

UA: UKRAINE ANALYTICA

Issue 2 (28), 2022



- ASIAN GEOPOLITICS
- RUSSIAN INVASION
- UKRAINIAN FACTOR

ASIA

Editors

Dr. Hanna Shelest
Dr. Mykola Kapitonenko

Publisher:

Published by NGO "Promotion of Intercultural Cooperation" (Ukraine), Centre of International Studies (Ukraine), with the financial support of the Representation of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Ukraine and the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation – a Project of the German Marshall Fund of the United States

UA: Ukraine Analytica is the first Ukrainian analytical journal in English on International Relations, Politics and Economics. The journal is aimed at experts, diplomats, academics, students interested in international relations and Ukraine in particular.

Contacts:

website: <http://ukraine-analytica.org/>
e-mail: Ukraine_analytica@ukr.net
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ukraineanalytica>
Twitter: https://twitter.com/UA_Analytica

The views and opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of UA: Ukraine Analytica, its editors, Board of Advisors or donors.

ISSN 2518-7481

500 copies

BOARD OF ADVISERS

Dr. Dimitar Bechev (Bulgaria, Director of the European Policy Institute)

Dr. Iulian Chifu (Romania, State Counsellor of the Romanian Prime Minister for Foreign Relations, Security and Strategic Affairs)

Amb., Dr. Sergiy Korsunsky (Ukraine, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to Japan)

Prof., Dr. Igor Koval (Ukraine, Odesa City Council)

Marcel Röthig (Germany, Director of the Representation of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Ukraine)

James Nixey (United Kingdom, Head of the Russia and Eurasia Programme at Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs)

Dr. Róbert Ondrejcsák (Slovakia, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)

Amb., Dr. Oleg Shamshur (Ukraine, former Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to France)

Dr. Stephan De Spiegeleire (The Netherlands, Director Defence Transformation at The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies)

Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze (Ukraine, Head of the Parliamentary Committee on European Integration)

Dr. Dimitris Triantaphyllou (Greece, Director of the Center for International and European Studies, Kadir Has University (Turkey))

Dr. Asle Toje (Norway, Vice Chair of the Nobel Committee, Research Director at the Norwegian Nobel Institute)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

POSITIONS OF THE STATES OF THE MIDDLE EAST REGARDING THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR	3
<i>Mykola Zamikula</i>	
ISRAEL AND THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE	18
<i>Yurii Latysh</i>	
HOW DOES THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR CHANGE ASIAN GEOPOLITICS?	27
<i>Alina Hrytsenko</i>	
ASIAN NEUTRALISM, SECURITY, AND THE UKRAINIAN FACTOR	37
<i>Ihor Lossovskyi</i>	
THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR AS A TURNING POINT FOR UKRAINE'S RELATIONS WITH CHINA	46
<i>Yurii Poita</i>	
WILL CHINA TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR	52
<i>Vladyslav Faraponov</i>	
IN PURSUIT OF INTEREST: INDIA AND RUSSIA'S WAR AGAINST UKRAINE	60
<i>Olha Vorozhbyt</i>	
FROM DOWN UNDER: WHY IS AUSTRALIA SO INVOLVED IN THE WAR IN UKRAINE?	69
<i>Izabela Pereira Watts</i>	

POSITIONS OF THE STATES OF THE MIDDLE EAST REGARDING THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR

Dr Mykola Zamikula

National Institute for Strategic Studies, Ukraine

This article examines the positions of the key Middle Eastern states regarding the Russo-Ukrainian war. Special attention is paid to descriptions of the policy of Türkiye, Iran, Israel, and the Gulf states. The article analyses specific factors that shape the moderate/neutral policy of the Middle Eastern states and determine the public opinion of their population on the issue of the Russian invasion; the potential of Middle Eastern actors to influence the course of the Russian aggression against Ukraine; and the threats and opportunities which arise from the Russo-Ukrainian war and directly affect the interests of the Middle Eastern states.

