

MA. Thesis
International Studies

US PRESSURE ON JAPAN-RUSSIA RELATIONS IN LIGHT OF THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS



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0.1. ABSTRACT

In 2013 Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Russia's President Vladimir Putin announced their readiness to renew the dialogue on the Kuril Islands – the disputed territory that kept the Japan-Russia bilateral relationship frozen for almost 70 years. Due to the territorial dispute, the Japan-Russia economic and diplomatic cooperation remained relatively underdeveloped, which provided a great opportunity for both to benefit from the improved bilateral cooperation. However, the breakthrough has never happened, since the Japan-Russia relationship deteriorated after Japan joined US sanctions against Russia due to Russian involvement in the Ukrainian Crisis. Conventional explanations cite that the United States pressured Japan into imposing sanctions against its national interest. In this paper I provide an analysis of Japanese sanctions against Russia to answer the question of whether US pressure on Japan resulted in reactive Japan's foreign policy sanctions against Russia.

Therefore this paper will put forward a case to answer the question of whether Japan's foreign policy was influenced by it being a reactive state. For the purpose of this research, I analysed the three rounds of sanctions from March 2014 to July 2016 by using a process tracing method combined with attributed influence and preference attainment to identify and measure US pressure on Japan. Drawing the concept of a reactive state model I will demonstrate how the United States pressured Japan against Japanese national interest. By focusing on the extent of Japanese sanctions, I put forward the case that Japan was able to implement low-key yet independent policy in case of sanctions.

Keywords: US-Japan relations, Japan-Russia relations, foreign policy analysis, the Ukrainian crisis, sanctions, reactive state

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1. INTRODUCTION

Japan-Russia relations have always been considered complicated due to frequently changing periods of diplomatic friendship, neutrality and military confrontation (Tōgō 2010, 228). Today, both Japan's Prime Minister Abe and Russia's president Putin reach for a better diplomatic and economic relationship, yet the legacy of the World War II prevents the two states from fully realising successful cooperation. The problem lies in the disputed islands north of Hokkaido – the Southern Kurils or the Northern Territories – that keep the states from signing a peace treaty (Panov and Tōgō 2016, 17). In 2013, there was an ongoing debate over the possible territorial dispute resolution in both academic and political circles, when both Abe and Putin announced renewed negotiations on the latter. The hope for a breakthrough was nourished by optimistic statements of "hajime" (begin) and "hikiwake" (draw) in regards to negotiations made by Putin, but also by Abe's hopefulness on finding the final solution to the conflict (Rozman 29.04.2016).

The breakthrough, however, never happened as the Japan-Russia relationship experienced a new low when Japan joined US economic sanctions against Russia due to the Russian involvement in the Ukrainian Crisis. The Ukrainian Crisis is referred to as the ongoing crisis in the Ukraine that started with the public protests (Euromaidan) against the Yanukovich government that resulted in February 2014 Revolution in Kyiv. The revolution evoked national unrest in Eastern and Southern Ukraine that led to the Crimean Referendum and the Civil War in the Donbass region. The international community strongly criticised Putin for supporting pro-Russian rebels in Ukraine by supporting them with goods and arms, yet Japan kept its position relatively neutral.

The situation changed when Putin announced that the Crimean peninsula would be registered as two de facto Russian federal subjects — the Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol (TASS 21.03.2014). Consequently, Japan showed solidarity with the United States and the European Union by imposing sanctions against Russia, despite the progress made on the territorial dispute with Russia. Considering the strength of

Japanese sanctions, several experts emphasized that while Abe sanctioned Russia, he made it clear that Japan was willing “to keep the diplomatic door with Moscow open” (Rozman 29.04.2016).

Japanese solidarity with the United States evoked a long-standing debate on the reactivity of Japan’s foreign policy – the notion that Japan performs low-key risk avoiding diplomacy, solely reliant on the United States in foreign affairs (Mochizuki 2007). In the case of Japanese sanctions, experts raised a question, whether the decision to impose sanctions against Russia while Japan-Russia relations experienced an important stage in territorial negotiations was independent or influenced by an external actor. This research focuses on US pressure on Japan to impose sanctions against Russia due to Russian involvement in the Ukrainian Crisis. The objective of this research is to analyse whether the United States influenced Japan’s decision to join US sanctions against Russia even though such policy was against Japanese interests. Therefore, this research will add to the discourse on the reactivity of Japan’s foreign policy by answering the question whether Japan acted as a reactive state in relation to the Ukrainian Crisis and in following sanctions against Russia. For the purpose of this research I will use a process tracing method combined with attributed influence and preference attainment to identify and measure US pressure on Japan. Finally, analysis will show whether US pressure was successful and whether Japan is a reactive state.

The research covers events from March 2014 to July 2016 and analyses three stages of sanctions in three chapters. The paper begins with the literature review on Japan’s foreign policy and Japan-Russia relations to provide a context to the issue of US pressure on Japan-Russia relations in regards to territorial dispute. Methodology explains the method of measuring external pressure and elaborates on theoretical approaches on Japan’s foreign policy-making process. Subsequently this research will complement the discourse on Japan’s foreign policy-making process and US-Japan-Russia relations.

The main objective of this paper is to analyse if and how the United States influenced Japan to act accordingly to US references. By showing whether US pressure was effective, this research will complement the discourse on Japan’s foreign policy and

answer the questions whether Japan remains a reactive state. In light of global changes and the growing influence of Japan on the global arena, it is important to understand, how Japan acts in foreign affairs and whether it is able to implement independent policies that are not dependent on US preferences. The case of Japan-Russia relations in light of the Ukrainian Crisis provides a remarkable example, when the United States and Japan have different objectives. Therefore, this research will not only complement the discourse on US-Japan power relations, but also will be enlightening on Japan-Russia relations in regards to the US-Russia deteriorating relationship. As a result, by knowing Japan's behaviour in foreign affairs we might predict the future moves Japan will take to ensure its position on the global arena.

1.1. RESEARCH PROBLEM

This thesis will present an analysis of US pressure on Japan's foreign policy-making process. The central argument of this paper can be defined under two research questions:

- RQ1 Has US pressure on Japan resulted in reactive Japanese foreign policy – sanctions against Russia?
- RQ2 Is Japan a reactive state?

