January 31, 2023. [https://www.nato.int/cps/is/natohq/news\\_211272.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/is/natohq/news_211272.htm).

<sup>450</sup> Cabinet Secretariat, 2022. "National Security Strategy of Japan." December 16, 2022. <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/siryoushoushou/221216anzenhoshou/nss-e.pdf>.

This ideation is not new. Bacon and Burton pointed out in their 2017 article how NATO and Japanese security analysts were increasingly linking Russian and Chinese threats to a rules-based international order and had been perpetuating narratives of “natural partnership” and “strategic parallelism” in their mutual management of the security threats that each faced “from its significant, authoritarian other.”<sup>451</sup> Their pre-Ukraine War analysis notes how the fallout from what was perceived to be NATO’s inadequate response to the Crimea crisis had caused Japan to pull back from the hardline of strategic parallelism and to pursue rapprochement with Putin, an assessment which dovetails with Abe’s “new approach” to relations with Russia (as explained in Chapter 6-1) fashioned in the context of Japan’s efforts to resolve the “Northern Territories” and peace treaty issues. However, with the resolute, united response to the Ukraine War from both NATO and the US’s Indo-Pacific allies (and ensuing bloc politics), narratives of strategic parallelism have returned. Indeed, like the institution of NATO itself, such narratives have been given a powerful lease of life, as these theoretical linkages between Transatlantic and Indo-Pacific security have been furnished with a real-life reference point constituting the most severe conventional war in Europe since WWII.

Having been given this opportunity to expand the horizons of its hard power beyond both its traditional purview of Japanese territory (per postwar “one-nation pacifism”) and its *ri-ekisen* of the Indo-Pacific (per Abe’s “proactive pacifism” and FOIP), Japan also felt compelled to broaden its signature foreign policy doctrine of seeking to realize a “free and open Indo-Pacific” (*jiyūde hirakareta Indo-Taiheiyō*). As Hakata, Aizawa, and Cannon point out, since 2023, PM Kishida has subtly shifted focus towards a new normative concept, the “free and open international order” (*jiyū de hirakareta kokusai chitsujo*) or “FOIO,” in his foreign policy literature and diplomatic discourse with Western leaders.<sup>452</sup> The FOIO concept is cited to have

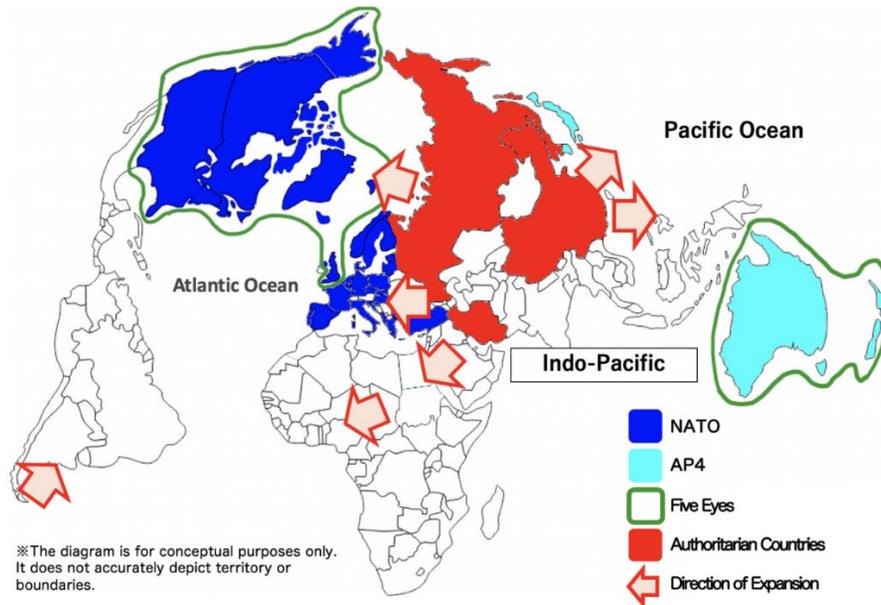
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<sup>451</sup> Bacon, Paul, and Joe Burton. 2017. “NATO-Japan Relations: Projecting Strategic Narratives of ‘Natural Partnership’ and Cooperative Security.” *Asian Security* 14 (1): 38–50. doi:10.1080/14799855.2017.1361730.

<sup>452</sup> Hakata, Kei, Teruaki Aizawa, and Brendon J. Cannon. 2024. “Japan’s Strategic Messaging for a ‘Free and Open International Order (FOIO)’: Can It Preserve Its Indo-Pacific Achievements?” *Focus Asia Perspective & Analysis*, The Institute for Security and

been introduced in 2017 soon after the 2016 introduction of the FOIP concept, and is noted by the authors to often take a different terminological form, with FOIO often being used in conjunction with the phrase “based on the rule of law.” FOIO is featured in Japan’s 2022 NSS as one of Japan’s “national security objectives,” with Japan pledging to secure a “free and open international order based on the rule of law” in conjunction with allies, like-minded countries, and others to “achieve a new balance in international relations” (making it clear that such partnerships involving Japan extend beyond the Indo-Pacific and that the political subtext of FOIO is the realist aim of counterbalancing certain authoritarian powers). The FOIO concept has been adopted by NATO and the EU and appears in the text of the Japan-NATO ITPP and the Japan-EU Defense and Security Partnership agreement. The concept again appeared in the US-South Korea-Japan trilateral Camp David statement in 2023. As shown in Chapter 5, Japan has used FOIP as a conceptual arena to justify its use of hard power (deployment of the SDF) outside Japan. In short, a variant of FOIP with much of the same geopolitical implications has been placed into the spotlight per Japan’s post-Ukraine War cooperation with NATO and the EU. Though not originally meant to portray the geopolitical ideation of FOIO, Nagashima Jun’s conceptual map shown below demonstrates the logic of FOIO partnership in the face of authoritarian expansion very aptly.

**Figure 6:** Conceptual Map of Authoritarian Expansion and its Containment (FOIO Cooperation and Convergence of Transatlantic and Indo-Pacific Security Paradigms)



Source: Nagashima Jun, 2024<sup>453</sup>

One prominent example of a FOIO partnership is the example of the 2023 UK-Japan Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), which constituted the second such RAA Japan has signed in its history. RAAs are significant in that they constitute visiting forces agreements that provide the legal basis for reciprocal visiting deployment of troops engaging in cooperative activities (in contrast to the unilateral permanent deployment of the USFJ arranged by the US-Japan SOFA). In signing the UK-Japan RAA, Japan has now established the legal basis for the stationing of the SDF beyond the Indo-Pacific region, where it had already established such a basis via the January 2022 Australia-Japan RAA, Japan’s seminal RAA signed on the eve of the Ukraine War. The 2023 UK-Japan RAA was described by the UK government as the “most important defense treaty between the UK and Japan since 1902” (the year of the signing of the Anglo-Japanese alliance), and the signing came

<sup>453</sup> 長島 純. 2024. “NATO 首脳会合の 3 つの成果と今後 ——価値共同体 NATO の挑戦と日本のグローバル・アプローチの進化への課題.” 笹川平和財団, August 13, 2024. [https://www.spf.org/iina/articles/nagashima\\_19.html](https://www.spf.org/iina/articles/nagashima_19.html).

just weeks after the launch of the GCAP program.<sup>454</sup> The burgeoning bilateral partnership of the two island countries was upgraded to a new “global strategic partnership” via the Hiroshima Accord signed in May 2023. One of the first statements of intent in this document was cooperation for the FOIO vision, with both nations determining to “strengthen the free and open international order based on the rule of law.”<sup>455</sup>

While Japan’s burgeoning presence in Europe is striking, perhaps an equally important trend within the paradigm of Indo-Pacific and Transatlantic convergence is the reciprocal increased discourse power and presence of European nations in issues endemic to the Indo-Pacific. First, Europe has been steadily increasing its discourse power regarding the main crisis point of the so-called first island chain, Taiwan. Per his 2023 *Foreign Affairs* contribution, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan stated that the US was “growing the connective tissue between US alliances in the Indo-Pacific and in Europe ... allies in the Indo-Pacific are staunch supporters of Ukraine, while allies in Europe are helping the United States support peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.”<sup>456</sup> This use of Taiwan as a metaphor for Ukraine has gained traction in Europe, with Jens Stoltenberg stating at a joint press conference with Antony Blinken that “today it’s Ukraine; tomorrow it could be Taiwan.”<sup>457</sup> An April 2024 NATO Defense College (NDC) policy paper explored the potential legal basis for the triggering of Article 5 in the event of a Taiwan

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<sup>454</sup> Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street. 2023. “Prime Minister Hosts Japanese PM and Agrees Historic Defence Agreement.” GOV.UK, January 11, 2023. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-hosts-japanese-pm-and-agrees-historic-defence-agreement>.

