

## ***Implications of Ukrainian War in the Indo-Pacific***

*Written by: B.S. Ashish (Jindal School of International Affairs)*

### *Brief Background on Russo-Ukrainian Relations: The runup to the current war*

Russo-Ukrainian relations have rapidly deteriorated ever since the former Ukrainian President, Viktor Yushchenko, in 2007, took part in negotiations with the European Union (EU) over a possible integration through Association Agreement (AA). The association agreement had included a proposed pact of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) with the European Union- a symbol of Ukrainian 'sovereignty' to formulate its own trade policies independent of Kremlin's influence; something the Kremlin was wary about. Around the same time, Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia, was keen on launching Russia's own economic association- the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), for which Ukraine's admission played a key role. Yushchenko's implicit refusal to join EAEU while being visibly inclined towards integrating into the European Union threatened the Russian sphere of influence over its soviet colonies, thereby, resulting in Russia's annexation of Crimea on 18 March 2013 and its recognition of Donetsk's People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk's People's Republic (LPR), controlled by pro-Moscow armed warlords and separatists, as a warning to Ukraine.<sup>1</sup>

The current Russian war on Ukraine started off with President Putin announcing on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2022 about his intentions to honour the territorial claims of DPR and LPR over the Ukrainian provinces of Donetsk Oblast and Luhansk Oblast by initiating military operations in the Donbas region. Experts speculate that the Kremlin had already bestowed Putin with the power to command the military operation in the Eastern provinces of Ukraine even before his speech on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.<sup>2</sup> Putin's announcement came at a time when Ukraine showed interest to join the N.A.T.O., a security alliance created to contain erstwhile Soviet Union during the cold war. Russia's reaction to Ukraine's N.A.T.O. aspirations did not come off as a surprise as Kyiv had already experienced Moscow's military and political disruptions during their economic integration talks with the European Union. This event certainly resurfaced vital questions about the intentions of authoritarian regimes of Russia, China and North Korea. One of Putin's demand was for Kyiv to rule out the possibility of joining forces with the N.A.T.O. indefinitely; Putin refused to terminate the so-called military operation in Ukraine despite Ukrainian President Zelenskiy announcing on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March that Ukraine was not keen on becoming a member of the N.A.T.O., raising speculations about the real intention behind Moscow's offensive against Kyiv,<sup>3</sup> the question about Ukraine's sovereignty.

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<sup>1</sup> Duncan Allan, "The Minsk Conundrum: Western Policy and Russia's War on Eastern Ukraine," *Chatham House: Ukraine Forum*, May 2020. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-05-22-minsk-conundrum-allan.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Mason Clarke & Fredrick W. Kagan, "Russia-Ukraine Warning Update: Russia Likely to Pursue Phased Invasion of Unoccupied Ukrainian Territory," *Institute for the Study of War*, 22 February 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep39698>

<sup>3</sup> Isobel Koshiw, Jon Henley & Julian Borger, "Ukraine will not join Nato, says Zelenskiy, as shelling of Kyiv continues," *The Guardian*, 15 March 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/15/kyiv-facing-dangerous-moment-amid-signs-of-russias-tightening-grip>

This brief focuses on how this war could affect the interests of Indo-Pacific nations such as China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and India, and whether this war could empower China against Washington's Indo-Pacific allies.

### *Beijing's takeaway from the Ukrainian war*

The Chinese President, Xi Jinping, is known for laying out grand strategies to create a Sino-centric Indo-Pacific (erstwhile Asia-Pacific region) order. Experts have opined that China does not have the objective to invade or occupy territories of other nations, but to create a Chinese order in the region that suits the interests of the mainland. However, they also observed that the Taiwanese reintegration into the mainland and territorial claims over the South and East China Sea have been integrated into China's core-interests, and the means to achieve these core-objectives seem blurred.<sup>4</sup> Beijing's aggression towards Taipei whenever it engages militarily with the West proves the speculation of these experts.

