
TAISIYA USTINOVA. RELATIONS OF THE MIDDLE EAST
REGION STATES WITH JAPAN

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Abstract. The article examines the peculiarities of Japan’s relations with the countries of the Mideast. A brief history of interstate relations is given, the reasons for Japan’s activity in this region are considered. First of all, Japan is concerned about the flawless import of energy resources from these countries. In addition, Japan, in cooperation with the United States, pursues an active foreign policy in the countries of the region in contrast with China.

Japan is a highly industrial country that is poor in minerals and energy. Since modern industry is based on the consumption of large amounts of electricity, it is vital for Japan to import enough energy from the countries rich in them. As an energy-dependent state, Japan, for which its national and geopolitical interests are prioritized, cooperation with the countries of the Arab region and with Russia has always been beneficial. Natural resources more and more influence international relations, which affects the political processes taking place around the world. This has been especially acute in the past few years, when, on the one hand, there is a danger of depletion of earth interior (including

maldistribution of deposits, and due to the often irrational use of natural resources), on the other hand, dangerous tendencies of escalation of conflict situations constantly arise, which could affect oil production in the countries of the Mideast, considered traditional suppliers of Japan. As one of the most import-dependent countries, Japan cannot but consider these aspects. Japan's dependence on energy supplies was affected by the Fukushima accident and the subsequent shutdown of all nuclear power units throughout the country.

The Russian Far East, rich in minerals, has always drawn attention of the Japanese, primarily because Japan took into account the logistical benefits of delivering liquefied gas (LNG) and oil from its next-door neighbor, compared to their delivery from the Middle East, which is also carried out through the unsafe Strait of Malacca [Japan refuses...].

On the territory of the Far Eastern Federal District, large joint Russian-Japanese economic projects were implemented, for example, the development of oil and gas condensate fields in the Sakhalin Region, automotive industry in the Primorsky Territory, wood processing in the Khabarovsk and Primorsky Territories, processing of diamond raw materials and geological exploration in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), the construction of an agrological terminal in the Amur Region, the construction of a large forest processing complex in the Irkutsk region and many other. The strategic area of cooperation between the two countries is the fuel and energy complex – large joint oil and gas projects, such as Sakhalin-1 and Sakhalin-2. Accumulated investments from Japan amounted to about \$10 billion. Their largest inflow was in 2009, when a natural gas liquefaction plant was launched on the island, the products of which provide almost 9 per cent of Japanese LNG imports [Sattarova I...]. Therefore, Japan has always considered the Far Eastern-Siberian region as the most important base for the development and implementation of its security strategy due to the fact that the energy aspect in the modern world is one of the key ones.

In 2014, Japan, under pressure from the United States, joined the countries pursuing a sanctions policy against Russia. As a result of sanctions imposition investments in Russia, cooperation in the field of space exploration and an agreement on the prevention of dangerous military activities were frozen. At the same time, Russian-Japanese consultations on facilitating the visa regime were suspended, and negotiations on a number of joint projects were postponed. On April 29, 2014, the Japanese Foreign Ministry published a statement on support for sanctions on its official website and announced its actions: "Japan is suspending the issue of visas to 23 Russian citizens involved in violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine." ("Japan has decided to stop issuing visas to enter Japan to a total of 23 individuals who are considered to have contributed to the violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity for the time being") [Statement by the Minister... 29.04.2014]. Japan did not impose tough sanctions against Russia at that time, although it declared them by all means under pressure from its American partners under a military-political treaty. However, at this time, it began to expand economic cooperation even more actively with the countries of the Middle East, primarily the UAE and Saudi Arabia, and in recent years – also with Libya.

After the start of the SMO in 2022, Japan was forced to proceed to serious sanctions against Russia, which led to a significant cooling of relations and entailed both the suspension of many joint projects and a significant reduction in imports of minerals, oil, gas and other energy resources from Russia. By this time, Japan had already managed to conclude many economic and political agreements with the countries of the Middle East region, and to establish uninterrupted delivery of energy resources from there.

Historically, Japan imported oil from the countries of the Middle East back in the 20th century. For example, in 1973 Japan imported only 290 million tons of oil, 43 per cent of which were oil from the countries of the Middle East, 41 from Iran, and 16 per

cent from Indonesia [Harutyunyan E.V. Energy... p.53]. At the same time, Japan never openly intervened in Arab-Israeli relations and did not give official assessments of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This allowed it to maintain good partnerships with the United States and develop economic cooperation with the countries of the Mideast. Certain maneuvering between the United States and the Mideast countries allowed Japan to act in its own economic interests and overcome the oil crises of the 1970–1980s. During these crises, even the special term “Energy Diplomacy” appeared. All aspects were taken into account: from the US reaction to Japan’s negotiations with Arab leaders, including those with whom the United States had a difficult relationship, to the need to negotiate at a quick rate, given the mentality of Middle Eastern partners.