Factors and Trends that Shape the Perception of the Russian Aggression against Ukraine in the Middle East

The Middle East remains a heterogeneous, fragmented region. This fragmentation is facilitated by historical, religious, and ethnic elements. Despite the majority of their populations being Arabs, the idea of pan-Arabism remains unimplemented. Leadership in the Arab World is claimed by Saudi Arabia, which has gathered a coalition of allies and dependent states¹. However, it cannot be considered as the core of a stable regional alliance. Some states in the region actively oppose the idea of Saudi hegemony.

The influence of non-Arab states which claim regional leadership in the Middle East

complicates the situation even more. The Republic of Türkiye seeks to play an active role in the region within the framework of the neo-Ottoman foreign policy concept². Iran is trying to strengthen its position by actively using the religious factor and proxy forces³. Tehran's expansion of influence in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen is becoming a key threat to other states in the region.

A specific role in the Middle East is played by Israel. For many years, it was isolated from the majority of the Islamic world because of the unresolved Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Today, the common threat from Iran intensifies the process of normalisation of Arab-Israeli relations⁴. It could lead to Israel's inclusion in the regional system as a full-fledged member – but for now this is still incomplete.

1 A. Sunik, *Regional Leadership in Authoritarian Contexts – Saudi Arabia's New Military Interventionism as Part of Its Leadership Bid in the Middle East*, "Rising Powers Quarterly", 2018, # 3(1), pp. 65-85.

2 K. Dalacoura, *Turkish Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Power Projection and Post-Ideological Politics*, "International Affairs", July 2021, Vol. 97, Issue 4, pp. 1125-1142.

3 The International Institute for Strategic Studies (ed.), *Iran's Networks of Influence in the Middle East*, Routledge 2020, p. 224.


4 M. Asseburg, S. Henkel, *Normalisation and Realignment in the Middle East*, SWP Comment, July 2021, # 45, p. 8.

Despite fragmentation, the region has specific features which in general determine the reaction of the Middle Eastern states to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Most of them are ruled by undemocratic regimes: secular dictatorships, absolute monarchies, and fundamentalist islamists. The Middle East is characterised by the personalisation of power. At the same time, the regional Eastern states remain close to the authoritarian Russian regime of Vladimir Putin in terms of their orientation. This impacts the perception of the latest events in Eastern Europe by the local political elites.

The leaders of the Middle East respect strength. This also plays into Russia's hands. The Russian military operation in Syria has demonstrated that Moscow is ready to support client regimes, and is able to ensure their security. On the contrary, the West's image as an influential player has received several serious blows. This was facilitated by sensitive defeats (e.g., the fall of the Afghan government of Ashraf Ghani) and their inability to support diplomatic rhetoric through force (the failure of Barack Obama's "red lines" in Syria). This allows critics of American hegemony to talk about a post-American Middle East in which a power vacuum has already been formed.

Regional peculiarities shape the worldview of the population of the Middle East and influence public perception of international processes. The Middle East remains a zone of intense armed conflict and terrorist activities. Its population lives in constant danger – so it has a specific attitude to the issue of interstate conflict and active hostilities. On the one hand, it has a better understanding of what Ukrainians have to face. At the same time, the presence of regional security challenges pushes the

issue of Russian aggression to the bottom of the information space. From the point of view of public perception, the locals are accustomed to such threats. Armed aggression and collateral civilian casualties do not cause such a shock in the Middle East as in the stable states of Western Europe and North America.



The leaders of the Middle East respect strength. This also plays into Russia's hands. The Russian military operation in Syria has demonstrated that Moscow is ready to support client regimes, and is able to ensure their security

On the contrary, the increased attention of the West to the problem of Russian aggression against Ukraine causes irritation and criticism. It is perceived as an illustration of the "policy of double standards". The narrative that for Europe and the United States the lives of Ukrainians are more valuable than the lives of Syrians, Palestinians, and Yemenis is quite popular in the Middle East. Russian propaganda and agents of influence, who are very active in the region, are trying to use the situation to their advantage, contributing to the spread of such views⁵.

Unfortunately, popular assessments of the Russo-Ukrainian War are also influenced by the spread of anti-Western sentiment in the Middle East. Ukraine does not have a negative reputation in the region. However, the war is perceived in the context of the confrontation between Russia and NATO, in which the "Arab Street" traditionally sympathises


5 X. Gogitidze, *Люблять силу і не люблять Захід. Як арабський світ ставиться до війни в Україні (They love power and do not love the West. How the Arab world feels about the war in Ukraine)*, "BBC", 13 July 2022 [<https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-62146857>]

with Moscow. Russia is perceived there as a geopolitical opponent of the West, fighting against unjust imperialistic American hegemony. People ignore the neo-imperial and neo-colonial character of Russia's policy towards Ukraine.