<sup>455</sup> GOV.UK. 2023. “THE HIROSHIMA ACCORD: AN ENHANCED UK-JAPAN GLOBAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP.” May 18, 2023. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64662b0b0b72d30013344777/The\\_Hiroshima\\_Accord.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64662b0b0b72d30013344777/The_Hiroshima_Accord.pdf).

<sup>456</sup> Sullivan, Jake. 2023. “The Sources of American Power: A Foreign Policy for a Changed World.” *Foreign Affairs*, October 24, 2023. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/sources-american-power-biden-jake-sullivan>.

<sup>457</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan). 2024. “MOFA Response to NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg’s Comments Regarding Taiwan during Joint Press Conference with US Secretary of State Blinken.” January 30, 2024. [https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News\\_Content.aspx?n=1328&sms=273&s=116529](https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=1328&sms=273&s=116529).

contingency.<sup>458</sup> Likewise, the EU mentioned Taiwan for the first time in its Indo-Pacific strategy, sent a delegation to Taiwan for the first time in 2021, and passed a resolution in 2023 (via an overwhelming vote in the EU parliament) to support the status quo in the Taiwan Strait (going as far as to label China’s coercive force projection against Taiwan a violation of international law).<sup>459</sup> Regarding the maritime domains of the East China Sea and South China Sea, European nations have also upped the ante, with both NATO and the EU highlighting maritime security as a cooperation area with Japan in the aforementioned Japan-NATO ITTP and Japan-EU Defense and Security Partnership agreement, respectively. The 2022 EU Strategic Compass committed to continued dialogue with China, but in areas of interest to the EU, “especially on issues such as respect for the international law of the sea, peaceful settlement of disputes and a rules-based international order and human rights.”<sup>460</sup> The fact that all of these stated issues of discussion with China are essentially commitments to an enforcement of the FOIO concept is telling.

European nations have been backing up such rhetorical support for Japan’s security hotspots with actual force projection. As seen in the subchapter on the Kuril Islands dispute, Russia and China have been jointly increasing force projection around Japan significantly after the declaration of their “no-limits” partnership and the outbreak of war in Ukraine. This force projection is made particularly concerning for Japan and its security partners by the signing of an MoU on maritime law enforcement by Russia and China in April 2023, opening up the possibility of their intensified joint maritime activities in gray zone areas.<sup>461</sup> In July 2024, Germany, France, and Spain participated in joint exercises with the Japan Air Self-Defense

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<sup>458</sup> Lee, James. 2024. “NATO and a Taiwan Contingency.” Outlook No. 2, NATO Defense College, February 2024. <https://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=1921#>.

<sup>459</sup> European Parliament. 2024. “China Is Trying to Distort History and International Law in Taiwan, MEPs Warn.” October 24, 2024. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20241017IPR24739/china-is-trying-to-distort-history-and-international-law-in-taiwan-meps-warn>.

<sup>460</sup> European Union External Action Service. 2022. “A STRATEGIC COMPASS FOR SECURITY AND DEFENCE.” March 2022. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic\\_compass\\_en3\\_web.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf).

<sup>461</sup> Reuters. 2023. “China, Russia Sign Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Law Enforcement.” Reuters, April 26, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/china-russia-sign-memorandum-understanding-maritime-law-enforcement-2023-04-26/>.

Force (JASDF), with the German and Spanish contingents jointly training with the JASDF in Hokkaidō (the deployment featuring Germany’s first joint aerial exercise with the JASDF and Spain’s first fighter jet deployment to Japan).<sup>462</sup> This is significant as Hokkaidō has been on the frontlines of Russia-China bilateral exercises, which, as seen above, have intensified since the Ukraine War. These exercises with European nations come at a time when Japan is also working to finalize an RAA arrangement with France. Meanwhile, the first application of the Japan-UK RAA was conducted in the November 2023 Vigilant Isles 23 exercise in Japan, the first exercise that fully integrated (embedded) the troops of the two nations.<sup>463</sup>

Meanwhile, in the maritime domain, an Italian carrier strike group or “CSG” (a naval operational unit featuring various assets and an aircraft carrier) undertook its first deployment to the Indo-Pacific region (including the South China Sea), having departed for a five-month deployment in the area in June 2024.<sup>464</sup> In November 2024, a French CSG departed Toulon towards the Indo-Pacific, a deployment which will mark the first presence of a French aircraft carrier in the entire Pacific Ocean in 57 years.<sup>465</sup> The UK, which completed an Indo-Pacific CSG deployment in 2021, is set to deploy another CSG to the region in 2025.<sup>466</sup> Germany and the Netherlands are also preparing to send warships to the region.<sup>467</sup> This comes as a spate of

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<sup>462</sup> Nagatomi, Shinnosuke. 2024. “Germany, France and Spain Hold Joint Air Drills in Japan.” *Nikkei Asia*, July 19, 2024. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Defense/Germany-France-and-Spain-hold-joint-air-drills-in-Japan>.

<sup>463</sup> The British Army. 2023. “British Troops Embed with Japanese Armed Forces for First Time.” November 27, 2023. <https://www.army.mod.uk/news/british-troops-embed-with-japanese-armed-forces-for-first-time/>.

<sup>464</sup> Peruzzi, Luca. 2024. “Italian Carrier Strike Group Starts Five-Month Deployment to the Indo-Pacific.” *Naval News*, June 5, 2024. <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2024/06/italian-carrier-strike-group-starts-five-month-deployment-to-the-indo-pacific/>.

<sup>465</sup> Takahashi, Kosuke. 2024a. “French CSG to Call in Japan during Indo-Pacific Deployment.” *Naval News*, December 18, 2024. <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2024/12/french-csg-to-call-in-japan-during-indo-pacific-deployment/>.

<sup>466</sup> Vavasseur, Xavier. 2023. “UK Aircraft Carrier to Return to the Indo-Pacific in 2025.” *Naval News*, May 23, 2023. <https://www.navalnews.com/naval-news/2023/05/uk-aircraft-carrier-to-return-to-the-indo-pacific-in-2025/>.

<sup>467</sup> Gale, Alastair. 2024. “NATO Steps up Naval Presence in Western Pacific to Counter China.” *The Japan Times*, August 17, 2024. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2024/08/17/asia-pacific/nato-navies-indopacific-china/>.

originally bilateral US exercises in the Indo-Pacific (e.g., Talisman Sabre with Australia, Garuda Shield with Indonesia, Sama Sama with the Philippines, and Malabar with India) have all been expanded to include Japan and/or Transatlantic partner countries. The 2024 Japan-EU Security and Defence Partnership agreement called for greater cooperation in the maritime domain (e.g., maritime capacity building of third countries in the Indo-Pacific region and joint exercises) involving participation of third countries, and it is thus likely that EU member states will continue to increase their joint presence with Japan in the Indo-Pacific region going forward.<sup>468</sup>

In addition to leveraging its new security partnerships in Europe to counter its security crises vis-à-vis China, Japan is rapidly increasing its own capabilities in the Indo-Pacific and especially in the first island chain which serves as the territorial manifestation of East Asia's "Ukraine" metaphor. This is seen in the expansion of Japan counterstrike capabilities as seen in the previous subchapter. Japan's efforts to buttress deterrence systems in the Ryūkyū (Nansei) Islands constitutes another aspect of this internal balancing. These islands were the main deployment sites for a nationwide Japan Ground SDF drill in 2021 (the first such nationwide drill in 30 years).<sup>469</sup> They also host new Japanese military bases featuring arsenals of medium and short-range guided missiles,<sup>470</sup> and constitute potential hosting grounds for US temporary bases and medium-range missile units in the event of a Taiwan contingency.<sup>471</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> European Union External Action Service, 2024.

<sup>469</sup> Kyodo News. 2021. "Japan Moves Missile Capable Troops into Remote Island Base as Regional Tensions Rise." Kyodo News+, September 15, 2021. <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2021/09/fb0d69ab3fff-japan-ground-troops-begin-nationwide-drills-for-1st-time-in-30-years.html>.