In the second half of the 20th century, Japan considered the countries of the Mideast exclusively as donors of energy resources, and did not develop any special foreign policy course for these countries. However, frequent conflict situations in the region, armed clashes and the 1991 Gulf War forced Japan to intensify its foreign policy in these countries and consider them not only as economic, but also political partners. This was due to the safety issues of transporting oil and LNG from these countries to Japan. As a result, in the late 1990s, Japan developed a new active foreign policy course for the countries of this region.

Since the early 2000s, Japan has intensively developed relations with countries throughout the Arab region: from North Africa to Iran and Afghanistan. Since that time, the Blue Book of Japanese Foreign Policy (the main print edition of the Japanese Foreign Ministry) has published annual reports and prospects for the development of Japan’s relations with these countries. But the focus remains on economic relations. Japan is primarily interested in obtaining energy resources from the countries of the region, and the Middle East region is also a profitable market for the sale of mass consumption goods for it.

The need for Japan to intensify and develop relations with all countries of the Middle and Middle East, regardless of their relations with each other, is emphasized. The 2023 Blue Book states: “The Middle East is the main source of energy supply for the international community, and Japan depends on the region for about 90 per cent in terms of crude oil imports. Therefore, peace and stability in the region, including the safety of shipping, are extremely important for energy security, as well as the stability and growth of the global economy, including Japan. On the other hand, the region has experienced various conflicts and disputes throughout its history. Tense and unstable situations, as well as difficult humanitarian conditions, continue to persist. Japan is an ally of the United States, and also traditionally maintains good relations with the countries of the Middle East. To maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law, including in the Middle East, Japan will actively participate in diplomatic efforts to help ease tensions and stabilize the situation in the Middle East, in close cooperation with the interest countries, taking into account the issues of concern and the needs of each country within the framework of various structures, such as the Japan-Arab Political Dialogue” [Diplomatic Bluebook 2023., p. 011].

Japan managed to maintain good relations with both Israel and Palestine, it participated in international missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and in general its policy in the region can be described as peacekeeping.

Japan’s most active relations with the countries of the Middle East region developed during the period when Shinzo Abe was the prime minister of Japan. S. Abe often visited the countries of the Arab East on official visits, for example, in January 2014, he toured several countries in the region [Japanese Prime Minister sees...], conducting intensive negotiations with their leaders. During this tour, S. Abe proposed to allocate \$2.5 billion in material assistance to the countries of the Middle East, some of which will be provided to states affected by the

terrorist organization ISIS [Japan will help...]. In 2019, S. Abe took an active part in reducing the escalation of the conflict situation around Iran. In June 2019, he paid an official visit to Tehran, which was the first in the last 40 years (at the time of the visit). Abe held talks with then-US President D. Trump and insisted that the conflict situation should only be resolved peacefully through negotiations, without the use of force. As a result of diplomatic efforts by the Japanese party, the United States softened its position on Iran and did not impose tough sanctions against it. In fact, S. Abe became an intermediary between the United States and Iran, and this mission was successful [Tarasov S. Will it be possible...].

However, many political scientists, including Iranian ones, saw in S. Abe's visit not only a mediation mission, but also a specific economic interest. According to Mohsen Ruth Sefat, former deputy head of the Department of Political and International Studies of the Iranian Foreign Ministry, the main goal of the visit is to protect Japan's interests in obtaining Middle East oil from the Persian Gulf. Any tension in the region harms Japan's economic interests. This entails the Iranian port of Chabahar, in the development of which Japan is ready to invest seriously [Vardanyan A.S. About the visit...].

Significant success was achieved by S. Abe and in an effort to provide Japan with the necessary resources as much as possible, securing the routes of their transportation. After 2 tankers transporting oil to Japan were subjected to a sabotage attack in June 2019, the United States blamed Iran for this. But S. Abe held a series of peacekeeping talks with both Iranian representatives and the United States. The negotiation process between Japan, Iran and the United States was successful. Speaking in September 2019 at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, the Japanese Prime Minister stressed that everything possible should be done to transport Middle Eastern resources safely, but exclusively through diplomatic methods,

excluding the escalation of the conflict and the application of any violent measures [Shinzo Abe: Japan...].