On the other hand, contrary to the predictions of experts, China has frequently involved in skirmishes across the LAC with India, and has been keen on acquiring Arunachal Pradesh from India, not to mention Beijing's encroachment into Kashmir. Indian scholars critiqued China to have exploited Indian goodwill as the Sino-Indian war of 1962 occurred despite both sides signing agreements such as The Panchasheel Agreement of 1954 (also known as the Five Principles of Coexistence) that highlighted the importance of territorial integrity and sovereignty of both states. The Chinese had breached into the Indian side of the McMahon line, an agreed line of border between Tibet and British India, and occupied strategic heights and passes. In reality, Beijing never formalised The Line of Actual Control (LAC) notwithstanding the 1973 agreement they signed with New Delhi that formalised the LAC.<sup>5</sup>

China has also caused immense nuisance to its neighbours along the South and East China Seas like Vietnam, Japan and the Philippines by encroaching into their Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and claiming the islands of these nations. China's maritime claim of the infamous 'nine-dash line' ranges from Malaysia and Indonesia to the South to the Taiwanese strait in the north, from Vietnam to the West to Philippines to the East. Scholars have noted that China has militarised the Sparty and Paracel Islands, and has often resorted to military means to secure its interests along the nine-dash line, such as in the case of the Johnson Reef Skirmish with Vietnam in 1988, the occupation of the Mischief Reef that is situated within the Filipino EEZ in 1995, and in the case of Scarborough Shoal rift with the Philippines in 2012.<sup>6</sup>

Putin's invasion into the Donbas region, notwithstanding the deterrence of America and the western bloc, is an indication to China that the United States is not at its strongest to keep China in check. A few experts have even drawn parallels

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<sup>4</sup> Andrew Scobell, Edmund J. Burke, Cortez A. Cooper III, Sale Lilly, Chad J.R. Ohlandt, Eric Warner & J.D. Williams, "China's Grand Strategy: Trends, Trajectories, and Long-Term Competitions," *RAND Corporation*, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.7249/RR2798>

<sup>5</sup> B.L. Shah, "Conflict Resolution in International Politics: The Indo-China Cross Border Dispute in Arunachal Pradesh," *The Indian Journal of Political Science: (Indian Political Science Association)*, Vol. 71, No. 2, pp. 599-611. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42753721>

<sup>6</sup> Romi Jain, "The South China Sea Issue: A Critical Appraisal of China's Geo-economic Strategy," *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs*, Vol. 32, No. 1/2, pp. 27-48, December 2019. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26902684>

between Russian invasion into Ukraine and potential Chinese action in Taiwan.<sup>7</sup> The U.S. is, to an extent, committed to the defense and security of Taiwan under the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, however, many experts claim that the role of the United States in protecting the island ends right with the supply of arms and doesn't require it to use force to deter Chinese aggression. Gang Lin and Wenxing Zhou, in their article to the *China Review*, opined that the U.S.-Taiwan relations have not been stable, with Washington adjusting their relations with Taiwan several times in the past to suit their strategic interests. They note that the Truman administration, in 1949, seriously considered to abandon support for Kuomintang National Party in the Chinese Civil War. With that being said, Washington extended support to Taiwan during the runup to the Korean War in 1950, to secure Taipei's cooperation in housing Washington's aircrafts and other military requirements against Russia and China; only to abandon their support and assistance to Taiwan once again, when Nixon visited Beijing in 1972 to secure China's support to contain the Soviets. The Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) was passed during Ronald Regan's administration, which acted as a substitute to the Mutual Defence Treaty of 1954 that was agreed upon between Taipei and Washington. Through the TRA, the United States supplied arms to Taiwan, however, the legal basis for America's military presence in Taiwan was revoked. It is to be noted that with the normalisation of relations between Beijing and Moscow in the 1980s and with the weakening of the Soviet Union, the United States abandoned its commitment to honour the 'national reunification' process of China and its promise to respect China's proposals of 'peaceful reintegration' process of Taiwan into the mainland; the increased arms sales to Taipei by the end of the 1980s proves Lin and Zhou's claims.<sup>8</sup> However, the United States has maintained strategic ambiguity vis-à-vis the situation across the Taiwanese strait in the recent past, in an attempt to balance Taiwanese reliance on the U.S. as well as Chinese aggression over Taiwan.<sup>9</sup>