<sup>470</sup> Lau, Chris. 2023. "Japan Moves Missile Capable Troops into Remote Island Base as Regional Tensions Rise." CNN, March 17, 2023. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/17/asia/japan-new-defense-base-disputed-islands-intl-hnk/index.html>.

<sup>471</sup> Kyodo News. 2024b. "U.S. to Deploy Missile Units to Japan Islands in Taiwan Contingency." Kyodo News+, November 25, 2024. <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2024/11/981708e1601f-us-to-deploy-missile-units-to-japan-islands-in-taiwan-contingency.html>.

Perhaps the most striking of the recent changes to Japan's Indo-Pacific capabilities pertained to the reorganization of the command and control systems of the SDF and the USFJ. In 2024, Japan approved plans to establish a joint operations command center to coordinate the operations of its various SDF forces.<sup>472</sup> The US then announced its plans to grant operational command ability (previously held by the US Indo-Pacific Command in Hawaii) to the USFJ via its reorganization into a Joint Forces Headquarters (whether integration of these two command towers of the SDF and the USFJ will occur via an arrangement like the ROK Combined Forces Command remains to be seen).<sup>473</sup> However, the very granting of operational control to the USFJ indicates a view of Japan and the first island chain as potential contingency zones akin to a Korean Peninsula subject to a continuing Korean War. This added emphasis on Japan as a vital military actor comes as Japan is rapidly increasing its security cooperation not only in the Transatlantic region but also in the Indo-Pacific, via the signing of the Japan-Philippines RAA, talks on the establishment of a Taiwan-Japan security dialogue, and Japan's unprecedented November 2024 hosting of a Five Eyes intel meeting in Tokyo.

Such heightening of Japan's security presence in the Indo-Pacific have dovetailed with the burgeoning security concerns of Indo-Pacific actors in the wake of the Ukraine War. Taiwan, as the primary metaphorical equivalent of Ukraine in East Asia, effectuated a "military force restructuring plan" in the aftermath of the Ukraine War featuring an increase of conscripted military service for young men from four months to a full year, President Tsai Ing-wen citing Taiwan's exposed position on the "frontlines of authoritarian expansion" as the reason for the changes.<sup>474</sup> Japan's new RAA partner, the Philippines, has similarly leaned into narratives of a post-

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<sup>472</sup> The Yomiuri Shimbun. 2024a. "Bills to Create Joint SDF Headquarters Pass Diet; New Joint Commander to Ease Burden on SDF Chief." The Japan News by The Yomiuri Shimbun, May 11, 2024. <https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/defense-security/20240511-185484/>.

<sup>473</sup> The Asahi Shimbun. 2024. "U.S. to Grant Command Authority to Its Forces in Japan." July 28, 2024. <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/15365555>.

<sup>474</sup> Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan). 2022. "President Tsai Announces Military Force Realignment Plan." Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan), December 27, 2022. <https://english.president.gov.tw/News/6417>.

Ukraine War security crisis to ramp up trilateral “JAPHUS” cooperation with the US and Japan as well as a confrontational stance against China, especially under the tenure of President Bongbong Marcos. President Marcos hosted a bilateral summit with Zelenskyy in Manila in June 2024 and has maintained a strong pro-Ukraine stance amidst the conflict.<sup>475</sup> The Philippines also pledged allegiance to a shared vision of a “free and open Indo-Pacific and international order based on international law” in an April 2024 trilateral “Joint Vision Statement” with the US and Japan, thus rhetorically aligning itself with the gist of Japan’s FOIP and FOIO initiatives.<sup>476</sup>

In sum, the Ukraine War has served as the direct catalyst for the vast expansion of the geographic reach of Japan’s security partnerships and hard power from its post-Abe scope largely tethered to the *ri-ekisen* of the Indo-Pacific to new frontiers in Europe and the Transatlantic. As seen in new PM Ishiba Shigeru’s experimental ideation regarding an “Asian NATO,” an exchange of ideas endemic to different security paradigms (i.e., the Indo-Pacific and the Transatlantic) is taking place. As part of Japan’s unique contribution to this exchange of ideas, the FOIO concept, which utilized the Ukraine War as a point of reference, was presented as a narrative message that can serve as the ideational basis for the linking of a Transatlantic security paradigm with an Indo-Pacific one. As with other aspects of Japan’s march away from the legacy of the postwar period, more postwar restrictions and whilom taboos for Japan and the exercise of its hard power have been removed, this time in the realm of the geographic scope of Japan’s grand strategy.

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<sup>475</sup> Office of the President of the Philippines Presidential Communications Office. 2024. “Zelenskyy Thanks PBBM for PH Support to Ukraine.” June 3, 2024.

[https://pco.gov.ph/news\\_releases/zelenskyy-thanks-pbbm-for-ph-support-to-ukraine](https://pco.gov.ph/news_releases/zelenskyy-thanks-pbbm-for-ph-support-to-ukraine).

<sup>476</sup> The White House. 2024. “Joint Vision Statement from the Leaders of Japan, the Philippines, and the United States.” The White House, April 11, 2024.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/04/11/joint-vision-statement-from-the-leaders-of-japan-the-philippines-and-the-united-states/>.

## Chapter VII. Discussion and Outlook

This study comprehensively outlined the implications of the Ukraine War for the grand strategies of South Korea and Japan. In doing so, it contributed to filling a gap in existing literature, which focuses heavily on the implications of the Ukraine War for the strategic policies of the great powers (e.g., the US and the EU, *inter alia*) with comparatively scant analysis of the war's implications for other regional dynamics, despite the obvious status of Northeast Asia as a security hotspot. By choosing East Asia's two middle powers and by utilizing Pacheco Pardo's novel middle power grand strategy model, it also constitutes a seminal test of a new conceptual framework as well as a demonstration of how short-term crises could carry implications for the long-term strategic thinking endemic to the concept of grand strategy itself. Having completed this thorough analysis, one should ask the question of whether there are general trends or commonalities that emerge when placing the cases of South Korea and Japan side-by-side.

Regarding macro-level changes, the biggest implication of the Ukraine War for the grand strategies of both middle powers was the internalization and reification of an international paradigm of bloc politics. In particular, it is notable that both sets of policymakers in South Korea and Japan gleaned the same general lessons regarding national security from the Ukraine War. As explained in Chapter 5, President Yoon's PPP and conservative think tanks, from the early stages of the conflict, have proposed a connection between a lack of explicit alliance alignment and military deterrence (c.f., economic deterrence or diplomatic peace guarantees) and a fundamental crisis of security. This directly mirrors the thinking of Japan's policymakers, as expressed by Hamada Yasukazu, Ishiba Shigeru, and others, that an insufficiency of defense capabilities, allies, or even a nuclear umbrella constituted a root cause of the security crisis in Ukraine (and thus prospectively could be the root cause of a security crisis involving Japan). As such, both middle powers sought to accelerate explicit alignment with their shared alliance partner, the US, and with other "like-minded" countries amidst a bifurcation (or at least a "fuzzy bifurcation") in global politics. Indeed, the main hallmarks of President Yoon's policies (e.g., the

presentation of an ROK equivalent to the FOIP concept, the slogan of a “global pivotal power” seeking new opportunities and partnerships via values-based diplomacy, and trilateral security cooperation with Japan amidst a downplaying of divisive historical issues) are remarkably similar to the strategic preferences of both Japan and the US. For South Korea, a middle power whose politics is informed by a prominent and perennial strategic dilemma between autonomy and alignment, such developments constituted politically significant (and, as seen above, controversial) statements of intent regarding the ROK’s strategic choices in the aftermath of the Ukraine War.