To better address those questions, I use three arguments from hypothetical framework:

- HP1 US pressure has forced Japan to implement sanction policies against Russia.
- HP2 Japanese sanction policy against Russia is a reactive policy.
- HP2 Japan is a reactive state.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's fast-changing world Japan is one of the most influential economic powers in the region, yet Japan's foreign diplomacy remains low-key and risk-avoiding compared to the other developed countries. Japanese passivity in foreign affairs is widely considered to be a result of Japanese inability to perform independent foreign policy, which makes it merely rely on its major strategic ally – the United States (Mochizuki 2007, 17). Scholars, who thoughtfully analysed the reasons and consequences of Japan's dependence on US lead in foreign affairs, have emphasised the issue of *gaiatsu* (external pressure) in Japan's foreign policy-making process¹. While the debate on US pressure on Japan's foreign policy-making process is ongoing, the case of Japanese sanctions against Russia has never been studied in this context.

Whereas Japan-Russia relations are considered to be difficult, the US factor adds to the complexity between the two states. Today, US pressure on Japan in case of sanctions challenged the progress Abe and Putin made before 2014 on territorial dispute – the issue that was closely interconnected with the United States.

Initially, the dispute over the sovereignty of the Southern Kurils/Northern Territories has been the keystone of Japan-Russia relations for 60 years. A number of studies agree that the mutual distrust is rooted in the events of World War II, when the Soviet Union violated the Pact of Neutrality and entered the war against Japan (Miyashita 2003, 108).

There is a clear division in the literature between two perspectives of the historic and legal grounds to the Kuril Islands. The Pro-Russian stance is based on the result of Yalta Agreement – the document signed by the leaders of the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union on 11 February 1945 (Tōgō 2010, 228). According to the Yalta agreement, Japan was revoked from its legal rights to the southern part of the Sakhalin Island along with the Kuril Islands after the end of World War II. The territories were passed to the Soviet Union as a payment for a 'self-sacrifice' in helping its allies in liberating Asia from Japanese aggression (Hasegawa 1998, 72; Koshkin 2003, 230).

¹ The notion of *gaiatsu* is further explained in methodology chapter

The Japanese position, supported both by Japanese and Western scholars, refuses to recognise the Yalta Agreement and its results (Kimura 2008; Rees 1985). Instead, Japan bases its claims on the Potsdam Declaration, which demanded that Japan return territories acquired by force after the Meiji Restoration, and which did not specifically clarify the future of the Kuril Islands (Tōgō 2010, 229). During the Cold War both positions existed with little changes, since both Japanese and Russian academic circles tended to ignore each other's arguments and "elevate their own country's claims and achievements at the expense of the other's" (Stephan 1974, 1).

The US factor in the dispute is repeatedly highlighted by scholars due to its direct involvement and unquestionable interest. Russian scholar Koshkin argued: "the Americans made us and the Japanese hostages of the tangled Kuril problem" (Brown 2016, 21). Indeed, Washington clearly supported Russian incorporation of the disputed islands by agreeing to the Soviet conditions to join the Pacific War against Japan. Yet, the Cold War marked the shift of the United States' position: it was more important for the United States to ensure Japan's alliance rather than to keep its initial stance. The United States supported Japan in the deliberately vague San Francisco Peace Treaty, yet it was never signed by the Soviet Union, and the question of peace restoration and territorial dispute resolution was left open (Tōgō 2010, 232). Hasegawa argues that such development was in favour of the United States, since it prevented the Japan-Russia rapprochement and "helped redirect Japanese anger about territorial losses away from Okinawa" to the Kuril Islands (Brown 2016, 20). Moreover, the Japan-Russia effort to negotiate over two islands in 1956 collapsed under the "Dulles intimidation" – the threat that the United States will never leave Okinawa if Japan drops its claims on the Kuril Islands (ibid. 21). It is argued that the Japan-Russia alliance would be a threat for US dominance in Pacific region, thus the territorial dispute is essential in keeping these two countries from cooperation (LaCaze 1992, 93-94).

The end of the Cold War marked a new stage in Japan-Russia relations. In the early 90s Russia experienced turmoil in domestic politics, which also affected the territorial dispute with Japan. Despite various attempts of Liberals and Democrats to return all

four islands as a sign of goodwill, Communists and Nationalists – the dominant power in the Russian Duma – blocked such policy (Buszynski 2000, 407).

The next serious possibility for dispute resolution occurred during the first term of President Putin. The Irkutsk summit of 2001 presented a new “two plus alpha” framework, which was developed from *yontou ikkatsu henkan-ron*², and suggested that the islands could be returned in different stages - Habomai and Shikotan first, Iturup and Kunashir later (Rozman 2016, 6). Although MOFA (2011) states that Japan is willing to “respond flexibly to the timing and manner of their actual return”, in fact, such an approach was highly criticised by Japanese conservatives and foreign ministry officials along with Russian officials (Brown 2016, 2). Therefore, neither the Koizumi administration, nor Putin accepted “two plus alpha” as a conclusive framework in the beginning of the 2000s (Rozman 2016, 7).

After 10 years of stagnation Abe focused on the restoration of Japan-Russia relations in order to continue the “two plus alpha” negotiations (Tōgō 2012). Today the literature on Japan-Russia relations focuses on different factors that might have pushed the Abe administration to seek a closer relationship with Russia. Firstly, the geopolitical factor of rising China is perceived to be crucial for Japan, thus it was repeatedly discussed in Japanese media and in academic publications (Buszynski 2000, 408; Green 2001, 33). While Russian opposition to the West brings it closer to China, Japanese strategic interest is to prevent such a situation from happening (Drennan 2015). Secondly, prospects of bilateral economic relationship, which remained undeveloped for decades, became positive, particularly towards crude exports and Russia-Japan investment cooperation (Ershova 2014, 14). Lastly, there is a recreation of a strong national identity registered both in Russia and Japan. Although national identity is usually referred as one of the obstacles in the dispute, Tōgō argues that it will bring states closer (Rozman 2016, 7-8). While Japan burdens the consequences of World War II, Abe is determined to resolve the post-War territorial conflicts in order to restore Japan’s sovereignty, which will eventually lead to the national identity restoration. Similarly, Putin is interested in

² The notion that all four islands should be returned together (Brown 2016)

better relationships in the East, including Japan, since it supports his argument of Russians being both Westerners and Easterners (ibid. 8).

While Togo's positive approach is creditable, it seems unlikely that the national identity factor will be sufficient enough to urge leaders to compromise. Although similar interest in national identity restoration might be a connecting point for Abe and Putin on personal level, diplomatically it will have little effect. Similarly, there is little to suggest that geopolitical factor will be crucial for either Putin or Abe in terms of negotiations on the territorial dispute. The issue of rising China brings little threat to the Putin Administration, whereas the Kuril Islands have strategically important location. As for Abe, the alliance with the United States is more beneficial in terms of security than rapprochement with Russia. Therefore, although Drennan's and Tōgō's arguments are sufficient for Japan-Russia relationship's improvement in general, they have little importance for either Putin or Abe to compromise their initial stance on the dispute.