Officials in Beijing will be keenly observing U.S.' response to the war. The United States' response to the Russian invasion into Ukraine has been majorly through economic sanctions. Biden, in his State of the Union Address on March 1<sup>st</sup>, announced about N.A.T.O. member-states' attempts to isolate Russian banks from international financial network and block Russian firms and government institutions from accessing vital technology. He further announced that the U.S. had closed its airspace for Russian airlines in an attempt to further isolate Russia. Moreover, Biden's announcement of the United States' plan to 'mobilise ground troops, air squadrons and ship deployments in Eastern European N.A.T.O. member-states such as Poland, Romania, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia against potential Russian aggression in the future' is reassuring to these nations. However, Biden's clarification that the U.S. troops were not being mobilised to fight in Ukraine but to safeguard existing N.A.T.O. member-states in compliance with the Article 5 of the N.A.T.O. charter, sends a signal to Xi about the level of commitment of the U.S. to come to the defence of Taiwan, with whom the United States does not have an active 'mutual defense treaty'.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Schuman, "China is watching Ukraine With a Lot of Interest," *The Atlantic*, 13 January 2022.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2022/01/china-ukraine-putin-xi-jinping/621206/>

<sup>8</sup> Gang Lin & Wenxing Zhou, "Does Taiwan Matter to the United States? Policy Debates on Taiwan Abandonment and Beyond," *China Review (The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press)*, Vol. 18, No. 3, Special Issue: Washington-Taipei Relations at a Crossroads, pp. 177-206, August 2018. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26484537>

<sup>9</sup> B.S. Ashish, "Strategic Clarity or Ambiguity; what should the United States adopt vis-à-vis Taiwan?" *Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Diplomatist*, 23 November 2021. <https://diplomatist.com/2021/11/23/strategic-clarity-or-ambiguity-what-should-the-united-states-adopt-vis-a-vis-taiwan/>

<sup>10</sup> Jim Garamone, "U.S. stands with Ukraine, Biden says in State of the Union," U.S. Department of Defense, 1 March 2022. <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2951409/us-stands-with-ukraine-biden-says-in-state-of-the-union/>

Beijing's approach is clear. It is keen on challenging western hegemony, and in the current situation, it is able to challenge the existing world order without direct repercussions to Beijing, on behalf of Moscow and Putin. Chinese officials have repeatedly implied that China will not publicly condemn the invasion. In fact, Foreign Minister Wang Yi went on record and said that China was on the right side of history over Ukraine war in a reply to an American warning.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, China has been cautious not to bring sanctions onto them, and have not officially condoned Russian invasion either. Wang Yi was also on record when he expressed to the Spanish Foreign Minister, Jose Albares, that China doesn't want to be sanctioned by the West as it had nothing to do with Russia's invasion.<sup>12</sup> Chinese investments in Russian enterprises also steadily decreased post the invasion, with Bank of China's Singapore operations ceasing its financing for Russian energy firms while the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China restricted its financing of Russian enterprises and commodities. An interesting turn of event is that Beijing-backed Asia Infrastructural Investment Bank (AIIB) had also halted funding for Russia and Belarus for waging and condoning the war on Ukraine.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, China might have no moral objections to Russia's invasion, but Beijing sure knows about the impact of western sanctions on Chinese economy and won't certainly risk sanctions by publicly supporting the invasion or Russian aggression against Kyiv. As for China initiating offensive operations over Taiwan or other Washington's Indo-Pacific allies, it totally depends on the geopolitical situation of Beijing, but these nations cannot rule out this possibility while revisiting their security strategy.