Both middle powers have used the crisis of the Ukraine War to expand the geographical scope of their middle power grand strategies to include new partnerships, especially with Europe and NATO. Both countries have reaped certain benefits from this arrangement, especially in the realm of military power and the defense industry. For example, South Korea’s post-Ukraine backfilling deals with Poland and the United States, as well as other arms deals with Eastern European nations (as well as recurring partnerships with such Western European nations as the UK and Norway) have fueled a considerable rise in the visibility of South Korea as a global defense exporter (being now ranked the third largest arms exporter in Asia).<sup>477</sup> While incomparably behind South Korea in this area, Japan, as seen above in Chapter 6-2, has used the opportunity afforded by the Ukraine crisis to conduct sweeping legal revisions to its heretofore inability to conduct arms transfers and to procure and potentially export new finished products such as GCAP sixth-generation fighter jets and Glide Phase Interceptors. Mitsubishi Heavy Industries’ \$2.8 billion windfall from Japan’s updated counterstrike policy and missile procurement and enhancement programs represents yet another example of this post-Ukraine War

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<sup>477</sup> Wezeman, Pieter D. 2024. “TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS, 2023.” Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), March 2024. [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/fs\\_2403\\_at\\_2023.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/fs_2403_at_2023.pdf).

acceleration. Per a December 2024 report by SIPRI, South Korea and Japan have led the way in arms revenue growth in Asia and Oceania in 2023.<sup>478</sup>

There are also definite entrapment risks that have arisen for the two middle powers as a result of their post-Ukraine pursuit of greater alignment policies and bloc politics. Especially significant were the severe risks to each middle power's *sui generis* grand strategy goal, with South Korea's goal of national reconciliation and reunification as well as Japan's settlement of the "Northern Territories"/WWII peace treaty issue with Russia (a constituent aim of post-Abe Japan's goal of overcoming the legacy of the postwar era) both being severely endangered in the aftermath of the Ukraine War. Both cases deal with national identity and territorial unity. Both cases were also heavily reliant on the maintenance of a cooperative, non-confrontational relationship with Russia. As seen in Chapter 4-1, Russia's about-face regarding the maintenance of the DPRK sanctions regime that it had upheld since 2006, its pledge to support sensitive DPRK military technologies, and the activation of its new mutual defense treaty with the DPRK via North Korea's deployments to Ukraine have all served to greatly complicate the process of inter-Korean reconciliation. Similarly, as seen in Chapter 6-1, the Ukraine War, Japan's response to the war, and the acceleration of bloc politics have engendered significant diplomatic, economic, and geopolitical consequences that limit the prospects of a mutual settlement between Russia and Japan.

Thus, regarding the main narratives of the Ukraine War (bloc politics and alignment) and their consequences, the situation of both middle powers can be said to be one of convergence. Nevertheless, there are also divergences between the two middle powers that are evident at the micro-level. These divergences directly pertain to the lingering strategic dilemma between autonomy and alignment that affects South Korea particularly acutely. Namely, while engaging on the whole in alignment per a new Cold War paradigm, South Korea's commitment to such

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<sup>478</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). 2024. "World's Top Arms Producers See Revenues Rise on the Back of Wars and Regional Tensions." SIPRI, December 2, 2024. <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2024/worlds-top-arms-producers-see-revenues-rise-back-wars-and-regional-tensions>.

alignment was and is slightly more muted and prone to hedging behavior when compared with Japan. For example, regarding the main antagonist of the Ukraine War, Russia, the Yoon administration's 2023 NSS has been far less hawkish in its framing of South Korea's Russia policy when compared with equivalent documents published by the US and Japan. For example, while condemning Russia's invasion and pledging the ROK's participation in sanctions against Russia and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, the ROK government pledged to "also make efforts to maintain stable relations with Russia."<sup>479</sup> The Yoon administration's NSS goes on to state that South Korea would "continue diplomatic communication on major issues requiring cooperation with Russia while working to minimize the damage to our economy and companies operating in Russia due to sanctions." Thus, some hedging rhetoric stemming from fear of losing longstanding diplomatic communication regarding "major issues" (i.e., DPRK policy) and economic ties are visible in South Korea's NSS even under an administration whose policies were particularly hawkish on the issue of Ukraine.

In contrast, Japan's latest NSS portrays Russia as a revisionist power that challenges the international order, while noting that, with regards to future relations with Russia, Japan will "protect its own national interests in light of the severe security environment in the Indo-Pacific region," "prevent Russia from taking actions that undermine the peace, stability, and prosperity of the international community," and adhere to its basic policy of "concluding a peace treaty through the resolution of the territorial issue" (effectively rejecting Russia's proposal of a treaty "without preconditions"). Japan's latest 2024 Diplomatic Bluebook likewise lists only the deteriorating elements of Japan's relationship with Russia in the areas of diplomacy, economy, and the territory issue, while noting that the "current situation is entirely the result of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and Russia's attempt to shift responsibility to Japan is extremely unjust and absolutely unacceptable."<sup>480</sup> The Bluebook also outlines Japan's derisking efforts to limit its economic and energy

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<sup>479</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea. 2023b.

<sup>480</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. 2024b. "Diplomatic Bluebook 2024." September 30, 2024. [https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2024/pdf/pdfs/2024\\_all.pdf](https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/other/bluebook/2024/pdf/pdfs/2024_all.pdf).

interactions with Russia, a clear contrast to South Korea's pledge to minimize damage to its economic interests in Russia.

In addition, unlike the US, EU member states, and Japan, South Korea did not expel Russian diplomats in the aftermath of the invasion. This is in especially stark contrast to Japan, which as seen above, expelled eight diplomats from the country in April 2022, while expressly highlighting Russia's invasion of Ukraine as the reason for the expulsions. The reciprocal expulsion of a diplomat by Russia and Japan later in 2022 constitutes another example of a diplomatic skirmish between the two countries. In contrast, the last time that such a diplomatic expulsion was seen in South Korean-Russian relations was in 1998, when South Korea retaliated against a Russian expulsion of ROK diplomats conducted under the pretext of espionage.<sup>481</sup>

South Korea has also refrained from joining the G7 Oil Price Cap Coalition, which had been established per an agreement made at the July 2022 Schloss Elmau G7 Summit and which had placed a price cap (\$60 per barrel) in December 2022 for Russian seaborne crude oil and price caps for other petroleum products. The current coalition, per its latest October 2024 advisory, listed the G7 (including Japan), the EU, Australia, and New Zealand as its members.<sup>482</sup> Notably, South Korea is the only IP4 country to have not joined the coalition. South Korea has also refrained from joining the UK-led "Call to Action" coalition consisting of 46 countries to coordinate efforts to crack down on Russia's "shadow fleet" of tankers mobilized to circumvent the OPC regulation of Russian oil exports.<sup>483</sup> As of the last update in late November 2024, with the endorsement of the coalition by Australia and New Zealand, South Korea constitutes the only IP4 country to have refrained from endorsing the "Call to

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<sup>481</sup> International Herald Tribune. 1998. "Korea Expels Envoy in Rift with Russia." *The New York Times*, July 9, 1998. <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/07/09/IHT-korea-expels-envoy-in-rift-with-russia.html>.

<sup>482</sup> European Commission. 2024. "Updated Price Cap Coalition Advisory for the Maritime Oil Industry and Related Sectors." October 21, 2024. [https://finance.ec.europa.eu/document/download/3d23e169-8904-4057-b621-0d3b26546019\\_en?filename=price-cap-coalition-advisory-maritime-safety-2024\\_en.pdf](https://finance.ec.europa.eu/document/download/3d23e169-8904-4057-b621-0d3b26546019_en?filename=price-cap-coalition-advisory-maritime-safety-2024_en.pdf).

<sup>483</sup> Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street. 2024. "The 'Shadow Fleet': A Call to Action." GOV.UK, November 28, 2024. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-shadow-fleet-a-call-to-action>.

Action” regarding Russia’s shadow fleet. South Korea has refrained from joining such a coalition despite the fact that shadow tanker activity has increased in the Korean Straits since the war and the fact that the use of such shadow fleets is not just limited to Russia but also extends to North Korea.<sup>484</sup>

Likewise, regarding Russia’s primary postwar partner China, some hedging behavior that is absent in the case of Japan is visible in the case of South Korea. In 2022, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ (OHCHR) assessment on Xinjiang concluded that the arbitrary and discriminatory detention of Uyghurs and other predominately Muslim minorities in Xinjiang “may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity.”<sup>485</sup> Japan has since joined the US, UK, and Australia-led joint statements in the UN General Assembly Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee) condemning China’s actions in this regard.<sup>486</sup> Meanwhile, South Korea has refrained from participation under the Yoon administration. Similarly, South Korea also

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<sup>484</sup> European Parliamentary Research Service. 2024. “Russia’s ‘Shadow Fleet’: Bringing the Threat to Light.” November 2024. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/766242/EPRS\\_BRI\(2024\)766242\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/766242/EPRS_BRI(2024)766242_EN.pdf).

<sup>485</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. 2022. “OHCHR Assessment of Human Rights Concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, People’s Republic of China.” August 31, 2022. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/2022-08-31/22-08-31-final-assesment.pdf>.

