

Japanese government imposes sanctions on Russia

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Japan has backed the NATO-led war campaign against Russia, formally announcing a series of sanctions on Moscow over the Ukraine crisis on Tuesday. The decision followed an online meeting between Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, US President Joe Biden, and US allied leaders.

Kishida, from the right-wing Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), stated after Tuesday's meeting, "We've agreed on the need to take powerful sanctions against Russia." He condemned Russian aggression declaring it "shakes the very foundations of the international order," and supported united action by "the international community"—that is, the US and its allies.

Japan will freeze the assets of six Russian individuals, including President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. The sanctions also target three banks, Russia's central bank and the state-owned Promsvyazbank and Vnesheconombank. The sanctions include bans on exporting goods to 49 Russian organizations and bans on exporting any goods that could have military applications, such as semiconductors.

Prime Minister Kishida previously stated that Tokyo would join in blocking Russian banks' access to the SWIFT international payment system that is essential for many international financial transactions. Japan will provide Ukraine with upwards of \$US200 million in loans and aid.

The sanctions are part of Tokyo's further alignment with Washington's war drive against Russia as well as China. Kishida claims that Russia has acted unilaterally, but this stands reality on its head. Moscow's invasion of Ukraine is a response to Washington's campaign to surround Russia with NATO allies, complete with US weaponry and troops, and to the 2014 US-instigated coup in Kiev, backed by

far-right forces.

Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has seized on the Ukraine crisis as a means of pushing the right-wing nationalist agenda of Japanese remilitarization. He issued a call on February 27 for Japan to consider a nuclear weapon-sharing program between the US and Japan, similar to that between the US and NATO countries, that would allow Washington to station nuclear weapons in Japan.

Such a step would be a clear breach of Japan's anti-nuclear policies that stem from the widespread opposition produced by the US atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Brushing that aside, Abe declared: "Japan is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and has its three non-nuclear principles, but it should not treat as a taboo, discussions on the reality of how the world is kept safe."

The three non-nuclear principles state that Japan will not possess, produce, or allow nuclear weapons on its territory, though the last of these has been violated in the past by the United States.

Well aware of the public opposition to any change, Kishida said Abe's suggestion was "unacceptable." However, Abe's remarks make clear that these discussions are taking place behind closed doors. Abe remains a member of the National Diet's House of Representatives and highly influential within the LDP, leading the largest faction in the party.

Japan's main opposition parties, which posture against remilitarization and war, have also lined up with the Washington-NATO agenda. The Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP) and the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) have denounced Moscow as the sole aggressor and instigator of the current conflict in Ukraine.

On February 27, at its annual convention, the CDP

adopted a resolution that condemned Russia's actions "in the strongest terms" as "a challenge to the international order based on the rule of law, not only in Europe but also in Asia." It went on to "support the Japanese government in taking measures consistent with the G7 and other international bodies for economic sanctions and humanitarian assistance."

The CDP's support for the "international order" and "rule of law" is backing for the US-dominated post-World War II order in which Washington rewrites the rules in its own national interests. While the Russian invasion of the Ukraine is reactionary, the chief responsibility for the war underway rests with US imperialism which has sought to provoke Russia into war by refusing to exclude the Ukraine from NATO. By including Asia in the statement, the CDP provides a justification for broader Japanese involvement in the current conflict.

The Japanese Stalinists in the JCP similarly seek to obscure the causes of the Russian invasion. In a February 24 statement, JCP Chairman Kazuo Shii issued a statement, saying, "The Japanese Communist Party strongly condemns [Russia's invasion of Ukraine] as it is an obvious act of aggression... The JCP calls on the international community to unite against Russia's invasion of Ukraine and persuade Moscow to desist from further military operations in Ukraine."

The appeal to the "international community" aligns the JCP with the US and its allies around the world that are chiefly responsible for provoking the war. Shii previously dismissed Russia's concerns over NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe and potentially the Ukraine in a February 12 statement. "Moscow argues that NATO should halt its eastward expansion, but such an argument provides no justification for its recent actions," he declared.

Shii papers over the entire 30-year history of the US and NATO since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The destruction of Yugoslavia and the bombing of Serbia, US imperialism's wars of aggression throughout the Middle East, and the 2014 coup in Ukraine demonstrate that Washington has instigated conflict throughout the region, bringing it right to Russia's doorstep.

Shii backs the US-led sanctions against Moscow, which are part of the ongoing campaign to wage open war with Russia and reduce the country to semi-

colonial status. The JCP, which postures as an opponent of remilitarization and the US-Japan security treaty, becomes an open apologist for Washington's imperialist appetites.

Neither the CDP nor the JCP are genuinely opposed to imperialist war, Tokyo's remilitarization, or, above all, the war drive against China. Instead, they camouflage the predatory actions of Japanese and US imperialism and seek to prevent an anti-war movement of workers and youth from emerging.



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