In general, most Middle Eastern states are trying to remain neutral regarding the Russo-Ukrainian war at the official level. They demonstrate loyalty to the principles of international law within the framework of the multilateral platforms of the UN system, in cases where it comes to declarative support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine⁶. At the same time, they refrain from making harsh statements and supporting practical measures aimed at deterring the aggressor. Their public position is influenced by geopolitical positioning within the framework of the confrontation between the West and Russia. Their reaction is determined not by the situation of relations with Ukraine, but by the nature of contacts with the United States and the Russian Federation. As the conflict does not concern their interests directly, they consider their position as an asset for building relations with the global players. The Middle Eastern states are using the situation to prove their importance as partners and to bargain for preferential treatment from Washington or Moscow.

Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine opens up additional opportunities for some Middle Eastern states which have energy reserves. As Europe is looking for an alternative to Russian supplies, they can ensure an increase in profits. The West's need for oil and gas from the Gulf states increases the geopolitical value of the latter, allowing them to build relations

with the United States and Europe on their own terms. However, in the long term, the negative consequences of the conflict for global economic ties can also affect their well-being.



Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine opens up additional opportunities for some Middle Eastern states which have energy reserves. As Europe is looking for an alternative to Russian supplies, they can ensure an increase in profits

Also, the Russian aggression against Ukraine can lead to dangerous consequences for some states of the Middle East due to the role of agricultural exports from Ukraine and Russia in their food security⁷. Active hostilities, the occupation of some Ukrainian territories, and the blockade of the Black Sea ports of Ukraine pose a threat to them, determined by the place of the food issue in the system of social relations between the authorities and the population of the region. Providing affordable food remains a critical public policy responsibility from the perspective of the people. Supply disruptions and the increase in prices can lead to large-scale mass protests (as has happened in the past – during the Arab Spring).

Gulf States: In Search of Economic and Geopolitical Benefits

The official reaction of the Arab states of the Gulf to the Russian aggression is shaped by their attempts to find a place in the current geopolitical balance of power. Traditionally, they have been considered

6 UN Resolution Against Ukraine Invasion, "Al Jazeera", 03 March 2022


[<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/3/unga-resolution-against-ukraine-invasion-full-text>]

7 C. Welsh, *The Impact of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine in the Middle East and North Africa*, Statement before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Middle East, North Africa and Global Counterterrorism, 18 May 2022 [<https://www.csis.org/analysis/impact-russias-invasion-ukraine-middle-east-and-north-africa>]

close partners of the United States. These relations have guaranteed their security for decades. However, they are based solely on rational assessments of mutual benefits. The United States was interested in Arab energy resources, and paid for it with security guarantees. But today, forecasts point to a gradual decline in the importance of hydrocarbons in the global energy system. The liberal wing is gaining more and more weight among the political elite of the United States. The Gulf states understand that their importance for Washington will decline. Moreover, they are losing confidence that the United States will provide them with full support. There are differences in the assessment of the Iranian threat and the operations in Yemen between the USA and its Arab partners. This shows to Saudi Arabia and the UAE that the United States is not ready to unconditionally defend their regional ambitions.

Gulf states are interested in maintaining their status as Washington's partners. However, they are afraid to tie their international positioning solely to the United States. They respect strength, and this factor contributed to their orientation towards Washington at the time of the peak of American influence. But changes in the balance of power in favour of other players can lead to a shift in their positions. In recent years, the Arab states of the Gulf have diversified their foreign policies, demonstrating a willingness to deepen relations with geopolitical opponents of the United States⁸. Economic cooperation with China brings them undeniable benefits. Coordination with the Russian Federation within the framework of the OPEC+ system

allows them to regulate energy prices, maintaining them at a favourable level. In general, it is easier for the Arab monarchies to find a common language with the Chinese and Russian regimes. The latter are attractive not only due to lack of piety in human rights, but also because of internal stability and predictable foreign policy.



