

**THE TAIWAN ISSUE IN THE WAKE
OF THE UKRAINE CRISIS**

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Executive Summary

1. The impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine has not altered the strategies of China, Taiwan and the United States. China is upholding its relationship with Russia to counterbalance the United States, while the Indo-Pacific is still the United States' strategic priority in containing China. Taiwan continues to lean on the United States closely to counterbalance China.
2. China justifies what the United States believes is a pro-Russia policy domestically through a popular anti-America narrative, while gradually shifting to a posture of neutrality in the international community to protect its international legitimacy.
3. The rapidly rising international attention on Taiwan at the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine has prompted China to emphasise the substantial difference between Taiwan and Ukraine and keep a low-key stance on the Taiwan issue, while criticising the United States for eroding its one-China policy in support of Taiwan.
4. The Tsai government is challenged by growing public scepticism of US military intervention in the event of a military conflict between China and Taiwan. While politicians and scholars from different camps debated on Taiwan's strategy in dealing with China and the United States, a public consensus for improving self-defence and self-reliance has emerged.
5. The Taiwanese government has also actively participated in US-led sanctions against Russia, provided medical aid and facilitated public donation to Ukraine, organised the largest military exercise in the waters close to China and received a US delegation of former high-level military officers.
6. In terms of international status and image, of the three, China is most negatively affected by the war in Ukraine, while the United States is the biggest beneficiary, rallying its allies and partners, and consolidating its image and status as a global hegemon. This is conducive to its Indo-Pacific strategy, including its support for Taiwan. Taiwan has also benefitted from the enhanced international publicity and sympathy.

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The United States: Prime Factor in China's and Taiwan's Strategy since the Ukraine Crisis

- 1.1 Parallels have been drawn between Russian-Ukraine and China-Taiwan after Russia's invasion of Ukraine as China had, before the war, issued a joint statement on international relations entering a new era with Russia and the US-supported Taiwan has been under the constant threat of China. China and Taiwan are closely watching the Ukraine crisis and how the United States is handling the resolution of the Ukraine crisis as it somewhat foreshadows how such a crisis and resolution may turn out in the future between China, the United States and Taiwan.
- 1.2 The three parties' handling of the Ukraine crisis would have ramifications for their future tripartite game. For China and Taiwan, the United States remains the most important factor in their handling of the Ukraine crisis.
- 1.3 China sees the Ukraine crisis within the framework of its strategic competition with the United States. It continues with its now entrenched anti-American narrative, blaming the United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) for the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis and showing a sense of camaraderie with Russia.
- 1.4 However, under the mounting pressure of Western public opinion and possible secondary sanctions by the United States and its allies, Beijing has not explicitly supported Russia's war effort, aiming to maintain a delicate balance between Russia and the United States. On Taiwan, it does not see similarities between Taiwan and Ukraine and continues to accuse Washington of vacillating on the Taiwan issue.

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- 1.5 Taiwan, on its part, has become more sceptical of the prospects of the United States sending troops to aid it in the event of a similar crisis. The Taiwanese government has also adopted China's approach of highlighting the difference between Taiwan's and Ukraine's situation to dispel doubts of US military intervention in a war with China. Meanwhile, it has followed the United States in sanctioning Russia, enhanced and demonstrated military preparedness, and continued to warn the public of a "cognitive war" waged by China.
- 1.6 While cautioning China against aiding Russia, the United States is maintaining the posture that the Indo-Pacific remains its strategic priority and encouraging Taiwan to build up its military strength in the event of a war across the strait. The United States and EU are likely to rally behind each other in applying greater pressure on China against supporting Russia in significant ways.

China: From Alliance with Russia against the United States to Posture of Neutrality

- 2.1 Beijing has come to realise the fundamental political disagreement between China and the West, and the threat posed by the 'peaceful evolution' concept promoted by the United States to the stability of its regime after the severe sanctions imposed by the West in the wake of the Tiananmen Movement in 1989, including the cessation of military talks with China. Consequently, China began to proactively engage in military exchanges with the Soviet Union/Russia before gradually upgrading its relations with Russia in various fields.¹
- 2.2 Russia-China relations have further developed since the Xi Jinping era, partly because Xi and Russian President Putin shared similar views on many issues, such as a strong commitment to the rejuvenation of their respective nation, extended control of the economy and society at home, and dissatisfaction with the US-dominated international order. The two men meet frequently, with Xi publicly referring to Putin as "my best friend".²

¹ "Russia Invades Ukraine: The Curiouser and Curiouser Case of China", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvZaV9b_RKE and "Seventy Years of Sino-Russian Military Relations: Retrospect and Reflection", <http://www.oyyj-oys.org/UploadFile/Issue/0ptftdui.pdf>, all accessed 24 March 2022.

