



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on January 29, 2023

## Former Japanese PM Lambastes Support for Ukraine

SINGAPORE — Former Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori decried the Japanese government's pro-Ukraine position in the Russia-Ukraine crisis that erupted last February, *Kyodo News* reported, even as incumbent premier Fumio Kishida mulls a visit to Kyiv.

Mori, a veteran ruling party member known for his close relations with Russia, criticized the extent to which Japan is backing Ukraine, elaborating that Russia would not accept defeat in the conflict, the agency said. Mori was speaking at a reception in Tokyo, with Kishida also in attendance.



AP Images  
Yoshiro Mori

Japan's government has imposed sanctions on Russia and supplied various forms of aid to Ukraine.

Mori was the premier of Japan for about a year and left office in April 2001 with some of the lowest support ratings ever for a Japanese prime minister. He was in the limelight again in 2021 when he had to step down as the chief of the Tokyo Olympic Organizing Committee.

Earlier this month, the *Yomiuri* newspaper reported that Kishida was considering visiting Kyiv to conduct talks with Zelensky, quoting Japanese government sources. He is poised to make an ultimate decision about whether to proceed with the visit or not, based on the war situation in Ukraine. The ruling party No. 2, Toshiimitsu Motegi, was also in favor of such a visit.

As chair of the Group of Seven (G-7) leading economies this year, Japan hopes to display support for Ukraine, *Yomiuri* said.

During a television program, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiji Kihara declared that visiting Kyiv is something Japan must consider as chair of G-7 this year.

"But nothing has been decided at this stage," Kihara said, when questioned if Kishida was visiting Kyiv. Kishida had previously told Zelensky in a phone call that he may visit Kyiv depending on "various circumstances."

Japan is slated to host the yearly G-7 summit in May in Hiroshima, when Ukraine is poised to be a key topic of discussion.

The other G-7 countries are the United States, Canada, Germany, Britain, France, and Italy.

Moreover, Kishida also told Western powers that East Asia could be the next Ukraine, as he called for a united front on an increasingly ambitious China and hostile North Korea.

During his G-7 tour, during which he visited leaders of all members except Germany, Kishida said he shared with G-7 leaders his "strong sense of crisis regarding the security environment in East Asia."

"The lesson of Ukraine has taught us that the security of Europe and the Indo-Pacific are inseparable," Kishida stated at a news conference following his meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden.



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“The situation around Japan is becoming increasingly severe with attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force in the East China Sea and South China Sea and the activation of North Korea’s nuclear and missile activities,” he said.

Kishida was alluding to China’s rising ambitions in neighboring waters, where the superpower has a series of island disputes with Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

In August last year, China launched missiles into waters that are situated in Japan’s economic zone as part of major military drills around self-ruled Taiwan, which Beijing regards as a renegade province to be reunified with the mainland, by force if necessary.

Kishida came to Washington after his government indicated that Japan would double defense spending over the next five years, a marked shift in policy for a country that has been officially pacifist since its loss in World War II.

However, Kishida highlighted that Japan still regards itself as a “peace-loving” nation and will pressure the G-7 to call for the ultimate abolition of nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, Biden and Kishida pledged to work together closely in the fields of economics and defense, hailing their countries’ alliance as the cornerstone of peace in an increasingly hostile Indo-Pacific region.

The topic of China was heavily touched on during the summit, with both leaders singling out the risk of a pugilistic Beijing for the international order and regional stability.

“We are modernizing our military alliance, building on Japan’s historic increase in defense spending and new National Security Strategy,” said Biden, as he hosted Kishida at the White House.

“Let me be crystal clear: The United States is fully, thoroughly, completely committed to the alliance and, more importantly, to Japan’s defense,” he added.

Besides, both countries also signed a deal to enhance cooperation in the peaceful exploration of space, amid plans for missions to the Moon and Mars.

“The Indo-Pacific faces growing challenges, from actions inconsistent with the rules-based international order by China to provocations by North Korea,” said Washington and Tokyo in a joint statement.

Meanwhile, Tokyo has justified expanding its military by claiming that the security situation in the Asia-Pacific region has been worsening. The East Asian island nation views China as “the greatest strategic challenge ever,” and the DPRK (North Korea) as “an even more serious threat than before.”

Senior researcher at Russia’s Academy of Military Sciences Vladimir Prokhvatilov opined that the militarization of Japan will take its toll on the Japanese taxpayer.

“Japan is extremely concerned about China’s activity near the Senkaku Islands, the unpredictability of North Korea’s missile exercises, and tensions in the Indo-Pacific. In general, increasing the military power of any country makes its neighbors think that this is done for a reason, and they also begin to strengthen their armies, build up and modernize their own weapons.”

The researcher singled out budget pressures the remilitarization of Japan may place on Tokyo, comparing it to the \$2.3 trillion cost over two decades of the U.S. war in Afghanistan.



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