<sup>486</sup> United States Mission to the United Nations. 2022. “Joint Statement on Behalf of 50 Countries in the UN General Assembly Third Committee on the Human Rights Situation in Xinjiang, China.” October 31, 2022. <https://usun.usmission.gov/joint-statement-on-behalf-of-50-countries-in-the-un-general-assembly-third-committee-on-the-human-rights-situation-in-xinjiang-china/>; Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. 2023. “Human Rights Violations in Xinjiang: Joint Statement at the UN Third Committee.” GOV.UK, November 9, 2023. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/joint-statement-on-human-rights-violations-in-xinjiang-at-the-un-third-committee>; Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations. 2024. “UNGA79 Third Committee: General Discussion on Human Rights: Joint Statement on the Human Rights Situation in Xinjiang and Tibet.” October 22, 2024. [https://unmy.mission.gov.au/unmy/241022\\_UNGA79\\_Joint\\_statement\\_on\\_the\\_human\\_right\\_s\\_situation\\_in\\_Xinjiang\\_and\\_Tibet.html](https://unmy.mission.gov.au/unmy/241022_UNGA79_Joint_statement_on_the_human_right_s_situation_in_Xinjiang_and_Tibet.html).

refrained from joining in joint statements criticizing the PRC's treatment of Hong Kong pro-democracy protestors.<sup>487</sup>

Therefore, while the overall content of South Korea and Japan's policy stance towards bloc politics has remained very similar, some micro-level differences indicate a more muted approach in the case of South Korea. These minute differences comport with the analysis of Chapter 3, which analyzed the existing literature which posits Korea as a middle power with a perennial strategic dilemma between autonomy and alignment. More specifically, such behavior comports with Pacheco Pardo's appraisal of Korea as a middle power with a strong identification with the geopolitical idiom of a "shrimp between whales" as well as Snyder's delineation of powerful political coalition within South Korea consisting of "progressive nationalists" who disfavor alignment due to an ethos stemming from subaltern nationalism and a fear of entrapment. As shown in Chapter 4-2, this contested dynamic was manifested in the chasmic rift in opinions between conservatives and liberals on nearly every alignment initiative pursued by the Yoon administration. In contrast, Japan's grand strategy, as seen in Chapter 5, has been predicated on an expedient marriage between alignment and autonomy (*alignment-cum-autonomy*), in which Japan's greater alignment with its ally is seen as a prerequisite for the fulfillment of its role as a "tier-one" power on the world stage. Likewise, severe restrictions on Japan's autonomous deterrence capabilities amidst the geopolitical need to counter a rising China informed a heavy focus on alliance "burden-sharing" and on force multiplication via alignment with the US and other "like-minded partners" in guaranteeing Japan's security.

Another understated factor in Japan's more proactive and confrontational approach vis-à-vis the Ukraine War is the variety of leadership roles it assumes in international politics, which obligates Japan's commitment to the sending of costly signals to authoritarian bloc countries (costly signals which other middle powers like

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<sup>487</sup> Foreign & Commonwealth Office. 2020. "UN Human Rights Council 44: Cross-Regional Statement on Hong Kong and Xinjiang." GOV.UK, June 30, 2020. <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/un-human-rights-council-44-cross-regional-statement-on-hong-kong-and-xinjiang>.

South Korea could avoid sending). Chief amongst these roles is Japan's status and responsibility as a G7 member state, which has obligated Japan to such commitments as OPC membership. Japan was compelled to make this G7 commitment despite the fact that Japan, as shown in Chapter 6-1, maintains key economic interests in Russia pertaining to the procurement of LNGs, which necessitated the Sakhalin-2 exemption to the OPC rules. Japan also synchronized its sanctions regime with the standards set by the G7, resulting in Japan's overall more widespread application of sanctions and its participation in such initiatives as the G7 and EU diamond ban against Russia (an initiative which involves cooperation from diamond producing nations in Africa).<sup>488</sup>

The aforementioned 10-year agreement on security cooperation signed by Japan and Ukraine constitutes another example of Japan being obligated (this time by virtue of a G7 joint declaration) to a high-stakes alignment policy via its G7 membership. Japan also served as the chair nation for the G7 in 2023, a responsibility which obligated Japan to pursue high profile efforts to support Ukraine and to otherwise channel the collective voice of a prominent global institution with regards to this issue. As G7 chair, Japan is noted to have arranged opportunities for Zelenskyy to meet leaders from the Global South (a key staging area for BRICS) via the medium of the G7 Hiroshima Summit.<sup>489</sup> Even outside the G7, there is a perception of Japan as a certain *primus inter pares* within the US alliance system in the Asia-Pacific and even the Indo Pacific due to its geographical location as the key component in the Indo-Pacific's first-island chain and its comparatively unwavering commitment to alliance and bloc alignment. This is seen in Jens Stoltenberg's comments asserting that "no NATO partner is closer or more capable than Japan."<sup>490</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> Verhelst, Koen. 2024. "How the West Convinced Russia's Diamond Competitors to Join It." POLITICO, December 2, 2024. <https://www.politico.eu/article/west-eu-convinced-russia-diamond-competitors-join-forces-botswana-angola-trade/>.

<sup>489</sup> Nakano, Yuko. 2024. "Japan's Leadership Role on Ukraine." CSIS, February 22, 2024. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/japans-leadership-role-ukraine>.

<sup>490</sup> NATO. 2023a. "Joint Press Point by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida." January 31, 2023. [https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/opinions\\_210901.htm?selectedLocale=ky](https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/opinions_210901.htm?selectedLocale=ky).

With such an elevated status comes elevated responsibilities, which contributed to Japan's more high-profile participation in bloc politics.

Nevertheless, as seen above in Chapter 4-2, costly signals sent by Seoul since 2022 to the authoritarian bloc countries have ensured that the main direction of South Korea's policy has also remained tethered to the paradigm of bloc politics and a new Cold War paradigm, obscuring the countervailing political messages endemic to the aforementioned examples of its hedging behavior. South Korea's alignment with Japan in various frameworks after 2022, including NATO's IP4 and trilateral defense cooperation with the intermediary of the US has facilitated this political messaging towards the authoritarian bloc. Regarding the former, security cooperation with NATO is obviously and innately a confrontational act from the perspective of Russia. South Korea could also be seen as tacitly endorsing, via its consecutive attendance of NATO summit meetings, the increasingly anti-China messaging of NATO declarations, especially within the declarations of the 2022 and 2024 NATO summits. As seen in Chapter 4-2, South Korea's trilateral alignment with the US and Japan resulted in joint statements like the 2023 Camp David Joint Statement, which went further than Moon-era bilateral US-ROK statements in explicitly mentioning the People's Republic of China and the 2016 South China Sea arbitration. The ROK's perceived need to enact countermeasures against extraordinary developments in its relationship with North Korea (i.e., the DPRK deployment to Ukraine) has also fostered South Korea's hardline response of threatening direct provisions of weapons to Ukraine, which crossed Putin's diplomatic red lines. Of course, many of these hardline signals stem from the natural affinity between South Korea's anti-communist right and a new Cold War paradigm, as typified by the revival of the terminology of "enemy" to describe North Korea in South Korea's defense white papers under the Yoon administration (a designation of North Korea markedly more pointed than those of Japan or the US).<sup>491</sup>

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<sup>491</sup> 반종빈. 2023. "[연합시론] '북한 정권과 북한군은 적' 표현 6년만에 부활한 국방백서." 연합뉴스, February 16, 2023.  
<https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20230216130800022>.

Along with the minute variances in commitment to alignment between South Korea and Japan, another interesting caveat to the post-Ukraine order in international politics is the continuing existence of muted tensions between and amongst nations belonging to the same bloc. For example, it was noted that the phraseology of a “no-limits partnership” that has gained rhetorical prominence after the Ukraine War was omitted from a May 2024 Sino-Russian joint declaration.<sup>492</sup> Similarly, Russia and China’s territorial disputes caused tensions when the PRC released a “China Standard Map Edition 2023” which included the entire divided island of Bolshoy Ussuriysky (Heixiazi) as Chinese territory. Such tensions necessitated the signing of joint documents during the May 2024 Sino-Russian summit that dealt with the issue of jointly developing the disputed island as well as resolving other issues such as allowing the navigation of Chinese ships through the lower Tumen River to the East Sea.<sup>493</sup> Support for Russia has diplomatically and economically isolated China, increasing Chinese companies’ vulnerabilities to international sanctions regimes (hence China’s permissive stance towards its major asset Huawei’s decision to scale back operations in Russia) while providing limited benefits even in the area of military cooperation (NATO and its Indo-Pacific allies having spent 3.7 times more on defense than China and Russia combined in 2021).<sup>494</sup> There has even been research revealing conflicting interests for the two countries in the Global South, theoretically a central arena for BRICS cooperation.<sup>495</sup>

Likewise, mirroring China’s relative reluctance in openly using the terminology of “ally” to describe Russia, there appears to be some hesitation on Russia’s part to describe its new mutual defense treaty relationship with North Korea as an alliance.