Gulf states are interested in maintaining their status as Washington's partners. However, they are afraid to tie their international positioning solely to the United States

Under such circumstances, the Gulf states are cautious about the Russian invasion of Ukraine. They condemn the very fact of war and call for a ceasefire. By doing so, they demonstrate a formal commitment to the fundamental principles of international law. However, they are not ready to declaratively join the camp of US allies who provide support to Ukraine⁹. Arab monarchies generally refrain from criticising the actions of the Russian Federation and raising accusations against Putin's regime. They also take a pragmatic stance regarding potential support for Ukraine. For the Arab monarchies of the Gulf, the Russian invasion is more a window of opportunities than a threat. They are less dependent on the export of grain from Ukraine and the Russian Federation. At the same time, they receive extra profits due to rising energy prices. Their position in negotiations with the West is also strengthening. European and American

8 A. Aboudouh, *Russia's war in Ukraine is making Saudi Arabia and the UAE rethink how they deal with US pressure over China*, Atlantic Council, 26 April 2022 [https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/the-ukraine-war-is-making-saudi-arabia-and-the-uae-rethink-how-they-deal-with-us-pressure-over-china/]

9 F. Wehrey, *The Impact of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine in the Middle East and North Africa*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa and Counterterrorism), 19 May 2022 [https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/05/19/impact-of-russia-s-invasion-of-ukraine-in-middle-east-and-north-africa-pub-87163]

politicians are trying to find alternatives to the supply of Russian energy resources. They need Arab oil and gas – so they are forced to turn a blind eye to the problems over human rights in the Gulf states.

Saudi Arabia is using the situation to unfreeze relations with the United States. The US-Saudi partnership has remained under pressure since Joseph Biden took office. Biden proclaimed a foreign policy based on values and moral obligations. Washington made it clear to Riyadh that it will pay greater attention to violations of rights and freedoms in Saudi Arabia. The US has reconsidered its attitude towards the Saudi operation against the Houthis in Yemen. An important step that blocked bilateral relations at the highest level was President Biden's refusal of a direct dialogue with Prince Mohammed bin Salman – the heir to the Saudi throne and de facto ruler of the Kingdom. In February 2021 Biden's Administration released a US intelligence report which stated that the Saudi Crown Prince had approved a plan which led to the murder of opposition journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018¹⁰.

However, Russian aggression against Ukraine has increased the importance of Saudi Arabia for Washington. The need for Saudi energy resources forces the United States to make compromises. Biden did eventually meet with Prince Mohammed during a visit to the Middle East¹¹. A step was taken to unfreeze the cooperation. However, its results for the settlement of the energy

issue remain uncertain. Saudi authorities confirmed the availability of opportunities to increase oil production. However, the final decision is expected at the OPEC+ meeting in August.

The UAE is also cautious about the activities of the Biden's administration. The Emirates are not ready to respond to American proposals in the first instance, as such a move will threaten Abu Dhabi's relations with Moscow. The authorities of the Emirates remember the decision of the White House to temporarily suspend the sale of F-35 aircraft to them¹². In the diplomatic arena, their actions are distinguished by independence, justified by the existence of agreements with Moscow. On 25 February 2022, the UAE abstained from voting in the UN Security Council on a resolution that condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine. By doing so, a supportive vote of the Russian Federation on the resolution on the situation in Yemen was ensured. Thanks to this, the Houthis were called a "terrorist group" in the documents of the Security Council for the first time¹³.

Qatar also refrains from public criticism of the Russian Federation. It remains one of the key investors in the Russian economy¹⁴. At the same time, it uses the situation to achieve economic benefits through the supply of liquefied gas to Europe, thus weakening the latter's dependence on Russia. An opportunity for the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy to speak at the Doha Forum – 2022 could be considered as a gesture in support of