By 2014 there was a growing hope in academic circles for possible breakthrough in the territorial dispute. Rozman (2002, 354) argued: "an unprecedented number of preconditions are at last in place for the leaders of Japan and Russia to reach an agreement, but more are needed." Although scholars usually agree that it is a long way for a solution, they tend to disagree on the factors that will lead to the conflict resolution.

Some argue that economic development between two states will play a pivotal role in territorial dispute resolution (Scarlapino 2003, 82). Kapur (2012, 387) suggests that eventually Russia will return the Kuril Islands to Japan in return for Japan-Russia economic cooperation, which will be beneficial for the Russian economy. Yet he doubts that the solution will be based on the return of all four islands. According to Panov (1999, 29-31), the conflict resolution will be reached only after Japan and Russia improve the most important spheres of the relationship - economic and diplomatic cooperation along with cultural exchange – in order to remove mutual emotional distrust and the Cold War stereotypes. Initially, he argues, the start is to be the bilateral economic cooperation on Kuril Islands (ibid. 31).

Nevertheless, emerging hope in academic circles was considerably shaken by the events of the Russian annexation of Crimea and following Japanese sanctions against

Russia. A major debate on Japan's participation in the international economic sanctions against Russia, which were imposed after the Crimean declaration of independence and Russia's annexation of the peninsula in 2014, continues to fuel academic discourse on Japan's position in the international arena. The issue of Japanese sanctions was analysed by Japanese and international scholars, the main focus lying on the causes of the crisis and following effects on Japan-Russia relations. With regards to causes of the conflict, which resulted in Russian aggression and following sanctions, Western scholars agree on the geopolitical struggle between Russia and the West, particularly, the United States (Daiske Oberbäumer and Sakaki 2015, 2). NATO's expansion to Russia's border along with the enlargement of western dominance into the Russian traditional sphere of influence – Ukraine - was perceived as an open threat to the Putin administration (Voytolovsky 2015, 72).

It is unclear the reason why Japan joined Western sanctions, especially in the period of improving the Japan-Russia relationship. Although the official version stresses Japanese dedication to democratic Western values, scholars tend to believe that it was US influence that made Japan impose sanctions. The literature on the causes for the Japanese response to Russian aggression is respectively less detailed and contains no thoughtful analysis. While it is generally assumed that Japan responded to US pressure and imposed sanctions against its national interest, I will analyse the whole process of Japanese sanctions with the focus on *gaiatsu* in order to fill the gap in the literature and to answer the questions why Japan imposed sanctions, and whether Japan acted reactively according to US preferences.

By understanding Japanese sanctions against Russia as a response to US pressure, we can draw parallels between the case of 2014 economic sanctions and the case of Japanese financial aid to Russia in 1990s. Miyashita (2003, 115) argues that Japanese reactivity in foreign affairs and responsiveness to US pressure were the reasons why Japan abandoned its long-standing Linkage Strategy. Linkage Strategy or *Seikei Fukabun* was a diplomatic move of inseparability of politics and economics in bilateral relations that Japan made in order to pressure Russia to return the Kuril Islands during the Cold War. Therefore, according to Linkage Strategy Japan refused to economically

assist Russia until territorial dispute was solved. Nevertheless, in 1993, Japan responded to US pressure and issued financial aid to Russia against its preferences even though there was no progress in the territorial dispute (ibid. 111). The current research will answer the question whether the case of Japanese reactivity is valid now, and whether Japanese sanctions against Russia is a response to US pressure rather than a proactive policy.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. REACTIVE STATE AND EMERGING ACTIVISM

There is a long-standing assumption that Japan's foreign policy-making process is reactive, therefore Japan's foreign policy occurs as a response to external pressure (*gaiatsu*) rather than national interest. The assumption is rooted in the events after the World War II, when Japan experienced drastic changes in foreign politics. Since the 1950s, the Yoshida administration had made a high priority of economic and social recovery from World War II, yet paid little attention to foreign affairs (Mochizuki 2007, 2). The "Yoshida Doctrine" introduced a low-key risk-avoiding diplomacy solely reliant on the United States for trade and security (Miyashita 2003). Consequently, it has marked the beginning of the discourse on Japan's foreign policy strategy. Both academic and policy circles have addressed the issue of Japanese passive engagement in foreign affairs, but no unified view could be found.

Initially, Japanese passivity was considered as a rationally planned strategy to pursue national interest. Simply put, Japan could focus on rebuilding its economic and diplomatic influence, while others, specifically the United States, took the lead in international affairs (Berger 2007, 263). Others, however, believed that Japanese passivity reflected the absence of Japan's international agenda, thus Japan's foreign policy was based on US preferences and *gaiatsu* rather than national interest (Hirose 2007, 281; Miyashita 2003, 2).

The notion of reactive state was introduced by Kent Calder, who argued that "the impetus to policy change is typically supplied by outside pressure, and reaction prevails over strategy in the relatively narrow range of cases where the two come into conflict" (Calder 1988, 518). He stressed two criteria to define that the state is reactive: "(1) the state fails to undertake major independent foreign economic policy initiatives when it has the power and national incentives to do so, and (2) it responds to outside pressures for change, albeit erratically, unsystematically, and often incompletely" (ibid. 519). Calder (1988, 528) argued that Japan is a reactive state that is unable to pursue proactive politics under external pressure due to its domestic political structure. Unlike countries with strong chief executives, such as the United States, Japan was limited by

“weak executive authority, factionalism in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, bureaucratic sectionalism, and Japanese unique electoral system” (Mochizuki 2007, 2-3).

Despite global changes that occurred after the 1990s and a seemingly more active position of Japan, Calder argued (2003, 605) that almost a decade later after the end of the Cold War Japan still performed reactively in foreign policy, whereas Japanese domestic political structure remained severely divided. Whereas Calder’s model was supported by many reactivists (Blakes, Hellmann, Lincoln), there were scholars who supported the idea of Japan being a reactive state, yet disagreeing on the reason. According to Miyashita (2003, 10), Japanese reactivity is based on Japanese *asymmetric dependence* on the United States, rather than fragmented structure of policy-making process. While Japan remains dependant on US military and trade, the United States have the leverage to influence Japan, which remains receptive of such influence. Unlike Calder’s notion of Japan’s weak domestic political structure, Miyashita’s argument explains Japanese responsiveness to US pressure in particular. Whereas Calder’s model of a reactive state was effective during the Cold War, it does not provide a sufficient explanation of Japan’s reactive behaviour in 2010s.