² "China's Xi praises 'best friend' Putin during Russia visit - BBC News", <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-48537663>, accessed 24 March 2022.

- 2.3 When some Western governments joined hands to stage a diplomatic boycott of the Winter Olympics in Beijing, Putin not only attended the Games, but also issued a joint statement with Beijing. The statement outlined more areas of cooperation between China and Russia at a deeper level in the future, and of working together to counter the US-led international order.
- 2.4 At that time, China-US relations were characterised by tense standoffs in many areas such as trade, technology, human rights, Hong Kong and Taiwan, and anti-America discourse was already deeply rooted in the country. As a result, the Chinese government's decision to join force with Russia against the United States has been well accepted by the Chinese public.
- 2.5 Weeks before the Ukraine war, the United States had been warning the international community, including China, of an imminent Russian invasion of Ukraine. US warnings were however seen by the Chinese government as an attempt to “fan the flame”, meaning, accelerating tensions through disinformation.³ Many of China's international relations scholars took the government's position that Russia would not launch a war against Ukraine.⁴
- 2.6 This “fan the flame” narrative was also evident in Beijing's criticism of US support for Taiwan before and after the start of the Ukraine war. Similar to Beijing's criticism of Washington on the Ukraine crisis, Beijing believes that the United States is rationalising its support for Taiwan by exaggerating China's threat to Taiwan and drawing Taiwan into its orbit.⁵ Beijing's “fan the flame” narrative of US role in the Ukraine crisis was familiar to the Chinese public and was hence well received by the public.

³ “The United States “fires every day”, scaring the Ukrainian rich to “flee” collectively... - Teller Report”, <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/gj/2022/02-15/9677055.shtml>, accessed 24 March 2022.

⁴ “What do you think of Shen Yi's misjudgment on the Russia-Ukraine conflict? - Quora”, <https://www.zhihu.com/question/518530667>, accessed 24 March 2022.

⁵ General Taiwan Strait Review, “Resolutely thwart any form of external interference and ‘Taiwan independence’ separatist attempts!”, <https://news.cctv.com/2022/02/09/ARTIGnPKduLuxK5JbaXj5mjy220209.shtml> and “Damn it! The United States took advantage of the chaos to bring fire to the Taiwan Strait twice”, <https://new.qq.com/omn/20220315/20220315A07CO900.html>, all accessed 24 March 2022.

- 2.7 Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Beijing faces challenges both domestically and internationally. Domestically, it is an embarrassment for Beijing to still insist on joining forces with Russia against the United States when what it believed was Washington's disinformation has become reality.
- 2.8 Internationally, it faces the challenge of gradually adjusting its position of aligning with Russia to avoid criticism and sanctions from the United States and the West, without completely abandoning Russia. Thus, Beijing's series of adjustments may be seen as an effort to maintain its domestic and international legitimacy amid a very challenging diplomatic dilemma.
- 2.9 The domestic challenge of legitimacy is less of an obstacle as Beijing has full control of the domestic media and protesting voices could be filtered through strict censorship. China utilises the well-entrenched anti-American framework to continue to put the blame on the United States for the Ukraine war and rally domestic support for Russia.
- 2.10 In the early days of the war in Ukraine, the official media reproduced mostly Russian reports; Chinese government spokespersons, when confronted by foreign journalists, used the Russian government's phrase of "special military operation" rather than invasion to refer to the Ukraine war. China accused the United States and NATO of leaving Russia with no choice but to launch an attack on Ukraine. They cited former US Secretary of State Kissinger and prominent American academics to support their stance,⁶ and referred to NATO's bombing of the Chinese embassy.⁷
- 2.11 While Beijing seeks to take a neutral stance, the West's concerted efforts to sanction Russia leaves no room for China to be neutral. In the eyes of the West, those who are not explicitly opposed to Moscow are supporting it. China, in particular, is high on the list of potential Russia supporters. It had issued a joint statement with Russia

⁶ "March 8, 2022 Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian hosted a regular press conference", https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/202203/t20220308_10649759.shtml, accessed 24 March 2022.

⁷ "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying hosted a regular press conference on February 24, 2022", https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/202202/t20220224_10645295.shtml, accessed 24 March 2022.

not long before the Ukraine war and has the economic and military might to support Russia.