-
- 10 *Assessing the Saudi Government's Role in the Killing of Jamal Khashoggi*, US Director of National Intelligence, February 11, 2021 [https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/Assessment-Saudi-Gov-Role-in-JK-Death-20210226v2.pdf]
 - 11 R. Berg, *Saudi Arabia: Biden meets crown prince amid criticism*, "BBC", 15 July 2022 [https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-62173934]
 - 12 *Biden suspends F-35 sale to UAE*, "Daily Sabah", 27 January 2022 [https://www.dailysabah.com/business/defense/biden-suspends-f-35-sale-to-uae]
 - 13 K. Klippenstein, *United Arab Emirates Chooses Solidarity Between Oil Producers Over Military Allies*. "The Intercept", 09 March 2022 [https://theintercept.com/2022/03/09/russia-oil-uae-ukraine-invasion/]
 - 14 A. Gostev, *Ни на чьей стороне? Кремль ищет союзников на Востоке (On Nobody's Side? The Kremlin is Looking for Allies in the East)*, "Radio Freedom: Crimea.Realities", 18 March 2022 [https://ru.krymr.com/a/ukraina-rossiya-voyna-vostok-kreml-soyuzniki/31759601.html]

Ukraine¹⁵. Qatar was also among the sponsor states for the resolution of the UN General Assembly on aggression against Ukraine, approved on 2 March.


Kuwait also co-sponsored this document. In addition, it became the only Arab state that joined the American initiative in a joint statement condemning Russian aggression¹⁶, adopted after an unsuccessful vote in the UN Security Council on February, 25. Thus, Kuwait is showing more solidarity with the United States in this matter than its neighbours.

The Republic of Türkiye: Mediator with Its Own Interests and Agenda

Türkiye's position on the Russian aggression against Ukraine has been determined by the role of Kyiv and Moscow in Ankara's developing foreign policy, traditional approaches to security issues in the Black Sea region and the current interests of the Turkish authorities.

For Türkiye, an open conflict between Russia and Ukraine is becoming a challenge. Both states remain valuable partners for Ankara. It is interested in deepening its strategic partnership with Ukraine in trade and the military-industrial sphere. At the same time, Türkiye is not ready for a demonstrative break in relations with the Russian Federation. Russia remains an important partner in the energy sector; and provides a significant share of income for the Turkish tourism sector. Ankara is forced to reckon with Russian influence in strategically important regions (the South Caucasus, the

Middle East and North Africa). The Turkish authorities use demonstrative cooperation with the Russian Federation in certain areas as an illustration of their independent policy, which is especially important for them due to the aggravation of relations with the West.



For Türkiye, an open conflict between Russia and Ukraine is becoming a challenge. Both states remain valuable partners for Ankara. It is interested in deepening its strategic partnership with Ukraine in trade and the military-industrial sphere. At the same time, Türkiye is not ready for a demonstrative break in relations with the Russian Federation

As a result, Türkiye takes a specific position on the Russo-Ukrainian war. It is trying to maintain a balance in its relations with Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Its principled position in supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine remains unchanged. At the same time, the Turkish authorities think that a tough confrontation with the Russian Federation does not correspond to the national interests of the Republic.

Ankara has joined its NATO partners in condemning Russia's actions by means of diplomacy. It provides assistance to Ukraine: humanitarian support, as well as arms supplies under agreed contracts. Special attention should be paid to the activities of the Baykar company, as well as the pro-Ukrainian position of its CEO Haluk Bayraktar¹⁷.

15 Volodymyr Zelenskyy at Doha Forum – 2022: Europe's refusal to purchase Russian oil and gas is only a matter of time, so it is necessary to increase energy production in the world, Official Website of the President of Ukraine, 26 March 2022 [https://www.president.gov.ua/ru/news/volodimir-zelenskij-na-doha-forum-2022-vidmova-krayinyevrop-73849]

16 Joint Statement Following a Vote on a UN Security Council Resolution on Russia's Aggression Toward Ukraine, US Mission to the UN, 25 February 2022 [https://usun.usmission.gov/joint-statement-following-a-vote-on-a-un-security-council-resolution-on-russias-aggression-toward-ukraine/]

17 Turkey's Baykar drone company 'will never' supply Russia: CEO. "Al Jazeera", 19 July 2022 [https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/19/turkish-firm-wont-supply-uavs-widely-used-by-ukraine-to-russia]

The closure of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles to the Russian navy was an important step for Ankara. In this case, Türkiye acted in accordance with the provisions of the Montreux Convention, which remains at the core of Turkish Black Sea policy. This move will not allow Russia to strengthen its naval potential in the Black Sea. Such actions are also in Turkish interests: Ankara complicates logistical communications for the Russian military, and for Bashar al-Assad's forces in Syria.