Other scholars empirically criticize the idea that reactive model can be still implemented to post-Cold War Japan. Both Maswood (2001, 134) and Green (2001, 31-2) believe that Japan’s growing role in global affairs reflects a shift towards proactive foreign policy, which is not solely dependent on US preferences anymore. Similarly, Yasumoto (1995, 42) argues that the Japanese government bases its foreign economic aid on the national interest rather than external pressure. In his book “The New Multilateralism in Japan’s Foreign Policy” he writes that “Japanese multilateral diplomacy in the late 1990s, through low-key, is not stagnant. We can still identify activism” (ibid. 145). According to Long, Japan’s contribution to international political and economic environment defines Japan as a more active international player, that is able to “set agendas, shape international norms, define Japan’s identity in the international system, and condition the international environment so as to shape other states’ preferences” (Miyashita and Sato 2001, 130).

By analysing Japanese sanctions against Russia through the reactivist model this research emphasizes the importance of *gaiatsu* in Japan's foreign policy and complements the discourse on Japan's policy-making process. This research suggests that Japanese sanctions against Russia are an example of reactive acts, when the United States pressured Japan to implement policy that stands against Japanese national interest. Whereas there are a number of potential reasons for Japan to impose sanctions, the US pressure is considered to play the crucial role in the final decision. Based on my research of a number of documents there is little to suggest that domestic factors, such as different political groups, particularly the right-wing nationalists, or the public opinion had influenced Abe's decisions in case of sanctions. Moreover, in case of *gaiatsu*, the United States, unlike other external actors, has both the ability and the will to influence Japan's foreign policy.

3.2. HOW TO UNDERSTAND US PRESSURE ON JAPAN

To understand US pressure on Japan we must first understand the concept of power in international relations. Scholars, named Guzzini, Lukes and Morriss, argue that "power is not a material capacity, but rather rests on the production of effects" (O'Shea 2014, 439). There are four "faces of power" created by conceptualists to identify the effects of power in international affairs. The first face of power has the same meaning as a *gaiatsu* and represents the ability of A (in case of this research - the United States) to pressure B (Japan) "to do something that B would not otherwise do" (Dahl 1957, 203; Miyashita 2003, 41). According to Barnett and Duvall, who catalogued faces of power through social relations, the first face of power is a compulsory power that represents direct interaction between A and B (O'Shea 2014, 440). Indirect interaction of the second face or the institutional power represents the ability of A to limit B in the scope of options in order to get the desired outcome. Furthermore, the third face of power (structural power) emphasizes on the way "how A can influence B's interests", whereas fourth (productive power) focuses on "how both A and B are constituted as subjects" (ibid 439).

For the purpose of this research I focus on the first face of power or compulsory power. Essentially, the United States gets Japan to do something that Japan would not

otherwise do by creating a narrative/discourse that prioritises the US-Japan alliance above Japanese immediate national interest. In other words, in this narrative Japan would not be able to exist without its alliance with the United States that ensures Japanese security and economic prosperity (Miyashita 2003, 22). By creating such narrative, the United States is using discursive power to directly pressure Japan's foreign policy-making process in order to reach desired policy (O'Shea 2014, 441). Simply put, in case of needed policy shift, the United States "warns" Japan about external security threats that Japan would not be able to face alone, and reminds it of the importance of the US-Japan alliance. The pressure is based on the assumption that Japan needs the alliance much more than the United States, therefore it should adapt its policies to the US preferences – this notion is the base of Miyashita argument on Japan's reactive behaviour in foreign affairs.

3.3. HOW TO IDENTIFY AND MEASURE US PRESSURE?

The question of how to measure the influence is difficult to answer, even though it is one of the most important questions in political analysis (Dür 2008, 559). According to March (1955: 434) "there is lacking not only an immediately obvious unit of measurement, but even a generally feasible means of providing simple rankings." Consequently, Dür (2008, 561) argues that there are three major difficulties with influence measurement. Firstly, there are different channels of influence, such as direct lobbying of policy-makers and outside lobbying focused on public opinion. Secondly, the counteractive lobbying might undermine the influence of another factor, thus it is difficult to measure the amount of influence each of them had. Lastly, the policy-making process can experience external pressure at different stages of the process, where influence imposed on the agenda-setting stage might come unnoticed unlike the influence imposed on the final decision-making stage or implementation stage (Dür 2008, 561).

To measure US pressure on Japan in case of sanctions I focus on the influence coming from the public statements of the Obama Administration. Little attention is paid to US lobbying and Russian counteractive lobbying activities, since there is little information on that account. Analysts agree that Russian lobbying in Japan is weak and almost non-existent, whereas US lobbying historically held a strong position in Japanese affairs

(Panov 2014). Moreover, while I use the reactivist model as the main framework, I do not emphasise the influence of the domestic political structure on the policy-making process. Unlike Calder's view that Japanese reactivity is a result of internal conflicts and inefficient bureaucracy, I focus on Miyashita's explanation of *asymmetric dependence* between Japan and the United States as the main reason for reactive state behaviour in the case of sanctions.

In order to measure the US pressure on Japan's foreign policy-making process I use the process-tracing method – one of the major methodological approaches to measure influence (Dür 2008, 559). Process tracing provides an adequate analysis of the causal sequence by “drawing descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence” (Collier 2011, 824). Collier highlights that careful description of each significant step of the process is important in order to understand what caused the outcome. Such steps include the identification of actors involved, preferences of these actors, attempts actors made in order to impose their preferences, and the reaction of the decision-makers on such interference (ibid. 824). Finally, research focuses on “the degree to which groups' preferences are reflected in outcomes and groups' statements of (dis-)satisfaction with the outcome” (Dür 2008, 562).

In this research I analyse major steps Japan took in regards of sanctions against Russia between March 2014 and July 2016 in order to firstly identify and measure the US pressure, and secondly analyse whether it was successful. In order to measure pressure, we have to identify it first, thus we analyse the outcome – sanctions - through the lens of whether the outcome reflects preference of Japan or the United States, and compare the original outcome with the ideal preferences of the actors. Such approach is called *preference attainment*, and it is used to detect the pressure in cases when “nothing visible happens, for example because all lobbying is secret or because structural power is at work” (ibid. 566-567). *Preference attainment* in combination with *attributed influence*, which is based on how experts perceive the situation of power relations in this case, helps us to identify and measure US pressure on Japan in case of sanctions.