- 2.12 The West regards Beijing's reluctance to use the term "invasion" to describe the war, opposition to sanctions against Russia, statement of maintaining normal economic and trade relations with Russia, abstention in the UN resolution to condemn Russia and vote against the guilty verdict of Russia's aggression against Ukraine at the International Court of Justice as supporting Russia.
- 2.13 On the other hand, some of the principles of international relations that Beijing has long advocated and now repeatedly cited in response to the Ukraine crisis, such as the inviolability of sovereignty and territory, settlement of disputes through negotiation and importance of the security concerns of all countries are seen by the West as pseudo-neutral rhetoric.⁸ However, due to the Chinese government's censorship, the West's criticism of Beijing has been filtered from the public in China.
- 2.14 As Russia continues to be hampered on the battlefield in Ukraine, along with mounting Western sanctions and critical international public opinion, it is becoming more of a strategic liability for China instead of a strategic asset.
- 2.15 While Beijing is unlikely to abandon Moscow as it is still hedging its bets on Moscow as a long-term strategic partner to fend off America's encirclement on several fronts, it has to take a two-pronged approach to avoid being dragged into Russia's war on Ukraine. The Chinese government has gradually loosened its grip on social media to allow some pro-Ukraine, even anti-war, voices to emerge, while pro-US voices are still censored. On 16 March, a Chinese CCTV news programme reproduced a report from the Ukrainian government that the Ukrainian army had destroyed nearly 1,700 Russian tanks and armoured vehicles.⁹ The news coverage could be taken as a signal for a more balanced official narrative on the Ukraine crisis.

⁸ "Don't make the mistake of expecting Beijing's help", <https://www.voachinese.com/a/biden-xi-talk-shows-big-differences-on-ukraine-and-taiwan-20220318/6491774.html>, accessed 24 March 2022.

⁹ "[News Live Room] Concerned about the situation in Ukraine, the General Staff of the Ukrainian Armed Forces informed that the Ukrainian army destroyed nearly 1,700 tanks and armored vehicles of the Russian army", <https://tv.cctv.com/2022/03/16/VIDETjxntKmv9G70ACIJY50G220316.shtml>, accessed 24 March 2022.

- 2.16 After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the West's attention was on not only Ukraine, but also Taiwan as the reluctance of the West to intervene militarily in Ukraine against Russia could embolden China to launch an attack on Taiwan.¹⁰ To Beijing, while the Ukraine's conflict with Russia is an international conflict involving two internationally recognised sovereign states, China's conflict with Taiwan is China's domestic affair as Taiwan is part of China. China's handling of the Taiwan issue is hence not a concern of other countries.¹¹
- 2.17 As the government's position has gradually adjusted towards a more neutral posture for the international audience, domestic voices have also become more diverse. Scholars who support the government's position cited the plethora of problems in Ukraine's internal affairs and diplomacy, the Cold War behaviour of the United States and NATO in gradually cornering Russia, and the United States' undue pressure on China to rationalise its support for Russia.¹²
- 2.18 Anti-Russian and anti-war voices highlighted Putin's many problems in domestic and foreign affairs, his belligerent character and the unjust nature of the invasion of Ukraine, the international dilemma the war poses for China, the potential of Russia becoming a strategic liability for China in the long run and so on.¹³ Some scholars further argued that the war in Ukraine has greatly enhanced US leadership of the West and their unity in counterbalancing countries that challenge the West; China

¹⁰ "Canadian military intelligence chief confirms Western allies are concerned about war in Taiwan Strait", <https://tw.appledaily.com/international/20220303/JWWW227MABEBDHEWCLFYALEHQU/>, accessed 24 March 2022.

¹¹ "State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi Answers Questions from Chinese and Foreign Journalists on China's Foreign Policy and Foreign Relations - Xinhua English.news.cn", http://www.news.cn/politics/2022lh/2022-03/08/c_1128448602.htm, accessed 24 March 2022.

¹² "Yu Hongjun | Extreme nationalism and radical democracy are the two main reasons for Ukraine's internal and external difficulties", https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/-i4Vn0j_99Iu7I_tGlq0A; "Zhang Hongjie | Why did the United States refuse Russia to join NATO four times?" <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/V3F3HuyxbrWHjQJ-0iI9lQ>; "After watching the "worst" scene of Russia in the war, I had an epiphany about the cruel truth of this world...", <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/-WVMl6Zmn-Me4sVOIKBPjw>; and "If Russia loses, what does it mean to China?" <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/5tSUSGXNzFkJXyShvo8QYg>, all accessed 24 March 2022.