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<sup>492</sup> Pan, Guangyi. 2024. “Why China Now Wants to Put Some Limits on Its ‘No Limits’ Friendship with Russia.” *The Conversation*, October 16, 2024. <https://theconversation.com/why-china-now-wants-to-put-some-limits-on-its-no-limits-friendship-with-russia-238436>.

<sup>493</sup> Zeyuan, Yu. 2024. “Putin’s Gifts a Reflection of China’s Dominance.” *ThinkChina*, May 20, 2024. <https://www.thinkchina.sg/politics/putins-gifts-reflection-chinas-dominance>.

<sup>494</sup> China Power Project – CSIS. 2023. “What Are the Weaknesses of the China-Russia Relationship?” November 9, 2023. <https://chinapower.csis.org/china-russia-relationship-weaknesses-mistrust/>

<sup>495</sup> Kurylo, Benjamin. 2024. “The limits of the ‘no limits’ Russian-Chinese partnership: The case of Africa.” *The South African Journal of International Affairs* 31 (2). Abingdon: Routledge: 121–49. doi:10.1080/10220461.2024.2353262.

During their June 2024 summit finalizing the agreement, Kim Jong-un announced the start of an “alliance relationship,” while Putin refused to mention equivalent terminology even once throughout his remarks.<sup>496</sup> Putin has since clarified that he saw the current treaty relationship as neither novel, with the new treaty signifying a return to the old Soviet-era framework, nor unique to North Korea, with Russia having signed equivalent treaties with other countries.<sup>497</sup> As seen in Chapter 4-1, Russia has only selectively abided by its mutual defense obligations, as proven by its recent actions vis-à-vis Kazakhstan and Armenia, and it is likely that Russia would not want to become entrapped by a Korea contingency. A similar dynamic could be said to exist for Russia in its relationship with China over potential entrapment costs pertaining to bloc politics and the Taiwan issue.<sup>498</sup> Meanwhile, regarding DPRK-China relations within the authoritarian bloc, DPRK-Russia alignment provides North Korea with a method to diversify its diplomatic horizons away from an overreliance on a perennially tricky relationship with China. Tensions between the DPRK and the PRC surfaced for the first time in years in May 2024 when North Korea interrupted a rare trilateral summit amongst the ROK, Japan, and China with a satellite launch. At the time, North Korea indirectly criticized China for jointly calling for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula (which contradicts North Korea’s constitutional vows to maintain nuclear weapons).<sup>499</sup>

Within the other bloc, the main fissure obviously stems from tensions between South Korea and Japan stemming from deep-seated mutual distrust and the lingering legacy of historical issues. PM Kishida, while a staunch advocate for trilateral

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<sup>496</sup> 한국경제신문. 2024. “[북러 회담] 전문가 ‘김정은은 “동맹” 과시...푸틴은 ‘자율성’에 초점.” June 19, 2024. <https://www.hankyung.com/article/202406198116Y>.

<sup>497</sup> The Korea Times. 2024. “Putin Notes Possibility of Joint Military Exercises between N. Korea, Russia: TASS.” November 8, 2024. [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2025/01/103\\_385922.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2025/01/103_385922.html).

<sup>498</sup> Rumer, Eugene. 2024. “Taiwan and the Limits of the Russia-China Friendship.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 3, 2024.

<https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/08/taiwan-and-the-limits-of-the-russia-china-friendship?lang=en>.

<sup>499</sup> Gallo, William. 2024. “Analysts See Signs of Strain in North Korea-China Ties.” Voice of America, May 30, 2024. <https://www.voanews.com/a/analysts-see-signs-of-strain-in-north-korea-china-ties/7634822.html>.

security cooperation, initially turned down a standalone meeting with President Yoon at the sidelines of the 2022 NATO summit early in their tenures, a move that was interpreted by Japanese scholars to have been made by Kishida in order to not appear weak against South Korea ahead of Japan's upper house elections held later that year.<sup>500</sup> As seen above, Japan's nationalistic approach to historical issues and other points of contention have fueled the opposition's claims that South Korea's post-Ukraine alignment policies constituted *guljong waegyo* vis-à-vis Japan.

Amidst these minute fissures, there have been some attempts to facilitate inter-bloc communication by the two middle powers, South Korea and Japan, even amidst the overwhelming hostility of the Ukraine War. As shown above, there is reason to believe that fissures exist between China and the other bloc nations, and there have recently been efforts by the Yoon administration that seem to have been aimed at exploiting these intra-bloc fissures. Yoon's current foreign minister, Cho Tae-yul, stated in December 2023 before his confirmation that there was a sense that the ROK's foreign policy was overly focused on trilateral alignment and that he believed that ROK-China relations are as important as ROK-US relations.<sup>501</sup> In May 2024, the ROK-Japan-China trilateral summit was resumed after a five-year hiatus, an occasion which came immediately after the ROK and China agreed to establish a diplomatic and security dialogue and to resume frozen negotiations towards an FTA agreement.<sup>502</sup> In October 2024, Yoon assigned his former chief of staff and close confidant Kim Dae-ki to serve as the ROK's next ambassador to China, underscoring an intent to mend relationships with China in pursuit of national economic utility and

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<sup>500</sup> Ryall, Julian. 2022. "Japan's Snub of Talks with South Korea on Sidelines of Nato Summit a 'Missed Opportunity.'" South China Morning Post, June 27, 2022. <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3183209/japans-snub-talks-south-korea-sidelines-nato-summit-missed>.

<sup>501</sup> 김은중. 2023. "조태열 '美·日에 외교 치중된 인상'...尹정부 외교정책 변화 시사." 조선일보, December 21, 2023. <https://www.chosun.com/politics/diplomacy-defense/2023/12/21/ZDZ3UOPHQBEY3JO6JPHPPRSSCM/>.

<sup>502</sup> 김영신, 광민서. 2024. "한중, FTA 2 단계 협상 재개 합의..."문화·관광·법률까지 개방"(종합)." 연합뉴스, May 26, 2024. <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20240526042451001>.

resolution of the North Korea issue<sup>503</sup> (Kim’s assumption of the role has since been cast into doubt due to President Yoon’s impeachment). Yoon recent overtures seemed to have borne fruit, with China singling out South Korea as the only Asian country included in a new visa-free tourism program announced in November 2024.<sup>504</sup> Regarding the situation in the Korean Peninsula, Xi Jinping restored rhetoric from before the Trump administration’s summits with Kim Jong-un to describe the issue during the 2024 APEC summit held in mid-November 2024. Notably, he stated that the “relevant parties” (including the DPRK) should work to resolve the issue, in contrast to his 2022 statements which placed the burden of policy change towards peace solely on South Korea.<sup>505</sup>

Similarly, it has been revealed early in 2024 that secret discussions were occurring between North Korea and Japan and that PM Kishida had proposed a summit meeting with the DPRK leader. On the part of North Korea, scholars have interpreted these inter-bloc communications as a way for North Korea to attempt to weaken trilateral alignment via overtures to a Japan historically open to high-profile diplomacy with North Korea (e.g., PM Koizumi Junichirō’s 2002 summit with Kim Jong-il).<sup>506</sup> A high-ranking official of the ROK presidential office also pointed to the diplomatic isolation of the DPRK following the historic normalization of relations between the ROK and Cuba as a potential factor in North Korea’s revealing of the secret talks.<sup>507</sup> On the Japanese side, scholars interpreted Kishida’s summit

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<sup>503</sup> KOREA PRO. 2024. “Yoon Suk-Yeol Taps Former Chief of Staff as Ambassador to China.” October 15, 2024. <https://koreapro.org/2024/10/yoonsukyeol-taps-former-chief-of-staff-as-ambassador-to-china/>.