As it was mentioned, this paper focuses on the compulsory power that reflects direct interaction between Japan and the United States. Therefore, I focus on official statements of the Obama Administration found in the State Department's press releases and media to identify whether there was any direct or indirect pressure on Japan. By direct pressure we should understand statements that clearly assert US opposition to Japanese position and that criticise Japanese actions. Indirect pressure is harder to identify, although it is generally presented through the discursive power of the narrative on the importance of US-Japan alliance. In the case of unwanted Japanese actions, the United States intensifies the discourse on external threats to Japan that will further require US involvement to protect Japan.

Finally, in order to answer the question, whether Japan is reactive, this research focuses on the outcome of US pressure. Simply put, I will identify what attempts the United States took to make Japan act in the line with US preferences, and then analyse whether those attempts were successful. First of all, this paper will compare sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union with the measures taken by Japan. Furthermore, the research will focus on Abe's personal approach to improve Japan-Russia relations despite sanctions and US criticism. By doing so, this research paper will draw a conclusion on the reactivity of Japan in relation to sanctions.

4. THE 1st ROUND OF SANCTIONS

Sanctions against Russia were introduced by the United States and the European Union in response to the Russian military intervention in Ukraine “as well as the authorisation given by the Federation Council of Russia on 1 March for the use of the Russian armed forces on the territory of Ukraine” (European Council 03.03.2014). On March 6, US President Obama assigned sanctions against actors “who have asserted governmental authority in the Crimean region without the authorization of the Government of Ukraine” (Exec. Order No. 13660). Particularly, the United States terminated its cooperation with Russia in economic and military spheres to send a signal to Russia, that the United States will not ignore Russian actions in Ukraine (Kitade 2016, 3). Similarly, on the same day, the EU leaders confirmed the suspension of “bilateral talks with the Russian Federation on visa matters and on the New Agreement” as well as the EU-Russia summit meetings cancellation (European Council 06.03.2014). However, it was not until the referendum in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, when Japan joined western sanctions.

Initially, Japan faced a complicated situation, when it was forced to compromise between its two different agendas. On the one hand, Abe was reluctant to compromise his progress with Putin on the territorial dispute. By 2014, Japan-Russia relations have reached its best state since 2001, when the renewal of the dialogue on the Kuril Islands was made possible by improving economic and diplomatic relationship between Russia and Japan (Rozman 29.04.2016). However, Japan’s open support of western sanctions would send a mixed message to Russia and imperil the future of the Kuril’s negotiations.

On the other hand, for many decades the United States has played a crucial role in Japan’s foreign affairs, therefore Japan was hesitant to act unfavourably to the United States. In the case of sanctions against Russia, the United States has insisted that only a unified response of the international community will be enough to pressure Russia to abandon its aggressive behaviour towards Ukraine. Subsequently, Russian economic and diplomatic isolation will pressure Russia to concede and accept the results of the

Maidan Revolution (Psaki 18.03.2014). Hence, Japan as a member of G7 was expected to act in accordance to democratic values and join sanctions against Russia.

Prior to March 2014, there is no indication of direct or indirect US pressure on Japan: US narrative on sanctions did not include Japan, but mostly focused on US and EU measures. Therefore, while Japan expressed its concerns about growing violence during the Ukrainian Crisis, no practical measures had been taken, nor was there an open criticism of Putin's actions.

The deterioration of the Ukrainian Crisis and announcement of the Crimean referendum, however, marked the beginning of US pressure on Japan to impose sanctions. On March 17, a US spokesperson stated that while the United States and the European Union have already announced their sanctions against Russia, Asian countries will also make an independent decision according to their international responsibility (Psaki 17.03.2014).

The US pressure on Japan has been imposed in indirect form by using a discursive power of narrative that emphasized the importance of the US-Japan alliance for Japan. In this narrative, the United States plays a pivotal role that is essential for Japanese security and economic prosperity. According to Miyashita (2003, 22), Japan's *asymmetric dependency* on the United States to protect Japanese sovereignty from military intervention makes Japan receptive to the US pressure. Therefore, the growing threat to Japanese security was used as a pressuring point to make "Japan act the way that it would not otherwise act" – the compulsory power that the United States has over Japan (ibid. 41).

Whereas, there were no public remarks that the United States was pushing Japan to impose sanctions, the analysis based on my analysis of daily press releases of March 2014 reveals that the United States and Japan were in close coordination about the North Korean threat. Moreover, Japan's concerns about China's increase of military budget in 2014 were substantial. In light of recent developments in North Korea and China, Japan's dependence on the United States for security was emphasised by US officials throughout March 2014.

The dialogue between Japan and the United States had intensified when Crimea announced its preparations to conduct a referendum. Whereas Japan was not interested in pressuring Russia, it was highly concerned about protecting the sovereignty of the state, due to its own unresolved territorial disputes: the Northern Territories with Russia, the Senkaku Islands with China and Takeshima with Korea - the legacy of WWII (Panov 2016, 35; Tōgō 8.05.2012). China's military budget increase in 2014 was perceived in Japan as a threat, and urged Japan to seek closer cooperation with the United States. In the event of Chinese aggression in the Senkaku Islands, Japan will require US protection, therefore, it was essential for Japan to show its solidarity with the United States.

Initially, the referendum of Crimea was perceived as a Russian military intervention, therefore Japan expressed its concerns that "US lack of resolve in preventing the annexation [of Crimea] would mean that a Chinese seizure of the Senkaku Islands would be met with similar weakness" (Rozman 29.04.2016). In response, US Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel reassured Japan that Japanese security is a priority in the US-Japan alliance, therefore the United States will protect Japan against any external threat (Cooper and Fackler 2014). Hence, we can identify the growing influence of the United States on Japan by using the Crimean Referendum as an example of illegal occupation of sovereign state's land and highlighting the importance of the US-Japan security alliance.

US indirect pressure on Japan was successful in the first round of sanctions, since Japan, despite its interest in maintaining good relationship with Russia, joined US sanctions. Japanese sanctions were introduced on March 18 as part of the G7 response, and included "suspension of consultation for easing visa regulations as well as freeze of launching negotiations of a new investment agreement, an outer space cooperation agreement and an agreement for prevention of dangerous military activities" (MOFA 18.03.2014).