#### *Does India stand to lose or benefit from the Ukrainian war?*

India is in a very unique position as it is one of the only powers that share close relations with both the United States and the Russian Federation. While relations with the United States improved post the economic liberalisation of India in 1991, India has had historic relations with Russia and erstwhile Soviet Union ever since Indian independence. India, from the prime ministerial tenure of Jawaharlal Nehru, has followed nonalignment to a significant extent and has refrained from siding with both the western bloc led by the United States and the communist bloc led by erstwhile U.S.S.R., giving India a unique opportunity to freely and strategically manoeuvre its foreign policy.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, India is just a middle power in this conflict with no direct stake or interests, which further enables India to remain nonaligned. While India has a moral obligation to condemn Russia's aggression against a fellow-democratic country, it is against India's national interests to engage and raise dialogues against Moscow or to condemn its operation in Ukraine. Moscow has been an unbiased mediator for India against both Pakistan and China in the past, and has helped India in

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<sup>11</sup> Reuters, "China on the right side of history over Ukraine war: Foreign Minister," *The Economic Times*, 20 March 2022. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/china-on-the-right-side-of-history-over-ukraine-war-foreign-minister/articleshow/90332431.cms>

<sup>12</sup> "China says it does not want to be impacted by Russia sanctions," *Al Jazeera*, 15 March 2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/15/china-does-not-want-to-be-impacted-by-russia-sanctions-fm>

<sup>13</sup> "China-backed Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank halt lending to Russia, Belarus," *The Economic Times*, 4 March 2022. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/business/china-backed-asian-infrastructure-investment-bank-halts-lending-to-russia-belarus/articleshow/89983941.cms?from=mdr>

<sup>14</sup> Aparna Pande, "India and the World," *From Chanakya to Modi: The Evolution of India's Foreign Policy* (HarperCollins Publishers India), Chapter 1, pp. 1-18.

the Security Council by vetoing against resolutions that went against Indian interests such as the U.N. intervention into Kashmir.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, India and the United States have been closely cooperating with each other in strategic plurilateral groupings such as the QUAD, and the United States is the single-largest importer of India's goods and services, with Indian exports worth close to US\$ 55 billion as of World Bank's latest record in 2019,<sup>16</sup> with Indian exports to the U.S. peaking ever since. With respect to defence deals and cooperation, Russia is India's major partner, with many bilateral and joint-ventures on the pipeline. Russia and India together are involved in the manufacture of BrahMos missiles that are to be exported to the Philippines by virtue of a US\$ 375 billion deal. Russia and India are also likely to be involved in the delivery of four Talwar-class warships and the procurement of 460 T-90 tanks among other deals, according to people familiar with the matter.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, the United States is eyeing to secure more deals with India amid sanctions on Russia, including P81 Maritime Surveillance Aircrafts.<sup>18</sup> The United States is happy with the reduction in the imports of arms from Russia to India, with nearly a 53% drop in Indian arms imports from Russia since 2011. The United States has not imposed sanctions on India under the CAATSA for purchasing the S-400 missiles from Russia while sanctions on Turkey under the CAATSA were imposed promptly by the United States. The U.S. realised the growing threat of China and the capability of India to block the influence of China in the Indo-Pacific, therefore, has not imposed any kind of sanctions on India. In fact, senators such as the Republican senator Todd Young have battled to get India's procurement of S-400 missile system an exemption from the CAATSA.<sup>19</sup> With that being said, India must be cautious with its deals with Russia, otherwise, it might risk sanctions from the U.S. and the western bloc.

On the economic front, this war has presented India with a unique situation. Sanctions against Russian oil resulted in the plummeting of Russian oil prices, and international investors have withdrawn steadily. Russia not only has reduced buyers for its oil and gas, but also does not have many investors for its oil and gas corporations post western sanctions. Putin and Moscow have turned to New Delhi for renewed and increased Indian investments and purchases in the oil and gas sector. Indian companies not only buy Russian oil, many corporations have stakes in the Russian sector while Russian firms also invest in the Indian petroleum sector.<sup>20</sup> American politicians have remained dicey about India's increasing economic cooperation with Russia and its silence vis-à-vis Russian invasion. The White House Press

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<sup>15</sup> Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "Russian support to India on Kashmir is rooted in history," *The Economic Times*, 20 January 2020. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/russian-support-to-india-on-kashmir-is-rooted-in-history/articleshow/73411150.cms>