<sup>504</sup> 조영빈. 2024. “중국, 느닷없는 ‘한국인 무비자’ 조치... ‘한반도 영향력 유지’ 노림수.” 한국일보, November 4, 2024.

<https://www.hankookilbo.com/News/Read/A2024110310220005678>.

<sup>505</sup> Park, Min-hee. 2024. “Unpacking Strategy behind Xi’s Declaration That China Won’t Allow Conflict on Korean Peninsula.” Hankyoreh, November 19, 2024.

[https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_international/1168169.html](https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/1168169.html).

<sup>506</sup> 조진우. 2024. “기시다 일 총리 ‘북과 고위급 협의 진행할 것’...김정은 만날까?” Radio Free Asia, January 31, 2024.

[https://www.rfa.org/korean/in\\_focus/nk\\_nuclear\\_talks/nkjapan-01312024151442.html](https://www.rfa.org/korean/in_focus/nk_nuclear_talks/nkjapan-01312024151442.html).

<sup>507</sup> 김미나, 권혁철. 2024. “한국-쿠바 수교하자 북한은 ‘기시다 방북’ 운 띄웠다.” 한겨레, February 16, 2024.

[https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/politics\\_general/1128563.html](https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/politics_general/1128563.html).

proposal as constituting a way for him to revive his dwindling electoral changes ahead of the LDP leadership election by reviving talks on the Japanese abductee issue<sup>508</sup> (a staple policy agenda which had elevated Abe's national standing during the 2002 Japan-DPRK Pyongyang summit). Although no summit meeting emerged from these secret talks, the talks themselves represent examples of inter-bloc communication amidst the overall landscape of post-Ukraine bloc politics.

Likewise, despite its high-profile alignment with Ukraine and the Western bloc as well as its openly confrontational messaging towards Russia throughout the entirety of the war, Japan has been capable of sending more nuanced signals to Russia when faced with more direct threats to the security of Japan. For example, with the aforementioned reports of possible deployment of US medium-range missiles to the Nansei Islands, Russia threatened Japan with “proportionate measures” in accordance with Russia's updated nuclear doctrine (an effective threat of nuclear deployment against Japan per Russia's new doctrine which allows for the use of such weapons in response to an attack by a non-nuclear armed state backed by a nuclear-armed state).<sup>509</sup> Faced with this unprecedented direct threat, Japan conveyed a more nuanced message via its ambassador to Moscow, with Japan's ambassador stating that there were no such plans for US missile deployments at present while also adding the caveat that future US missile deployments is a topic subject to the independent decision of the Japanese government to be made “based solely on Japan's national interests.”<sup>510</sup> Nevertheless, Russia has since clearly signaled that it will carry out a long-previewed end to its moratorium on the deployment of intermediate-range and short-range nuclear capable missiles, a final deracination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and an escalation with possible security implications for both Europe and East Asia.<sup>511</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> 조진우, 2024.

<sup>509</sup> TASS. 2024b. “Russia to Take Proportionate Steps, If US Missiles Appear in Japan — MFA.” TASS, November 27, 2024. <https://tass.com/politics/1878535>.

<sup>510</sup> TASS. 2024a. “Japan Doesn't Plan to Host US Intermediate-Range Missiles — Ambassador to Russia.” TASS, November 29, 2024. <https://tass.com/world/1879351>.

<sup>511</sup> Kolodyazhnyy, Anton and Guy Faulconbridge. 2024. “Russia Will Abandon Its Unilateral Missile Moratorium, Lavrov Says.” Reuters, December 29, 2024.

In sum, the Ukraine War constituted the largest military conflict in Europe since the end of the Second World War, and it is not surprising that it thus constituted a truly global crisis and a moment of punctuated equilibrium for the rise of bloc politics and its various implications over the past three-year period. However, the gears of change are starting to rapidly move again. Towards the tail end of 2024, rapid political changes have engulfed the West. Most notably, all three main proponents of values-based alignment in Northeast Asia have all lost power in some way. The Biden administration, a staunch advocate of this breed of bloc politics (exemplified by the administration's use of such terms as "quartet of chaos" and "axis of upheaval" to describe the authoritarian bloc) has been superseded by the stunning comeback of Donald Trump, a harbinger of a possible volatility and unpredictability in global politics. Around the same time, Japan's LDP suffered the second worst election result in its history in the October 2024 lower house elections, mostly due to a confluence of domestic corruption scandals.

Finally, in South Korea, in what can only be described as an egregious act of caprice, President Yoon declared martial law on December 3, 2024, citing the opposition's legislative attempts to obstruct the operations of the executive branch. Particularly significant for international relations is Yoon's statements on China (e.g., Yoon's citing of drone filming by Chinese nationals of sensitive South Korean military assets, his criticisms of allegedly environmentally harmful Chinese solar panel technology versus his lauding of the utility of domestic nuclear energy) and North Korea (conflations of the opposition with "shameless pro-North Korean" elements) in his justifications for martial law.<sup>512</sup> Such statements, albeit made in the context of Yoon's justification of a martial law declaration opposed by the vast majority of the country, stood in sharp contrast to the Yoon administration's efforts to broach inter-bloc rapprochement with China in recent months. Although a final decision on his impeachment by the Constitutional Court of Korea is still pending,

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<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-will-abandon-its-unilateral-missile-moratorium-lavrov-says-2024-12-29/>.

<sup>512</sup> 프레시안. 2024. "[전문] 윤석열 12.12 '국민께 드리는 말씀' 담화." December 12, 2024. <https://www.pressian.com/pages/articles/2024121210045438551>.

Yoon's actions have also dealt a shocking blow to the credibility of values-based diplomacy and democratic alignment. Another interesting development pertaining to the ROK's foreign policy was the inclusion by the DPK and other opposition parties of the charge that President Yoon had "ignored the geopolitical balance, antagonized North Korea, China, and Russia, insisted on bizarre Japan-centered foreign policies, and appointed figures lenient towards Tokyo to key government positions" as one of the reasons for his impeachment within the opposition's first impeachment bill against the president.<sup>513</sup> The foreign policy critiques of this failed first impeachment bill, which seem to have been directly cited from an proposed impeachment bill by the progressive Rebuilding Korea Party, engendered considerable consternation from American and Japanese observers<sup>514</sup> and were ultimately removed from the text of the second (and successful) impeachment bill.

These three major events in the US, Japan, and South Korea coincided with a spate of other rapid changes across advanced democracies, with the incumbent governments of France, Germany, and Canada all teetering towards political crisis and collapse. Similarly, in Taiwan, the incumbent executive branch of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has been engaged in pitched political warfare with a legislative branch controlled by a hostile opposition, leading to a string of political crises. Crucially, the incoming US Trump administration has won the 2024 election on a mandate of quickly settling the Ukraine War, sharply raising the possibility of a negotiated settlement of the conflict. With these new developments, it seems possible that the centripetal forces that have bound nations with the fissures outlined above to their respective geopolitical blocs will be greatly diminished.

In this scenario, changes in the middle power grand strategy of South Korea seem more likely than revisions to Japan's heretofore strategy. Soon after Yoon's martial

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<sup>513</sup> Kim, Arin. 2024. "'Anti-China, pro-Japan Diplomacy' Removed from Yoon Impeachment Bill after Criticism." The Korea Herald, December 14, 2024. <https://m.koreaherald.com/article/10017136>.

<sup>514</sup> 김영리, 이슬기. 2024. "'북중러 적대시? 이게 왜 탄핵안에'...서울대 교수의 '질문.'" 한국경제, December 11, 2024. <https://www.hankyung.com/article/2024121080177>.

law incident, DPK leader Lee Jae-myung conducted an interview with the *Wall Street Journal* during which he positioned himself as a Trump-style realist, endorsing then-President-elect Trump's plans to seek a settlement to the Ukraine War and to resume direct talks with North Korea.<sup>515</sup> Lee went further to state in a separate press conference that South Korea's diplomacy should shift away from "camp-centered and value-centered diplomacy" to a "pragmatic" approach centered on the interests of South Korea and its people.<sup>516</sup> In sum, within the perennial contest between autonomy and alignment in South Korea's grand strategy, a pendulum shift towards autonomy now seems likely, also potentially bringing the DPK's critiques of post-Ukraine War alignment with Japan and NATO to the forefront of ROK policy. In contrast, Japan's Ukraine War-era alignment policies greatly expanded the horizons of its security cooperation and military normalization processes and there is thus little pollical incentive to reverse the orthodoxy of alignment-*cum*-autonomy. This is especially the case as the LDP has remained the largest party in Japanese politics after the lower house elections and as the largest opposition party, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP), is led by Noda Yoshihiko, a moderate conservative whose tenure coincided with the 2011 Fujimura Announcement and a diplomatic hardline against China. Nevertheless, increased flexibility in diplomatic relations might facilitate Japanese efforts to reach out to its authoritarian neighbors for the resolution of select issues (e.g., the Kuril Islands territorial dispute, the DPRK abductee issue, *inter alia*).