Nevertheless, Abe did not intend to damage the growing relationship with Putin, which was illustrated in the extent of Japanese sanctions against Russia. To keep the diplomatic door with Moscow open, Abe avoided direct criticism of Putin's actions,

moreover the Japanese response to annexation of Crimea was the mildest among all G7 members. Unlike the US and EU sanctions that targeted diplomatic and economic cooperation with Russia, Japanese sanctions neither caused harm to Russian economy, nor did they sufficiently damage Japan-Russia relations (Kitade 2016, 3; Panov 4.09.2014). Abe's intention was to send a signal that Japan stands with the United States against illegal annexation of Crimea, yet creating no serious complications for the future of Japan-Russia relations. By doing so Japan reached three goals: firstly, Japan supported its alliance with the United States, secondly, it kept its international image of democracy advocate, thirdly, mild sanctions allowed Japan to keep the diplomatic dialogue with Russia (Panov 4.09.2014).

4.1. RESULTS

The analysis based on the first round of sanctions reveals that US pressure on Japan forced the Abe administration to join US/EU sanction policy against Russia even though it was against Japan's national interest. US influence on Japan was imposed in the form of indirect pressure by creating a narrative in which Japan has to rely on the United States to protect its sovereign land from external threats, specifically North Korea and China. US pressure was effective due to Japan's *asymmetric dependence* on the United States for security, therefore I argue that the first round of Japanese sanctions is a response to US pressure. Yet the extent of Japanese sanctions suggests that Japan is not a reactive state: weak sanctions were imposed to reach three goals that represented Japan's national interest. Therefore we can identify activism in the policy of manoeuvring between US pressure and national interest.

5. THE 2nd ROUND OF SANCTIONS

Despite the international response to Russian actions, the situation in Ukraine had not improved, but rather deteriorated. The second round of sanctions was introduced on the basis of Russia's constant involvement to the crisis that violated the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine (MOFA 29.04.2014). The United States urged the international community to take more effective measures in order to counter Russian 'Cold War tactics', thus from March 16 the United States started restricting visas and freezing assets of Russian and Crimean officials and companies that were linked to Vladimir Putin, targeting in total 104 individuals and 55 organisations (Kitade, 2016, 3; Tsvetkova, 2014). Similarly, the European Union restricted visas and froze assets of 146 individuals and 37 organisations (Kitade 2016, 3).

Japanese measures of the second round were introduced as part of the G7 response a month later, on April 29, and similarly to the first round, they were considerably weaker on scale: only 23 individuals were restricted from visas (MOFA 29.04.2014). Unlike other G7 states, Japan intentionally did not announce the names of people targeted by sanctions, neither did Japan freeze the assets of these individuals (Kitade 2016, 2). Moreover, Japanese authorities confirmed that some individuals targeted by the US and EU sanctions, such as Naryshkin or Sechin – people from Putin's inner circle, were not targeted by the Japanese sanctions (Moshkin 2015).

By looking at US pressure on Japan from an *attributed influence* perspective, we can see that many scholars argued that the second round of sanctions was imposed on Japan by the United States. Russian analyst Kunadze argued that it was US pressure that forced Japan to engage in the new round of sanctions, which came right after Japanese diplomats visited Washington (Galperovich 2015). Similarly, Rozman (29.04.2016) highlighted the presence of US influence on Japan to intensify sanctions against Russia, since the previous measures were ineffective.

Furthermore, we can also identify indirect US pressure on Japan. Since the first round of Japanese sanctions the narrative of the importance of the US-Japan security alliance has further intensified: in every Obama statement on the US-Japan coordination about the Ukrainian Crisis and the importance of the unified international response to it, the

topic of Chinese and North Korean threat came forward. For example, a week before the second round, Obama visited Tokyo for the Japan Summit 2014, and the discussion on the Ukrainian Crisis and insufficient measures against it was on the table (Sieg and Brunnstrom 2014). The US-Japan Joint Statement emphasised the successful cooperation between the United States and Japan in economic and security spheres, whereas both states had to oppose to the external threat coming from China and North Korea. The United States also assured that it will continue to cooperate with Japan to guarantee Japanese security, and highlighted the united stance of the states on the sanctions against Russia (The White House 25.04.2014).

Consequently, the US pressure was effective, since Japan responded to it and joined the second round of sanctions, which allows us to believe that Japan's foreign policy-making process in case of sanctions was reactive. Taking into consideration that a reactive state acts against its national interest in response to external pressure, Japan, due to its *asymmetric dependence* on the United States for security (Miyashita 2003, 10), had no other choice, but to agree to US foreign policy and implement its own accordingly, even when it has a different agenda.

Yet, the extent of Japanese measures against Russia in the first round and the beginning of the second round suggests that Abe was reluctant to impose sanctions, neither had he aimed to harm emerging Japan-Russia relations. Abe's primary intention towards Russia was to restore the economic and diplomatic relations between the two states and to resolve a territorial conflict, thus sanctioning policy contradicted Abe's primary intentions (Chen 21.09.2016). Consequently, Japan acted "in a way that Japan would not otherwise act" (Miyashita 2003, 41), due to its inability to secure its own lands in the case of Chinese aggression without the United States, hence Japan had to ignore its own agenda with Russia for a good relationship with its major ally.

As a result of Japanese weak sanctions, whereas keeping diplomatic relations with Russia, US narrative on sanctions against Russia changed from US/EU collaboration into G7 united framework. In the G7 Brussels meeting on 4-5 June, Obama highlighted the importance of a unified stance and assured that all G7 members have the same intentions against Russia (The White house 05.06.2014).

The change in the US narrative also indicates the doubts Obama had about the Japanese agenda: Japanese measures against Russia were the mildest among other G7 members' sanctions. Furthermore, given that Abe was determined to continue diplomatic dialogue with Russia, it was logical to suggest that Japan was the weakest link in Western measures against Russia, and that Putin might use it to split G7 unity over sanctions policy (Rozman 29.04.2016).

Moreover, after Abe's presentation of the final report on the revision of the constitution in May 2014, some US officials were worried that Abe's pursuing of actions to restore Japanese rights for self-defence might change the core of US-Japan relationship, whereas Japan will play a larger role in the alliance (Mie 15.05.2014). In light of a successful revision of Article 9, Japan will no longer be *asymmetrically dependant* on the United States for security – one of the main factors for Japanese reactiveness according to Miyashita. Instead, Japan will be able to implement more independent foreign policy, which suggests, that the United States might lose Japanese support in several foreign campaigns (including Russia) if Japan finds them inadequate for its national interest (Blair 3.07.2014).

Thus Obama needed a reassurance that Japan-Russia rapprochement on the basis of the territorial dispute negotiations will not encourage Japan to lift sanctions. As a result, Japanese weak April sanctions marked a shift from US indirect pressure to direct pressure.