<sup>16</sup> "India consumer goods Exports by country or region," *WITS- World Bank*. <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/IND/StartYear/2015/EndYear/2019/TradeFlow/Export/Indicator/XPRT-TRD-VL/Partner/USA/Product/All-Groups>

<sup>17</sup> US Eyes Increased Arms Sales to India Amid Crippling Sanctions on Russia; US Diplomat Says Delhi Not In Russian Camp," *The Eurasian Times*, 5 March 2022. <https://eurasianimes.com/us-eyes-increased-arms-sales-to-india-russia-sanctions/>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "US looks to 'balance' India's S-400 missile systems needs vis-à-vis Caatsa," *The Economic Times*, 14 January 2022. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/us-looks-to-balance-indias-s-400-missile-systems-needs-vis-a-vis-caatsa/articleshow/88887925.cms?from=mdr>

<sup>20</sup> Reuters, "Russia seeks Indian investment in its oil and gas sector," *The Economic Times*, 12 March 2022. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/energy/oil-gas/russia-seeks-indian-investment-in-its-oil-and-gas-sector/articleshow/90165971.cms?from=mdr>

Secretary, Jen Psaki, opined in a press conference that India accepting Russia's offer of purchasing discounted Russian crude oil did not violate American sanctions. However, herself along with senior politicians have subtly warned India to stay away from engaging with the Russians and have urged New Delhi to "stay on the right side of history with respect to this invasion".<sup>21</sup> India could leverage its position vis-à-vis containing Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific against the United States to pursue deals with Russia without risking sanctions, however, it is subjected to Russia's future actions in Ukraine and America's response. If Russia continues its offense, it might jeopardise India's position of strategic autonomy as it'll be heavily pressured by the western bloc to isolate Russia and condemn Russian aggression.

*Do pro-Washington Indo-Pacific nations have to worry about pro-Moscow authoritarian regimes in Asia?*

Australia and Japan have had troubled relations with China while South Korea has had longstanding tensions with North Korea ever since the 1950 Korean War. Canberra and Tokyo have relied on QUAD and similar groupings with Washington to counter the increasing Beijing aggression in the Indo-Pacific, not to mention Seoul's dependence on Washington to deter Pyongyang. It is important to take into consideration what the authoritarian camps in Moscow, Beijing and Pyongyang think about Washington's role in the Afghanistan crisis and about its weak deterrence to the war in Ukraine.

Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping and Kim Jong-un most certainly view the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan as the failure of the United States to establish long lasting peace and tranquillity in a war-prone region despite taking the lead. Dobbins *et.al.*, had predicted that a precipitous and hurried American withdrawal from Afghanistan might result in the collapse of the U.S.-backed Kabul government and the resurgence of the Taliban.<sup>22</sup> Despite such warnings, successive American administrations of Donald Trump and Biden were in a haste to end the 'never-ending war' of Afghanistan and withdraw American troops from the region. The collapse of the Kabul government a few days after the withdrawal of American troops and the inaction of the U.S. to contain the rise of the Taliban in August 2021 could be viewed as a sign of American weakness by these leaders. America's lack of commitment to militarily intervene into Ukraine proves with these leaders that the U.S. is experiencing a 'moment of weakness', as phrased by the U.S. Republican senator of Texas, Michael McCaul.<sup>23</sup>

Another factor to consider is that China has shown no moral authority over Russia to try and stop the war, with Chinese officials rhetorically addressing the situation to avoid western sanctions. Moreover, Moscow and Beijing released joint-statements reaffirming their partnership as 'friendship with no-limits' just before Russian invasion.<sup>24</sup> Many western

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<sup>21</sup> "US duplicity on India buying oil from Russia as White House brings out 'history' card," *The New Indian Express*, 17 March 2022. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/mar/17/us-duplicity-on-india-buyingoil-from-russia-as-white-house-brings-out-history-card-2431011.html>

<sup>22</sup> James Dobbins, Jason H. Campbell, Sean Mann & Laurel E. Miller, "Consequences of a Precipitous U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan," *RAND Corporation*, January 2019. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep19894>