¹³ "Why is the polarization of domestic views so serious in the Russia-Ukraine war?" <https://www.wenxuecity.com/news/2022/03/06/11370185.html>; "Not all Chinese support Putin, why the world only hears one voice", <https://www.nytimes.com/zh-hans/2022/03/03/world/asia/china-putin-ukraine.html>, all accessed 24 March 2022.

should hence abandon its traditional strategy of aligning with Russia and reconcile with the United States to integrate again into the Western order.¹⁴

- 2.19 Another group of scholars, however, argued that after the war in Ukraine, the United States would no longer be able to contain China's rise as it would be drained of much of its resources and that the world situation would be more favourable to China.¹⁵ Yet there were others who suggested that the Chinese government should not give up on Russia or make peace with the United States and should continue to join force with Russia to resist the United States, while tactically straddling between the two and adjusting its policies in accordance with situational changes.¹⁶
- 2.20 Regardless of the stance of arguments, the war in Ukraine is being discussed within the broader framework of the strategic competition between China and the United States, a scenario which is somewhat similar to the discussion on the North Korea nuclear crisis a few years ago in China. Some similarities could also be drawn from the Chinese government's handling of its relations with Russia now and with the North Korean nuclear crisis at the time.
- 2.21 As the government has kept a low profile on the Taiwan issue, China's Taiwan scholars could not provide any detailed analyses of the possible impact of the Ukraine war on China's Taiwan policy. However, for the Chinese who have kept themselves updated on the Taiwan issue, they were able to discuss the parallels between the war in Ukraine and the Taiwan issue on various social media, especially on anti-American websites and online forums where nationalists gather.
- 2.22 Some "grassroot strategists" in China who have long advocated armed unification with Taiwan saw the war in Ukraine as providing a good opportunity for China to

¹⁴ "The Possible Outcome of the Russian-Ukrainian War and China's Choice", <https://uscnpm.org/2022/03/17/e-wu-zhanzheng-de-keneng-jieguo-yu-zhongguo-de-jueze/>, accessed 24 March 2022.

¹⁵ "Putin used "ultimate deterrence", and old Europe immediately understood it - Xinhua English.news.cn", https://www.guancha.cn/ChenFeng3/2022_03_02_628308.shtml, accessed 24 March 2022.

¹⁶ "Cut with Russia and make peace with the United States?" <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/EGIRfQkDukSxiqOpen1Qug> and "The Ukrainian crisis has finally 'exploded', and China must stay awake on these three things", https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/SEBdF_Ty3oMT5n7v8E4J1Q, accessed 24 March 2022.

take over Taiwan by force quickly.¹⁷ Some proponents even drew up lessons learnt from the war in Ukraine for China to follow and prepare for the takeover of Taiwan.¹⁸

2.23 However, more voices argued for both sides of the Taiwan Strait to avoid a war and for Beijing to force Taipei into negotiating for unification through a brinkmanship strategy.¹⁹ Discussions also centred on the preparations needed in terms of military, economic and public opinion if China was similarly subjected to criticism, sanctions and even military intervention by the West in a war with the Taiwan in the future.²⁰

2.24 Overall, the war in Ukraine seems to have raised the awareness of the enormous international sanctions and pressure China would be subjected to on the Taiwan issue. The public are more in agreement with the government's emphasis on strategic patience and confidence on the Taiwan issue.

Taiwan: Towards Stronger Self-Defence

3.1 The war in Ukraine has once again brought Taiwan into the international limelight and generated anxiety among the Taiwanese public, leading to heated debates between the Blue and Green camps. The debates centred on the United States' strategic ambiguity over Taiwan in the event of a Chinese attack and what role

¹⁷ “The conflict between Russia and Ukraine is the best strategic opportunity for the Chinese mainland to unify Taiwan by force”, https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/OXxc959HF_vVyTiv5LxYWA, accessed 24 March 2022.

¹⁸ “The whole process of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has taught two lessons for ‘military unification of Taiwan’”, <https://www.dwnnews.com/%E5%8F%B0%E6%B9%BE/60280291/%E4%BF%84%E4%B9%8C%E5%86%B2%E7%AA%81%E5%85%A8%E8%BF%87%E7%A8%8B%E4%B8%BA%E6%AD%A6%E7%BB%9F%E5%8F%B0%E6%B9%BE%E4%B8%8A%E4%BA%86%E4%B8%A4%E5%A0%82%E8%AF%BE>, accessed 24 March 2022.

¹⁹ “In the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, let's talk about the Taiwan issue”, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/AjhXrX2e8UU2cvukU8TuIA>, “the Ukrainian crisis: Three inspirations for China to completely solve the Taiwan issue”, https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/nrU_-AgH82vsntluzUtrPQ, all accessed 24 March 2022.