At the same time, Türkiye refused to join in with the sanctions imposed against the Russian Federation. It has implemented such a policy before, justifying it by the need to maintain dialogue with Moscow for a diplomatic settlement of the conflict. In practice, Ankara pursues its own interests. A break with Russia could cause significant damage to the Turkish economy, which is already suffering from a deep crisis¹⁸. Under such circumstances, it remains possible for Russian business to use Türkiye to circumvent sanctions. There is evidence of Türkiye's involvement in the trading of Ukrainian grain which was illegally seized by Russian troops

in the temporarily occupied territories¹⁹. Türkiye is also working to ensure the flow of tourists from the Russian Federation²⁰.

Turkish officials are quite diplomatic while talking about Russia's actions in Ukraine. For example, Defence Minister Hulusi Akar has repeatedly refrained from placing responsibility on the Russian Federation for the destructive actions in the Black Sea region, such as the use of mines²¹ or attacks on Odesa²². Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said that some NATO member states are interested in continuing the Russo-Ukrainian war, in order to weaken the Russian Federation²³. Such a position clearly demonstrates the reluctance to aggravate relations with Moscow.

Turkish society in general supports this approach. It sympathises with Ukraine – but at the same time, between 73²⁴ and 80%²⁵ of the population believe that Ankara should remain neutral in this conflict. Openly pro-Russian views are not widespread in Türkiye. However, the perception of Russian aggression is affected by the problems in Türkiye's relations with its American and

-
- 18 'Nothing can be done' about placing sanctions on Russia: Turkey's Erdogan. "Al Arabiya", 25 March 2022 [https://english.alarabiya.net/News/middle-east/2022/03/25/-Nothing-can-be-done-about-placing-sanctions-on-Russia-Turkey-s-Erdogan]
- 19 Y. Gaber, *Grain Drain: Why Turkey Can't Afford to Ignore Russian Grain Smuggling from Ukraine*, Atlantic Council, 25 July 2022 [https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/turkeysources/grain-drain-why-turkey-cant-afford-to-ignore-russian-grain-smuggling-from-ukraine/]
- 20 S. Sidorenko, *Три компанії для росіян: як Туреччина допомагає агресору обходити санкції (Three Companies for the Russians: How Turkey Helps the Aggressor Circumvent Sanctions)*. "Європейська Правда" ("European Truth"), 04 May 2022 [https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2022/05/4/7138850/]
- 21 *Akar suspects mines in Black Sea released 'intentionally'*, "Hürriyet Daily News", 10 April 2022 [https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/defense-minister-suspicious-of-intentionally-leaving-mines-in-black-sea-172888]
- 22 *Türkiye 'concerned' after missile attack on Odessa port*, "Hürriyet Daily News", 23 July 2022 [https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/amp/russian-missiles-hit-ukraines-odessa-port-key-to-grain-deal-ukraine-175573]
- 23 A. Yusupov, *Чавушоглу: Ряд стран НАТО желает продолжения войны в Украине (Cavusoglu: A number of NATO countries want the war in Ukraine to continue)*, "Anadolu Agency", 20 April 2022 [https://www.aa.com.tr/ru/мир/чавушоглу-ряд-стран-нато-желает-продолжения-войны-в-украине-/2568819]
- 24 *How Turkey is courting Russia's oligarchs*, The Economist, 07 April 2022 [https://www.economist.com/europe/2022/04/07/how-turkey-is-courting-russias-oligarchs]
- 25 *Nearly 80 percent of Turkish population believe their country should stay neutral in Ukraine war – poll, 'Ahval'*, 5 March 2022 [https://ahvalnews.com/turkey-ukraine-crisis/nearly-80-percent-turkish-population-believe-their-country-should-stay]

European partners. Anti-Western views are widespread within Turkish society. Under these circumstances, Russia is often seen as an alternative centre of power and as a promising partner for stable cooperation that Ankara must reckon with. It is not surprising that only 34% of the population blame the Russian Federation for the Russo-Ukrainian conflict; at the same time, 48% consider the United States of America to be guilty of provoking the war²⁶.