Structural obstacles erected by the Ukraine War remain significant, however. In particular, regarding South Korea's *sui generis* grand strategic goal of inter-Korean reunification, Russia's support of North Korea's sensitive military technologies and its explicit rejection of a nearly two decades old DPRK sanctions regime indicates a

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<sup>515</sup> Martin, Timothy W., Gordon Fairclough, and Jiyoung Sohn. 2024. "He Might Be South Korea's Next President. All He Has to Do Is Impeach the Current One." *The Wall Street Journal*, December 9, 2024. <https://www.wsj.com/world/asia/south-korea-lee-jae-myung-impeachment-leader-58f34272>.

<sup>516</sup> 맹성규. 2024. "'尹 대통령과 트럼프 케미 안 맞을 것' 이재명 분석...트럼프 당선, '먹사니즘' 연장선." *매일경제*, November 10, 2024. <https://www.mk.co.kr/news/politics/11164225>.

shattering of erstwhile taboos. The prospect of reversing the clock and restoring these norms seems farfetched at best, and new methods of bringing North Korea to the negotiating table might be needed for the second Trump administration (assuming that the political will to do so exists). Likewise, the Ukraine War has heightened the mutual threat perception between Russia and Japan in ways that have been severely inimical to the peace process and the settlement of the “Northern Territories” or “Southern Kurils” territorial issue. Reversing these dynamics to achieve a settlement will prove to be challenging going forward.

Ultimately, the Ukraine War constituted a crisis that has reified global bloc politics and that has engendered grave implications for the grand strategies of various national actors (and supranational ones, in the case of the EU). Regarding the middle powers of South Korea and Japan, as shown through this study, the conflict has brought to the fore several important implications for the grand strategies of these two middle powers situated within the geopolitical hotspot of Northeast Asia, all of which have been recapitulated in the conclusion below. Whether yet another moment of punctuated equilibrium will arise to alter the global dynamics of the past three years and their concomitant impacts on South Korea and Japan’s grand strategies remains to be seen.

## Chapter VIII. Conclusion

This study contributed to existing scholarship by assessing the implications of the truly global crisis of the Ukraine War for the long-term strategic directions of Northeast Asia's two middle powers, South Korea and Japan. Chapter 2 operationalized the concept of grand strategy by outlining its usage in existing literature and its interpretation for the purposes of this study. Chapter 3 outlined South Korea's grand strategy by referencing the analyses of Ramon Pacheco Pardo and others, highlighting in particular Pacheco Pardo's middle state grand strategy model, South Korea's *sui generis* grand strategic goal of inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification, and the dichotomy of autonomy versus alignment in Korean strategic thinking.

Chapter 4 then analyzed how the Ukraine War has constituted an inflection point for South Korea's grand strategy. First, regarding South Korea's *sui generis* goal of inter-Korean reconciliation and reunification, I outlined in Chapter 4-1 how the Ukraine War has drastically changed the geopolitical environment in ways that are inimical to South Korea's paramount pursuit of national reunification. In Chapter 4-2, I then described how the Ukraine War has affected South Korea's long-standing strategic dilemma between autonomy and alignment (and its concomitant dichotomy of deterrence vs. accommodation vis-à-vis North Korea) endemic to the policy debates of South Korea's political actors. The subchapter detailed how the post-Ukraine Yoon administration has accelerated South Korea's march towards alliance alignment and integrated deterrence while also sending costly signals to Russia, North Korea, and China in ways that evince the ROK's participation in a new Cold War paradigm. Post-Ukraine polling data was also presented that showed an Overton window shift within South Korea towards the conservative strategic orientation of greater alignment.

Chapter 5 outlined the grand strategy of Japan, using the conceptual framework of Pacheco Pardo's middle power grand strategy model, outlining its *sui generis* grand strategic goal of overcoming the legacy of the postwar era and its geographical

“line of interest” or *ri-ekisen* (i.e., the Indo-Pacific as highlighted by the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” concept first proposed by Abe Shinzō). Finally, Chapter 6 examined the impact of the Ukraine War on this model of Japan’s grand strategy. I argued that the Ukraine War has complicated the geopolitical circumstances surrounding Japan’s pursuit of its *sui generis* grand strategic goal (i.e., the Abe Doctrine’s goal of overcoming Japan’s postwar legacy in terms of actualizing irredentist territorial expansion, expanded military/security capabilities, and geopolitical influence apposite to Japan’s status as an economic powerhouse), making some goals less achievable (i.e., receipt of the Kuril Islands from Russia) while accelerating the achievement of others (i.e., military “normalization” of Japan as shown by further erosions of barriers to weapons transfers and foreign security cooperation). The expansion of the geographical scope of Japan’s middle power grand strategy (i.e., its *ri-ekisen*) via the post-Ukraine War linkage of Transatlantic and Indo-Pacific security paradigms was also discussed. Finally, a comparative discussion of the findings and a discussion of the current outlook was presented in Chapter 7, which outlined convergences and divergences endemic to the two cases as well as the possibility that yet another period of crisis or punctuated equilibrium remains on the horizon for the East Asian middle powers of South Korea and Japan.

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## 국문초록

본 연구는 우크라이나 전쟁이라는 국제적 위기가 한국과 일본의 대전략에 미쳤던 영향을 심층적으로 분석한다. 서론으로 주제를 소개한 후 포괄적인 문헌 검토를 통해 대전략이라는 개념의 기존 학문 내에서의 활용과 본 연구에 활용될 동 개념의 조작적 정의를 제시한다. 이어서 라몬 파체코 파르도의 연구 등 기존 문헌의 개관을 통해 한국의 대전략을 분석함으로써 파체코 파르도의 중견국 대전략 모델, 한국의 수이 제네리스 (고유의) 대전략 목표인 남북 화해와 통일 문제, 그리고 한국의 전략적 사고 속에 나타나 있는 독자 외교 노선과 진영 외교 노선 간의 갈등 구조를 설명한다. 남북 화해와 통일이라는 한국 고유의 대전략 목표와 관련하여, 우크라이나 전쟁은 지정학적 환경의 극적인 변화를 야기하였고 이는 남북 화해 과정을 막는 장애물로 작용하였다. 한국 외교의 독자 노선과 진영 노선 간의 대립 구조와 관련하여 우크라이나 전쟁 이후에 출범한 윤석열 정부가 진영 형성과 통합억제 전략에 편승함으로써 신냉전 패러다임에 입각한 외교 정책을 전개하였고 이의 일환으로 러시아, 북한, 그리고 중국에 “값비싼 신호” 를 보냈다.

본고는 이어서 파체코 파르도의 중견국 대전략 모델의 개념적 틀을 동북아시아의 또 다른 중견국인 일본에 적용한다. 일본의 전략적 사고에 관한 선행 연구의 개관을 통해 일본의 수이 제네리스 대전략 목표로 ‘전후체제의 극복’ 을, 그리고 일본 대전략의 지리적 범위에 해당하는 일본의 "이익선"(리에키센)으로 인도-태평양 지역을 제시한다. 일본 고유의 대전략 목표와 관련하여 우크라이나 전쟁은 일본 ‘전후체제의 극복’ 과정의 부속 목표인 러일 평화 협정 체결과 쿠릴 열도 영토 문제 해결을 가로막는 변수로 작용하였지만 동시에 또 다른 부속 목표인 국방의 ‘보통국가화’ 를 가속화하였다. 마지막으로 일본은 우크라이나 전쟁을 계기로 하여 대서양 안보 패러다임과 인도-태평양 안보 패러다임의 결합을

통해 일본의 중견국 대전략의 지리적 범위 (즉 리에키센)의 확장을 노렸다. 본고는 이어서 비교 분석을 통해 우크라이나 전쟁 이후 한국과 일본의 대전략의 유사점과 차이점을 설명하고 향후 전망도 제시한다.

**키워드:** 대전략, 우크라이나 전쟁, 대한민국, 일본, 중견국 대전략 모델

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