²⁰ “China is not Russia, Taiwan is not Ukraine”, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/dtJoZqYVNOPatIhJlk60fA>; “Revelation from the conflict between Russia and Ukraine”, <https://user.guancha.cn/main/content?id=709644>; “When reunifying Taiwan by force, you should cut its throat with a sword”; “When reunifying Taiwan by force, you should cut its throat with a sword”, <https://user.guancha.cn/main/content?id=709644>; and “The real gain and loss of the Russian-Ukrainian war - prepare for the day you cross the strait”, <https://user.guancha.cn/main/content?id=706106>, all accessed 24 March 2022.

Taiwan should play between China and the United States in the future. Before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, 51% of respondents in a Taiwan poll had expressed dissatisfaction with US President Joe Biden's decision not to send troops to protect Ukraine.²¹

3.2 The Tsai administration had to calm public anxiety and dispel rising scepticism of the United States by stressing the differences between Taiwan and Ukraine and how these would make an invasion difficult. The common border between Ukraine and Russia has facilitated an easy invasion, while Taiwan and China are separated by the Taiwan Strait. Taiwan's chip industry is of high strategic value to the United States and the West, and it has strong military and advanced weapons to defend itself.²²

3.3 Domestically, the Tsai administration has stepped up military preparedness and organised the "hardest ever" refresher training for 15,000 reservists,²³ and alerted the people to a "cognitive warfare" from China. Internationally, it participated in the US-led sanctions against Russia, provided medical aid to Ukraine and called on society to donate to Ukraine through a government-established account. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) caucus in the Legislative Yuan donated NTD1 million to Ukraine, while the president, vice president and premier have each donated one month of their salary.

3.4 In March 2022, a delegation of former senior US government officials in military security and former Secretary of State Pompeo separately paid a visit to Taiwan. Taiwan's defence minister announced that the United States would be announcing arms sales to Taiwan.²⁴ Taiwan also held the "largest ever" military exercise in

²¹ Taiwan Public Opinion Foundation Poll, "More than half of Taiwanese are dissatisfied with Biden's failure to invade Ukraine - Teller Report", <https://www.storm.mg/article/4205414>, accessed 24 March 2022.

²² "Tsai Ing-wen: Taiwan and Ukraine are different", <https://newtalk.tw/news/view/2022-02-23/713870>, accessed 24 March 2022.

²³ "Taiwan to trial 14-day refresher training for 15,000 reservists", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvdC0eBcwrs>, accessed 24 March 2022.

²⁴ "The United States will once again announce arms sales to Taiwan! Scholar: It should be used to improve asymmetric combat equipment", <https://www.pourquoi.tw/2022/03/17/taiwan-20220317-1/>, accessed 24 March 2022.

waters close to China.²⁵ The emphasis now is on strengthening itself, showing its determination to defend itself and bolstering its self-defence capabilities.²⁶

3.5 Scholars and politicians from the Blue and Green camps emphasised different aspects of the war in Ukraine to support their own positions. To boost the confidence of the people to resist China, the Green camp cited the similarities between Russia and China, the heroic resistance of the Ukrainian people, obstruction of Russian military operations and unity of the West in sanctioning Russia as outcomes that would strongly deter China from launching an attack on Taiwan. It further believes that the West would have drawn lessons from the war in Ukraine and placed more emphasis on protecting Taiwan.²⁷

3.6 The Blue camp attributed the war in Ukraine to a miscommunication between Ukraine and Russia. Likewise, Taiwan must find ways to communicate with China instead of constantly irritating China the way Ukraine irritated Russia. The Blue camp also reminds the public that the United States was reluctant to send troops to help Ukraine for fear of war with Russia; it is even more unlikely for the United States to go to war with China over Taiwan as China is much stronger than Russia.²⁸

²⁵ “Why is the Taiwan Navy focusing on the southwest for the largest military exercise?” <https://finance.sina.com.cn/wm/2022-03-18/doc-imcwiwss6764644.shtml>, accessed 24 March 2022.

²⁶ “The most important thing is Taiwan’s self-reliance | Politics | Highlights | United News Network”, <https://udn.com/news/story/6656/6152895>, “Ukraine’s fight against Russia relies on “self-help”, Tsai Ing-wen reveals Taiwan’s only way to defend its sovereignty and security”, <https://www.ettoday.net/news/20220309/2204667.htm>, all accessed 24 March 2022.