In general, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is becoming both a challenge and an opportunity for Türkiye. On the one hand, the Turkish authorities are using the current situation to their advantage. Ankara's support for Ukraine improves its image in the West. Türkiye seeks to prove its importance as a credible regional player to its Western partners. Due to this, Türkiye is trying to overcome the ongoing crisis in relations with the United States and Europe.

Meanwhile, the Turkish authorities are trying to play a key role in the diplomatic settlement of the Russo-Ukrainian war. Ankara is seeking to become a major mediator between Kyiv and Moscow. That corresponds to the current approaches of Turkish diplomacy to resolving regional conflicts. Türkiye remains one of the few states that can provide a platform for Ukrainian-Russian negotiations. Using their potential in this regard, the Turkish authorities want both to stop the war at their borders and to demonstrate Türkiye's international influence. They want to improve their position in the geopolitical

game with Russia. Success here is necessary for the Justice and Development Party, as well as for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan personally. In 2023, both presidential and parliamentary elections will be held in Türkiye. Erdogan is losing the support of the population because of a deep economic crisis. He seeks to compensate for his domestic failures with foreign policy successes that can be used in the election campaign. An open demonstration of his role in the Ukrainian-Russian negotiations, as well as achieving any practical results, would become an important element in the consolidation of his image as a strong influential leader²⁷.

However, this strategy has a chance of success only if real progress is made. To date, it is obvious that Türkiye's ambitious plans to contribute to the ending of hostilities have remained unimplemented due to the destructive stance of the Russian Federation. The talks held in Türkiye in March had only a superficial effect. The recent agreement to unblock Ukraine's Black Sea ports for agricultural exports was seen as a great victory by the Turkish authorities. Ankara has tried to present it as the first step in a wider peace process²⁸. However, it is doubtful that these statements are true, given Russia's unwillingness to compromise. The Russian missile attack on the port of Odesa the day after the signing of the grain agreement showed that Moscow is not going to abandon its aggressive campaign against Ukraine. The prime target of this attack was not Ukraine's infrastructure, but Türkiye's

26 *How Turkey is courting Russia's oligarchs*, The Economist, 07 April 2022
[<https://www.economist.com/europe/2022/04/07/how-turkey-is-courting-russias-oligarchs>]

27 Y. Gaber, «Треба дати путіну врятувати своє обличчя»: що не так з позицією Туреччини в перемовинах? («Putin should be Allowed to Save his Face»: What is Wrong with Turkey's Position in the Negotiations?), "Hromadske Radio", 25 April 2022 [<https://hromadske.radio/podcasts/viyna-informatsiynny-marafon/treba-daty-putinu-vriatuvaty-svoie-oblychchia-shcho-ne-tak-z-pozytyisiei-turechchyny-v-peremovynakh>]

28 *Bakan Çavuşoğlu: Tahil Anlaşmasının Ateskesin ve Barışın Temelini Oluşturabileceğini Düşünüyoruz (Minister Çavuşoğlu: We Think that the Grain Agreement Can Form the Basis for Ceasefire and Peace)*, "TRT Haber", 04 August 2022
[<https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/bakan-cavusoglu-tahil-anlasmasinin-ateskesin-ve-barisin-temelini-olusturabilecegini-dusunuyoruz-699268.html>]

ambitions. It demonstrated the limits of Ankara's capabilities to construct a stable peace, if Russia does not want it.

Russian aggression also poses direct threats to Turkish interests. The continuation of active hostilities casts a shadow over Ankara's conciliatory position. It could have been an asset for Türkiye before the invasion or in the first weeks of open conflict. But now it harms the Republic's positions in relations with the West, creating the image of a "pro-Russian" Türkiye. The war in Ukraine is destabilising the Black Sea region. In the short term, it hampers Türkiye's economic activities in the area. In the long term, the aggression of the Russian Federation puts an end to the fundamental principle of Türkiye's Black Sea policy – the desire to turn the region into a zone of stability closed to external influence, where all important issues are resolved within the narrow circle of the Black Sea states. To date, this idea has no chance of implementation.