<sup>23</sup> Olafimihan Oshin, "McCaul says US withdrawal from Afghanistan has emboldened Russia on Ukraine," *The Hill*, 16 January 2022. <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/589971-mccaul-says-us-withdrawal-from-afghanistan-has-emboldened-russia-on>

<sup>24</sup> Reuters, "Ukraine war: China says friendship with Russia is 'rock solid'," *The Times of India*, 7 March 2022. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/china/ukraine-war-china-says-friendship-with-russia-is-rock-solid/articleshow/90048623.cms>

sources claim that China even knew about Russia's plan, and had asked Russia to push the invasion until the closing ceremony of Beijing Winter Olympics was over; it is to be noted that Russian forces invaded Eastern Ukraine on 22 February, precisely a day after the conclusion of the Olympics.<sup>25</sup> With that being said, Chinese officials have denied all allegations, and the Chinese Envoy to Washington, Qin Gang, in his Op-Ed to *The Washington Post*, expressed that China had no prior knowledge of the war and that it would've tried stopping the war by all means had it had prior knowledge about Russia's aspirations.<sup>26</sup> Beijing condemnation of the N.A.T.O. and the United States for urging Ukraine to join the organisation, while remaining tacitly silent about Russia's aggression in Eastern Ukraine,<sup>27</sup> acts as a wake-up call to Washington's Indo-Pacific allies.

i. *Impact of the war on Japan*

The situation in Ukraine has raised a very important security debate in Japan, something that was prohibited to raise before the Ukrainian war. Former Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, urged the current administration to consider the option of housing American nuclear missiles in Japan similar to European member-states of N.A.T.O. such as Italy and Turkey to deter Chinese aggression. This proposal was met with fierce resistance, even from his own brother, the current Minister of Defense for Japan, Nobuo Kishi, who had adopted a pacifist argument by not willing to change the Japanese tradition of prohibiting the production, possession and permission to introduce nuclear arms into Japan.<sup>28</sup> However, Abe feels that the Japanese citizens have realised the existing threat from China, especially with Russia threatening to use nuclear force in Ukraine, and have become militarily pragmatic, and that Hiroshima and Nagasaki disaster must not withhold Japan from advancing in a nuclear way.<sup>29</sup>

It is to be noted that Japan and the United States had signed a mutual defence treaty, the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security of 1954, wherein articles V and VI of the treaty affirms U.S.' support to Japan in case of an armed attack on any territory under the jurisdiction of the Japanese administration.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, Beijing would be cautious in dealing with Japan, and might restrain itself over resorting to military means vis-à-vis Japanese territories in the East China Sea.

ii. *Impact of the war on Australia*

On the other hand, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has called for the tightening of security alliances to counter Chinese influence and has pledged to increase defence expenditure to up-to 2.1% of the GDP. He is not the first and certainly not the only politician to worry about the 'friendship with no-limits' partnership between Beijing and

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<sup>25</sup> Edward Wong & Julian E. Barnes, "China Asked Russia to Delay Ukraine War Until After Olympics, U.S. Officials Say," *The New York Times*, 2 March 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/02/us/politics/russia-ukraine-china.html>

<sup>26</sup> Qin Gang, "Opinions: China Ambassador: Where we stand on Ukraine," *The Washington Post*, 15 March 2022. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/03/15/china-ambassador-us-where-we-stand-in-ukraine/>

<sup>27</sup> "Ukraine crisis: China accuses NATO of pushing Russia to 'breaking point'," *Wion News*, 9 March 2022. <https://www.wionews.com/world/ukraine-crisis-china-accuses-nato-of-pushing-russia-to-breaking-point-460521>

<sup>28</sup> Katherine Hill, Leo Lewis, Nic Fildes & Christian Davies, "Ukraine invasion forces Washington's Asia allies to rethink their security," *Financial Times*, 11 March 2022. <http://en.asaninst.org/contents/financial-times-ukraine-invasion-forces-washingtons-asia-allies-to-rethink-their-security/>

<sup>29</sup> Justin McCurry, "China rattled by calls for Japan to host US nuclear weapons," *The Guardian*, 1 March 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/01/china-rattled-by-calls-for-japan-to-host-us-nuclear-weapons>