²⁷ “From the Russian invasion of Ukraine and its follow-up, on the strategic questions related to the Taiwan Strait”, <https://voicetank.org/%E5%BE%9E%E4%BF%84%E4%BE%B5%E7%83%8F%E6%88%B0%E7%88%AD%E5%8F%8A%E5%85%B6%E5%BE%8C%E7%BA%8C%E8%AB%96%E8%88%87%E5%8F%B0%E6%B5%B7%E7%9B%B8%E9%97%9C%E7%9A%84%E6%88%B0%E7%95%A5%E7%96%91%E5%95%8F/>; “New game between the United States, China and Taiwan”, <https://vip.udn.com/vip/story/121937/6157730>; “The lessons of the Russian-Ukrainian war”, <https://vip.udn.com/vip/story/121937/6157730>; “Peace does not come from begging”; “The plight of Putin and Xi Jinping under the game of great powers; “Democrats and Republicans ‘rushing to protect Taiwan’?” <https://tw.news.yahoo.com/%E6%B0%91%E4%B8%BB%E9%BB%A8%E3%80%81%E5%85%B1%E5%92%8C%E9%BB%A8%E3%80%8C%E6%90%B6%E8%91%97%E8%AD%B7%E5%8F%B0%E3%80%8D%EF%BC%9F%E7%82%BA%E4%BD%95%E7%BE%8E%E5%9C%8B%E7%89%B9%E6%B4%BE%E5%9C%98%E6%95%B8%E6%AC%A1%E3%80%8C%E5%BF%AB%E9%96%83%E3%80%8D%E5%8F%B0%E7%81%A3-230041242.html>, all accessed 24 March 2022.

²⁸ “Zhao Jianmin: Taiwan will let the two sides of the strait return to peace without guessing the year of military reunification”, <http://hk.crntt.com/doc/1063/2/3/6/106323680.html>; “What did Taiwan learn from the Ukrainian-Russian war? Wu Sihuai, All international solidarity is in vain”, <https://www.ettoday.net/news/20220226/2197163.htm>; “United Daily News editorial / The whirlwind of the U.S. special mission to Taiwan, who is comforted?” <https://udn.com/news/story/7338/6135951>; “[Yahoo Forum/Li Zhengxiu] It is difficult to

- 3.7 The unificationists, on the other hand, advocate the acceptance of Beijing’s “One China” principle quickly and resumption of dialogue with Beijing to work towards not only peace, but also unification. Although there are significant differences in these positions, there is a basic consensus between the Blue and Green camps: that Taiwan should strengthen itself militarily and enhance the determination, confidence and ability of society to defend Taiwan.²⁹
- 3.8 A Taiwan poll conducted from 11 to 13 March 2022 showed that 61.6% of the respondents disagreed with the statement “Ukraine today, Taiwan tomorrow” and 62.4% thought that the war in Ukraine would not speed up China’s unification with Taiwan,³⁰ an indication that the anxiety caused by the war is already receding. A good 77.3% of the respondents believed that Taiwan should maintain “peaceful relations” with China, while only 16.1% believed that Taiwan should “resist China to protect Taiwan”,³¹ implying that most Taiwanese still want to maintain good cross-strait relations.
- 3.9 The same survey in October 2020 found that 55.1% of the respondents believed that the United States would send troops to help Taiwan, while the current survey found that only 42.7% believed so, a significant drop after the US handling of Ukraine. At the same time, 70.1% support the new system of military reserve training, which is described as the “hardest in history”, and 69.6% support the “extension of compulsory military service”, a sign of a high level of public support for improving Taiwan’s combat readiness in the light of the war in Ukraine.

return to mutual understanding in U.S.-China relations”, <https://tw.news.yahoo.com/%E3%80%90-yahoo%E8%AB%96%E5%A3%87%EF%BC%8F%E6%9D%8E%E6%AD%A3%E4%BF%AE%E3%80%91%E7%BE%8E%E4%B8%AD%E9%97%9C%E4%BF%82%E9%9B%A3%E8%BF%94%E7%9B%B8%E4%BA%92%E7%90%86%E8%A7%A3-230015630.html>, “Criticizing the United States for not sending troops. Zhao Shaokang”, https://tw.appledaily.com/politics/20220302/G722GPUFFBGNJB2DJGTG6O7T6E/?utm_source=dable, all accessed 24 March 2022.

²⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/bingzhong.wang/posts/3086517138238822>, accessed 24 March 2022.

³⁰ “Taiwan Strait Security Polls: Scared by the Russian-Ukrainian War? Taiwanese’s confidence in the U.S. military’s defense has dropped by 7 percentage points in 2 years - Teller Report”, <https://www.storm.mg/article/4240695>, accessed 24 March 2022.

³¹ “Wang Kunyi: Taiwanese are very contradictory and want peace and war - in-depth analysis”, <https://www.huaxia.com/c/2022/03/15/1051616.shtml>, accessed 24 March 2022.