On July 5, US Assistant Secretary of State Danny Russell expressed the US government's concerns over Abe's political developments, specifically highlighting the issue of inadequately soft sanctions imposed by Japan. In his interview to the Asahi Shimbun, Russell expressed US disappointment over Japanese reconciliation with Russia, and simply put, said "how disappointed the U.S. will be if Japan betrays its ally" (Jannuzi 2016, 94). Russell's statement contains strong and direct pressure on Japan to change its policy towards Russia by threatening Japan to come to terms with the consequences of the US-Japan security alliance termination. Whereas the indirect pressure was based on the narrative of the North Korean and Chinese threat in general,

the direct pressure was meant to remind Japan that it would not be able to secure its sovereign lands, the Senkaku Islands in particular, without US help.

Moreover, Obama in his speech after the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 expressed his concerns that the core of the sanctions lies on the United States and the European Union (The White House 29.07.2014). He made it obvious that weak measures will not be effective, thus states have to response in unified manner despite the difficulties.

The US direct pressure was effective in making Japan shift from signalling sanctions into substantial sanctions. Japanese dependence on US security pushed it to act reactively towards the United States and to intensify sanctions despite its preferences. On July 28 Japan froze assets of individuals involved in the destabilisation in Eastern Ukraine (MOFA 28.07.2014) and sanctioned companies that operated in key sectors of the Russian economy (MOFA 31.07.2014). Moreover, on August 5, MOFA (5.08.2014) announced restrictions on payment and capital transactions for 40 individual and two companies in Crimea. Although Japanese sanctions were still milder than the US measures, we can see that it was enough for the United States at this stage: Obama's statement on sanctions changed from being solely US/EU measures into international actions taken to protect democracy (The White House 28.08.2014).

5.1. RESULTS

Due to inefficiency of the first round of sanctions the United States intensified its pressure on Japan. The second round of sanctions was implemented under US pressure, which shifted from being indirect and mild, into direct pressure that used Japanese *asymmetric dependence* on the United States for security as a threatening tool. The US direct pressure was efficient in order to urge Japan to shift towards substantial sanctions in the second round.

6. THE 3rd ROUND OF SANCTIONS

In September 2014, prior to the third round of sanctions Japan and the United States were in the middle of the discussion on the planned revision to Japan-US Defence Cooperation Guidelines. The discussion also included informal talks on the Japanese military capability in light of Chinese geopolitical development in Asia in addition to the North Korean threat (Kubo 2014). My analysis based on the US statements in that period reveals that US narrative on the external threat to Japan has been consistent. The United States continued to emphasize the importance of the US-Japan alliance and the role the unity plays in this alliance. Therefore, we can identify the indirect pressure on Japan to be constant and efficient.

Japan joined the third round of sanctions on 25 September by putting restrictions on export of arms to Russia and prohibited several Russian banks from issuing their securities in Japan (MOFA 25.09.2014). Yet, compared to the US sanctions on defence and related material sector of the Russian Federation economy (OFAC 2016, 3) and to the EU measures against Russian state-owned banks, defence companies and three major energy companies (European Council 11.09.2014), Japanese sanctions were noticeably insufficient and somewhat lacking. Japan's restriction on the exportation of arms was symbolic, since there was no export of arms in general. Similarly, sanctions only affected the reputation of the listed banks with no economic harm, since no maturity date was imposed on those banks (Galperovich 2015).

Japanese refusal to impose stronger sanctions despite ongoing US pressure indicates a stronger proactive position gained after the second round of sanctions. If we look at the *preference attainment*, we can recognise the shift in Japanese preferences going closer to repairing the damage Japanese sanctions made to Japan-Russia relations. As a result of the second round, Russia refused to continue the dialogue on the territorial dispute and increased its military presence in the Kuril Islands (Rozman 29.04.2016). Russian Military drills in the Kuril Islands and the Kuril visit of the Chief of the Russian Presidential Staff Sergei Ivanov, were followed by the ban of certain Japanese officials to enter Russia (Drennan 2015).

While Russia demonstrated its potential to terminate the Kuril's negotiations, Japan became more verbal in opposition to the US lead in case of sanctions. The former Japanese PM Yoshirō Mori, who met Putin in September 2014, argued that Abe had little intention to damage Japan-Russia relations and that “the gap between US and Japanese geopolitical reasoning was at a peak not seen in post-Cold War decades” (Rozman 29.04.2016). Moreover, there were several statements from Japanese officials that Tokyo was pressured to join the sanction policy (ibid.). Tokyo Governor Yoichi Masuzō argued that Tokyo is willing to improve Japan-Russia relations despite Japanese collaboration with the United States in Russian sanction policy. He also urged Russians to understand that the Japanese need to “rely on the US military potential” in light of Chinese and North Korean threats (TASS 4.09.2014).

Clearly, Abe's message to Moscow had been heard. Despite sanctions, Abe kept diplomatic relations between Japan and Russia open by adding a personal touch to it. After a series of phone calls, Abe and Putin met in person on the ASEM summit on 17 October. As a result of this meeting, both Russian and Japanese officials hinted that talks on territorial dispute were back on the table (Rozman 29.04.2016) To add to this, the next time Putin and Abe met at the Beijing ATEC summit they confirmed Putin's visit to Japan (Embassy of Japan in Russia 10.11.2014).

In light of these events US pressure on Japan remained indirect, yet constant. The narrative on the external threat to the US-Japan alliance changed by becoming more aggressive towards Russia. The US Department of Defence (12.11.2014; 15.11.2014) repeatedly argued that there is a growing military threat coming from China and Russia that is dangerous for both the United States and US allies. Consequently, on December 9, Japan officially added 26 individuals and 14 entities to the list of asset freeze measures (MOFA 09.12.2014). Sanctions were intensified after the series of joint events between the United States and Japan focused on the US-Japan defence cooperation (Takenaka 2014).

The December sanctions were the last Japanese measures in response to the situation in Ukraine, and also the last reactive policy Japan implemented under US pressure. It is also worth mentioning that sanctions targeted people from Crimea and the city of

Sevastopol and consequently brought no harm to Russian economy. While it is obvious that Japan's measures were influenced by the US pressure, the extent of the measures suggests that Japanese responsiveness to the pressure was not as strong. While a reactive state fails to make independent choices and "responds to outside pressures [...] erratically, unsystematically, and often incompletely" (Calder 1988, 519), Japanese sanctions demonstrated that Japan had the strength to partially respond to US pressure with cold logic that allowed Japan to keep good relations with both the United States and Russia. Whereas the Japanese decision to impose sanctions was a reactive policy, the US pressure was inefficient to force Japan to abandon its rapprochement with Russia.