<sup>30</sup> "Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/1.html>

Moscow, and has remarked that this partnership might empower China to initiate destructive military operations against Washington's allies in the Indo-Pacific. Australia has also shown interest to expand the AUKUS nuclear submarine deal that involves Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States, not only to better equip its naval capability in an attempt to deter Chinese aggression, but also to continue being a part of closely-knit security alliances against China especially because QUAD has not been named explicitly as a security partnership against China.<sup>31</sup>

### *iii. Impact of the war on South Korea*

The Russian invasion of Ukraine played a significant part in influencing the presidential elections of South Korea as both the candidates made extensive reference to the invasion while laying out their security policies for South Korea during the election campaigns. While analysing the election results, it was clear that the South Koreans lost trust in maintaining peace and tranquillity merely through goodwill and diplomacy. Pyongyang's rapid advancement of their nuclear capability creates concern for Seoul; with the conservative candidate urging for closer ties with Washington and ramping up Seoul's military deterrence against Pyongyang's rapid nuclear missile programs. The mood of the electorate was clear: they believe that they cannot merely rely on Pyongyang's, Moscow's or Beijing's words, and the only way to prevent offensive operations against Seoul is by investing in military capability and enhancing their arsenal. The electorate was also unapologetic towards Ukraine's interest towards joining the N.A.T.O., and were in a mood to condemn Russian aggression against Kyiv; this was clearly reflected when the Democratic candidate was made to apologise for his statement blaming the Ukrainian President, Zelenskiy, to have unnecessarily locked horns with Moscow by showing interest to join the N.A.T.O. The electorate was pro-Washington and anti-Moscow and Beijing, not to mention their fierce opposition to Pyongyang.<sup>32</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The question, whether Russia's action resonate possible Chinese actions in Asia, depends on the geopolitical situation of Beijing. China's territorial claims across the South China Sea and the Indian Subcontinent are heavily disputed and China's adversaries in the region are sufficiently prepared militarily to handle China's attacks, unlike the invasion into Ukraine which took Ukraine by surprise. On the other hand, while analysing the reaction of the western bloc to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, one may note that the western bloc and the United States have not deterred the Russians enough to stop the war. China's unequivocal support to Russia despite Moscow being ambiguous about its recognition of the sovereignty of Ukraine might be of concern to America's Indo-Pacific allies.

With that being said, what China might do to Taiwan in the light of the Ukrainian war is unclear. Chinese officials have been denying all speculations about the possible Chinese offensive against Taiwan, however, many experts worry about the possibility of Chinese aggression against Taiwan especially due to America's commitment towards the defence of Taiwan became increasingly blurred post Biden's State of the Union address. There is another group of experts that

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<sup>31</sup> Katherine Hill, Leo Lewis, Nic Fildes & Christian Davies, "Ukraine invasion forces Washington's Asia allies to rethink their security," *Financial Times*, 11 March 2022. <http://en.asaninst.org/contents/financial-times-ukraine-invasion-forces-washingtons-asia-allies-to-rethink-their-security/>

<sup>32</sup> Hyonhee Shin, "Tight South Korea presidential race overshadowed by Ukraine and gaffers," *Reuters*, 2 March 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/tight-south-korea-presidential-race-overshadowed-by-ukraine-gaffes-2022-03-02/>

claim that the situation with China and Taiwan and the situation with Russia and Ukraine are not alike, with a significant difference in historical claims, legitimacy of conflict, and military preparedness of the countries involved in both situations.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, as reinstated earlier, it'll become a matter of geopolitical situation of Beijing that will determine its actions against Taiwan and other Washington allies in the Indo-Pacific if the United States continues its isolationist policies and practices military restraint vis-à-vis nations without mutual defence treaties.

(The views expressed are those of the author's solely and do not represent those of the Centre for Northeast Asian Studies in any way)

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<sup>33</sup> Andrew Scobell, "China Is Not Russia. Taiwan Is Not Ukraine," *The United States Institute of Peace (USIP)*, 4 March 2022. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/03/china-not-russia-taiwan-not-ukraine>