3.10 By 18 March, the Taiwanese public had donated over NTD700 million to Ukraine through an account set up by the ministry of foreign affairs³² and many civil society groups held at least two demonstrations in Taipei to protest against Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Overall, Taiwanese society has become more sympathetic of Ukraine, more realistic about the extent of US support and more willing to maintain good relations with China to avoid a military conflict. Society has also become more supportive of upgrading Taiwan's combat readiness.

The United States Continues Support for Taiwan

4.1 The West has been particularly fearful of China drawing lessons from the West's handling of the war in Ukraine to launch an attack on Taiwan to change the status quo in cross-strait relations. For the United States, the Indo-Pacific remains a strategic priority, of which supporting Taiwan is one.

4.2 QUAD leaders have announced their commitment not to allow a repeat of a war in Ukraine to happen in the Indo-Pacific, alluding to China.³³ US government officials had also testified before Congress that the United States would react differently from its response to the Ukraine crisis in the case of an attack on Taiwan.³⁴ The US military has also repeatedly suggested that it would help Taiwan develop "asymmetric combat capabilities" to deter China.³⁵ In a joint statement between the United States and UK on the Indo-Pacific on 11 March, they "noted that these steps come at a time when the United States, UK and European partners are enhancing their engagement with the Indo-Pacific and preparing to meet the challenge of systemic competition with China... They noted progress made on AUKUS..."

³² "Donation to Ukraine's special account exceeded 700 million yuan, the largest donation in a single day was 20 million yuan", <https://www.storm.mg/article/4247176>, accessed 24 March 2022.

³³ "Quad leaders agree Ukraine experience should not be allowed in Indo-Pacific - Japan, Australia | Reuters", <https://www.reuters.com/world/biden-quad-leaders-discuss-ukraine-thursday-white-house-2022-03-03/>, accessed 24 March 2022.

³⁴ "A Chinese Takeover of Taiwan Would Prompt Different Pentagon Response, Top Indo-Pacific Official Says - U.S.NI News", <https://news.usni.org/2022/03/09/a-chinese-takeover-of-taiwan-would-prompt-different-pentagon-response-top-indo-pacific-official-says>, accessed 24 March 2022.

³⁵ "Acknowledging that "China is advancing step by step", the United States will strengthen Taiwan's 'asymmetric combat capabilities'", <https://news.tvbs.com.tw/politics/1736537>, accessed 24 March 2022.

reaffirmed the importance of the maintenance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait”.³⁶

- 4.3 The United States has also acted to engage Taiwan internationally. The White House said at a press conference after the G7 countries announced their packages of sanctions on Russia: “We’re also unveiling today an expansive and unprecedented set of export restrictions developed in historically close coordination with the European Union, Australia, Japan, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Taiwan”,³⁷ demonstrating the close relationship between the United States and Taiwan. The US government also despatched a bipartisan delegation of former senior military officials to Taiwan and sent warships across the Taiwan Strait as a show of support for Taiwan.
- 4.4 On the other hand, Washington has not abandoned its long-held “strategic ambiguity” on the Taiwan issue. In a White House press release on the virtual summit between Biden and Xi, Biden “reiterated that US policy on Taiwan has not changed” and “emphasized that the United States continues to oppose any unilateral changes to the status quo”.³⁸
- 4.5 American and Western scholars share somewhat similar views with Taiwan’s Green camp scholars on Ukraine’s impact on Taiwan and China. They believe that China is facing a difficult diplomatic dilemma and that handling it badly would have serious ramifications that could lead to sanctions from the United States and the

³⁶ “Joint Statement on US-UK Consultations on the Indo-Pacific | The White House”, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/11/joint-statement-on-u-s-uk-consultations-on-the-indo-pacific/>, accessed 24 March 2022.

³⁷ “Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and Deputy National Security Advisor for International Economics and Deputy NEC Director Daleep Singh, February 24, 2022 | The White House”, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2022/02/24/press-briefing-by-press-secretary-jen-psaki-and-deputy-national-security-advisor-for-international-economics-and-deputy-nec-director-daleep-singh-february-24-2022/>, accessed 24 March 2022.

³⁸ “Readout of President Joseph R. Biden Jr. Call with President Xi Jinping of the People’s Republic of China | The White House”, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/18/readout-of-president-joseph-r-biden-jr-call-with-president-xi-jinping-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china-2/>, accessed 24 March 2022.