During the entire period of intensification of Japan's foreign policy in the Mideast, in addition to the economic and political aspects, interfaith dialogue between Japan and these countries takes place. In particular, in 2001, during the official visit of Japanese Foreign Minister I. Kono to Saudi Arabia, it was announced the beginning of an active dialogue between the Islamic and non-Islamic worlds. Japanese students began to show interest in studying the traditions and foundations of Islam, between the universities of Japan and the Middle East states there is a scientific and personnel exchange which is being carried out. They began to study the Muslim world in Japan back in the 30s of the 20th century, when the Great Japanese Muslim League was created, which was the beginning of Islamic studies in Japan. In the same years, centers for the study of Islam were created: an institute of Islamic culture and a scientific society for the study of Islam. As a result of their activities, periodicals of the relevant topics began to be published: "Islamic Culture" and "Islamic World" [Bibik A. Features...]. Therefore, interest in Islam in Japan can be called historical.

Currently, Japan's policy towards the Middle East is not only changing, but also becoming more and more active. Japan also provides significant financial assistance to countries in the region. For example, it invested significantly in the reconstruction of Palestinian infrastructure, provided material support to Afghanistan to restore destruction, and provided assistance to the population. Japan's main partner is Egypt in helping Afghanistan. During the visit of Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi in August 2021, an agreement was reached on cooperation in this area [Paramonov O. Middle East...].

In 2018, Japan for the first time after the Second World War opened its military base in Djibouti [Almametov A., Sharafutdinov D. ...]. This is a serious military structure, occupying a significant area, technically well equipped, and

prepared for the deployment of a military contingent. As long as Japan joins the tripartite Alliance of the United States, Australia and Great Britain AUKUS in the near future, this base may be well used as an outpost. AUKUS was originally created as a tripartite alliance for joint security cooperation in September 2021, but the United States seeks to expand it primarily at the expense of Japan and South Korea. Obviously, the opening of such a base is directed against the policies of China, expanding its influence in this region, and providing significant financial support to the economies of African countries. The precedent of opening such a base means the beginning of Japan's revision of its military concept, previously based on the principles of demilitarization and the abandonment of any armed forces and means of warfare.

In the summer of 2023, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited a number of countries in the Middle East: Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). These countries are the largest suppliers of LNG and other energy sources. Kishida continues to strengthen resource diplomacy in the region. With Japan's relationship with another major energy supplier, Russia, now stagnating, it is vital. Japan is ready to invest in technological cooperation with these countries in the field of decarbonization of their economy, and is also going to take part in the 28th session of the conference of the parties to the UN Framework Convention, scheduled for November 2023, which will be held in the UAE [Japan is looking for...].

In July 2023, Japan and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) resumed free trade negotiations. The corresponding agreement was signed by Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and GCC Secretary General Jassem al-Budaiwe [Japan and GCC resumed...]. The negotiations took place during F. Kishida's tour across the countries of the Middle East region.

It is very important for Japan that it is not perceived in the Middle East as a US vassal pursuing an exclusively pro-American policy. Japan is trying to seem like an independent actor in the Middle East region and cover as many countries as possible with

its influence. Nevertheless, it always has to strike a balance between relations with the countries of the Middle East on the one hand, and Israel and the United States on the other. To do this, it's necessary to be neutral during escalation of conflicts between Palestine and Israel, Iran and Iraq, Iran and the United States and others. Military-political partnership with the United States remains Japan's top foreign policy priority. Under pressure from the United States, Japan is forced to make sometimes unprofitable decisions for it in relations with other countries, and support all American foreign policy initiatives. This also affects relations with countries in the Middle East region, many of which see the United States as a political and often military adversary. So far, Japan has managed to maintain a balance in these multilateral foreign policy configurations, but given the ongoing changes in the system of international relations in general and in the region in particular, it is difficult to predict confidently the future development of events. It can only be said with confidence that Japan "has come" to the Middle East region for a long time, and intends to cooperate with the countries of the region in all areas, since this is vital for the country.

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VASILY OSTANIN-GOLOVNIA. "EUROISLAM" AND THE PROBLEM OF ADAPTATION OF THE MUSLIM DIASPORA IN THE EU

Keywords: Euro-Islam; multi-culturalism; migration; European Union; Tibi; Tariq Ramadan; religious factor; ideological and value approach.

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Abstract. The article deals with the phenomenon of "Euro-Islam" in the context of the problem of adaptation of Moslem diasporas in the countries of the European Union. A comparative analysis of two author's concepts of modern Islamic liberalism, Bassam Tibi and Tariq Ramadan, who in their works offer alternative approaches to the development of the EU migration policy is proposed. Particular attention in this article is paid to the comparison of multiculturalism, cultural pluralism and the traditional Islamic division of the world within the framework of the ideological and value approach.