The year 2015 marked a shift towards a pro-active policy in Japanese actions towards Russia. To keep its international image, Abe did not lift existing sanctions against Russia, yet he intensified his attempts to restore good relations with Putin. Despite the diplomatic sanctions, the absence of sanctions or contra-sanctions in the energy sector allowed Abe to rapidly develop economic relations with Russia. In 2015 Russia became the fourth-biggest supplier of liquefied natural gas to Japan hitting the record of crude's export since the collapse of the Soviet Union (Reuters 11.03, 2015).

US attempts to pressure Japan into new round of sanctions failed. Abe's statement on sanctions: "we have had a frank and candid exchange of views and we agreed that we would cooperate" (The White House 28.04.2015) after the meeting with Obama in April demonstrates that there was no longer a unified position on the issue. Moreover, the absence of Japanese measures against Russia as well as the confirmation on the renewal of the Kuril's dialogue illustrated that Japan no longer responded to US indirect pressure (Kyodo 29.09.2015). US attempts to directly pressure Japan were also inefficient: US spokesperson Kirby's fierce criticism of Japan-Russia rapprochement and "business as usual with Russia" had no effect on Japan's foreign policy (U.S. Department of State 08.11.2015).

Similarly, we can identify US indirect and direct pressure on Japan in the first half of 2016, which was ineffective. In his speech to the UN General Assembly in May, Obama strongly criticised Russia and China for aggressive politics, suggesting that both states

are equally dangerous for the global order (US Department of State 26.05.2016). The importance of unity against Russia was once more 'reminded' to Japan by the State Department spokesman Clay in his email before the Ise-Shima G7 summit (Bloomberg Staff Report 2016). Nevertheless, there are no indicators that US attempts to persuade Japan to change its approach to Russia reached the goal.

Earlier in the year, the United States attempted to pressure Japan when Obama requested Abe to postpone or cancel his Russia visit due to US-Russia confrontation over Ukraine and Syria (Kyodo 24.02.2016). The request was made in the context of Japan-US joint cooperation over the North Korean unsanctioned rocket launch, which suggests that Obama attempted to use Japanese dependence on US military as a persuading tool. Yet, Abe visited Sochi in May to confirm Putin's Japan visit and assure that leaders are ready to continue talks over disputed territories (Bloomberg Staff Report 2016). Moreover, Japan was the first state to lift part of the sanctions, when Tokyo continued visa-talks with Moscow that were terminated in the first round of sanctions. As a result, there were no obstacles to Abe-Putin meeting in Yamaguchi, where the leaders engaged in two-days of talks on the territorial dispute and peace treaty (Mie 15.12.2016).

6.1. RESULTS

Under the constant US pressure Japan engaged in the new round of sanctions, yet the sanctions were rather signalling than substantial. Japanese sanctions did not cause significant harm to Russian economy, neither did they isolate Russia diplomatically. In the third round of sanctions Abe's preferences changed into closer bilateral relationship between Russia and Japan, therefore the cooperation between these two states intensified. Despite the fact that the United States was using both direct and indirect pressure on Japan, the year 2015 marked a shift when US pressure became ineffective on Japan's foreign policy-making process.

7. CONCLUSION

This research revealed that the United States pressured Japan to implement and to intensify sanctions against Russia. While Japan's preference toward Russia was to improve bilateral relation and to renew the dialogue on the Kuril Islands dispute, the

United States urged Japan to terminate its economic and diplomatic relationship with Moscow due to the situation in Ukraine. The pressure was imposed in two ways: direct and indirect. The direct pressure was coming from the US officials who criticised Abe's rapprochement with Russia despite the main idea of sanctions to economically and diplomatically isolate Russia. The indirect pressure was presented through the narrative on the US-Japan security alliance, which suggested that Japan would not be able to protect its sovereign land without US support in face of the threat coming from North Korea and China. Therefore, the United States used compulsory power to force Japan to implement sanctions against Russia despite Japan's national interest to improve Japan-Russia relations. Japan's asymmetric dependency on the United States for security made US pressure to be possible and effective.

US pressure on Japan to impose sanctions was successful in the first two rounds of sanctions: although Japan was willing to continue negotiations on the territorial dispute, it joined US sanctions against Russia. The extent of Japanese measures was perceived as insufficient, therefore US pressure on Japan intensified. As a result, Japan joined the second round of sanctions several months later, which illustrates the effectiveness of US pressure to impose sanctions. However, the research demonstrates that Japanese responsiveness to US pressure is not absolute: Japan kept its sanctions mild and symbolic not to harm the Japan-Russia relationship. Moreover, while the negotiations on the dialogue about the territorial dispute evolved, Japanese foreign policy turned more proactive. The third round of sanctions demonstrated Japanese low-key but active policy towards Russia. Whereas Japan kept the US-Japan security cooperation ongoing, it did not respond to US pressure to terminate its relations with Russia. Moreover, since Japanese sanctions intentionally did not harm Russian economy, they had little practical effect.

The research questions of this paper were: Has US pressure on Japan resulted in reactive Japanese foreign policy – sanctions against Russia? And is Japan a reactive state? To address these questions I base my answer on three hypotheses. HP1: "US pressure has forced Japan to implement sanction policies against Russia" has proved to be right in all three stages of Japanese sanctions. Japanese sanctions were caused by

US pressure rather than national interest. HP2: “Japanese sanction policy against Russia is a reactive policy” has proved to be wrong. Although in the second round of sanctions Japan responded more reactively towards the United States, the further actions demonstrate Japan’s reluctance to act in accordance to US preferences. Japanese sanctions were a well calculated strategy of Abe to reach both Japan’s goals: to keep the US-Japan alliance strong as well as to improve Japan-Russia relations in order to continue the negotiations on the Kuril Islands. Therefore, I argue that Japanese sanctions were not a reactive policy, but rather an active and independent decision that compromised both US and Japan’s preferences, thus they demonstrated Japan’s ability to act independently. Finally, the HP3: “Is Japan a reactive state” is wrong, since the case of Japanese sanctions demonstrate that Japan was able to conduct independent and active policy even under the US pressure.

As a result, on the basis of this research, I argue that that although US pressure resulted in Japanese sanctions against Russia, Japan should not be considered as a reactive state. The case of the sanctions against Russia demonstrates that *gaiatsu* does not identify Japan’s foreign policy-making process, therefore Japan is able of conducting low-key yet active foreign policy.

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