West. Neither did they think China would give up on Russia and actively cooperate with the West to sanction Russia.³⁹

4.6 Some scholars pointed out the importance of Taiwan to the United States and US commitment to Taiwan as legally guaranteed, making it very different from the case of Ukraine.⁴⁰ However, some scholars cautioned the US government against exercising strategic clarity on Taiwan to prevent China from following in Russia's footsteps.⁴¹ Yet there are scholars who argued that China will not take Taiwan by force as it is playing a waiting game. China believes that the United States is on a long-term decline and is prepared to wait it out before it could take over Taiwan peacefully.⁴² Some scholars, on the other hand, analysed in detail what Taiwan can learn from the war in Ukraine, especially in terms of its military.⁴³

Prospects

5.1 Compared to the United States and Taiwan, China is the most negatively affected by the war in Ukraine. Its efforts to play a neutral role have been perceived by the West as supporting Russia, a move which contradicts with its claim as a "responsible great power". The biggest beneficiary of the Ukraine war is the United States. It managed to mobilise its allies and partners and consolidate its image and status as a global hegemon, a much needed attribute for enhancing its Indo-pacific strategy, including its support of Taiwan. Taiwan has also benefitted from the increased international publicity and sympathy.

³⁹ "Why China Is Struggling to Deal With Russia's War in Ukraine | Council on Foreign Relations", <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/china-russia-war-ukraine-taiwan-putin-xi>, accessed 24 March 2022.

⁴⁰ "Taiwan Is Not Ukraine: Stop Linking Their Fates Together - War on the Rocks", <https://warontherocks.com/2022/01/taiwan-is-not-ukraine-stop-linking-their-fates-together/>, accessed 24 March 2022.

⁴¹ "The Real Lesson for Taiwan From Ukraine | The National Interest", <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/real-lesson-taiwan-ukraine-200897>, accessed 24 March 2022.

⁴² "Don't make the mistake of expecting Beijing's help", <https://www.voachinese.com/a/biden-xi-talk-shows-big-differences-on-ukraine-and-taiwan-20220318/6491774.html>, accessed 24 March 2022.

⁴³ "Chinese and English Commentary Column - The Prospect Foundation: Early Lessons from Russia's Invasion of Ukraine", <https://www.pf.org.tw/article-pfch-2168-7961>, accessed 24 March 2022.

- 5.2 To date, the three parties are maintaining their general strategies towards each other. China continues to maintain its relationship with Russia to counterbalance the United States, while the United States is pushing its Indo-Pacific strategy to contain China and Taiwan is aligning more closely with the United States to counterbalance China.
- 5.3 Beijing has in recent years expressed confidence, patience and determination to pursue peaceful unification with Taiwan according to its own plans, regardless of Washington's strategy to "fan the flame". The war in Ukraine is likely to lead Beijing to place greater emphasis on strategic patience and peaceful reunification.
- 5.4 Wang Yang at this year's Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) declared, "Uncertainty and instability have increased in the Taiwan Strait, but time, momentum and righteousness are always on our side". Beijing's confidence and patience are conducive to a peaceful resolution. If Beijing hastens its reunification plan with Taiwan, it is more likely to resort to non-peaceful means under China's Anti-secession Law.
- 5.5 Non-peaceful means will subject Beijing to sanctions by the United States and the West. Beijing would be drawing lessons from the sanctions imposed on Russia and working out ways to reduce its vulnerability to foreign threats by increasing the cost to sanctioning countries and thwarting their sanctioning efforts. Beijing's opening-up policy after COVID is likely to be shaped by such considerations. The Chinese government will probably speed up the internationalisation of RMB as the ejecting of Russia from SWIFT could be applied to China as well.⁴⁴
- 5.6 For Taiwan, the war in Ukraine has led to a growing consensus within Taiwan to improve its war preparedness, which is in line with US expectations of Taiwan. Taiwan is set to reform its military service system, raise its military budget, increase military exchanges and weapons purchase from the United States. However, Taipei would also need to balance these moves in anticipation of Beijing's reactions and

⁴⁴ "U.S. and European SWIFT "financial nuke" on Russia landed, which might accelerate the process of internationalization of RMB", <https://cn.reuters.com/article/russia-swift-china-yuan-0227-idCNKBS2KW0K4>, accessed 24 March 2022.

the impact on its elections. The West's growing attention on Taiwan in the wake of the Ukraine crisis has further cemented Taiwan's position in the US Indo-Pacific strategy, heralding more and deeper cooperation between the United States and Taiwan.

5.7 The United States on the other hand is likely to accelerate its Indo-Pacific framework, a move which will inevitably lead to greater resistance from China. Unless a pro-Beijing regime emerges in Taiwan, tensions between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait will not be substantially eased in the context of escalating strategic competition between China and the United States.

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