Israel: In the Shadow of the Iranian Threat

Israel's foreign policy is aimed at preserving the independence and security of the Jewish state. Israel is not part of the so-called "collective West". It focuses on realistic assessments of its interests and threats from the regional environment. Israel has never declared support for implementation of an idealistic, moral- or value-based foreign policy. In the past, Tel Aviv itself has resorted to strategies and actions that were dubious from the point of view of supporters of the Western liberal model.

The current security threats to Israel remain the focus of attention of local politicians. The key security challenge for Israel is

Iran's aggressive policy. Tel Aviv considers Tehran as a key destructive element in the modern system of international relations²⁹. Its fundamentalist regime is believed to pose a direct threat to the existence of the Israeli state. For Tel Aviv, the strengthening of the Iranian position in Syria, and the prospect of the development of nuclear weapons in Iran are unacceptable.

The Iranian factor has an indirect but decisive influence on Israel's reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It forms the context of Russian-Israeli relations. The Israeli authorities adequately assess the role of the Russian Federation in international politics. They understand that Moscow's revisionism toward US hegemony contradicts Israeli interests. They see the deepening of the partnership between the Russian Federation and Iran in terms of anti-Americanism. The Kremlin has traditionally supported Israel's enemies in the Middle East, whose military potential depends on cooperation with the Russian Federation and the supply of Russian weapons.

 ***The Iranian factor has an indirect but decisive influence on Israel's reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It forms the context of Russian-Israeli relations***

Theoretically, such a Russian policy can be counteracted either by force or by diplomacy. However, Israel does not have the ability to use force against Russia to limit its support for Iran, the regime of al-Assad in Syria or various terrorist groups. Under these circumstances, Tel Aviv relies on a diplomatic solution. By demonstrating a

29 J. Rothwell, C. MacDiarmid, *Iran 'dangerously' close to completing nuclear weapons programme. Israel's prime minister says country will soon get its hands on a bomb unless the West stands up to the regime*, "The Telegraph", 11 June 2022 [<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2022/06/11/iran-dangerously-close-completing-nuclear-weapons-programme/>]

friendly position towards Russia, the Israeli authorities are trying to convince Moscow to weaken its support for anti-Israeli forces. They do not consider Russia as a friend, but accept as a fact the Kremlin's ability to exacerbate the threats to Israel's security. Tel Aviv is trying to avoid this by demonstrating readiness for dialogue with the Putin regime.



Israel's reaction is limited to formal public declarations, condemning the Russian invasion. The key interest for Tel Aviv remains the safety of the Jewish population of Ukraine. Practical assistance is mostly humanitarian

Such a policy has been successful in the past. For example, Israel managed to freeze the supply of S-300 air defence systems to Iran in the early 2010s³⁰. Freedom of action in Syria against Iranian military targets remains a key interest for Tel Aviv. Russia publicly condemns the attacks, but in practice takes a neutral position. The Russian air defences take no action in Syria against the Israeli air force. Tel Aviv benefits from maintaining the current situation, and is ready to pay for it through diplomatic activity. In particular, we are talking about refraining from excessive criticism of Russia's aggressive policy towards Ukraine.

Israel's reaction is limited to formal public declarations, condemning the Russian invasion. The key interest for Tel Aviv remains the safety of the Jewish population of Ukraine. Practical assistance is mostly

humanitarian. Israel has sent humanitarian cargoes to Ukraine; ensured the work of a field hospital in the west of Ukraine for one month; accepted Ukrainian refugees.

Of course, Israel is forced to consider the US position towards Russian aggression. Tel Aviv supports the initiatives of the White House regarding Ukraine, remaining an ally of Washington, and seeking American support against Iran. Representatives of its Ministry of Defence take part in the work of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group³¹. Thus, the Israeli authorities demonstrate solidarity with the position of the Euro-Atlantic community. At the same time, Israel refrains from providing weapons to Ukraine. Israeli supplies are limited to protective equipment. It is possible that some support is given clandestinely. But even in this case we can see the influence of the need to preserve relations with Russia on Tel Aviv's position, despite public rhetoric.


Such behaviour on the part of the Israeli authorities creates an image of their holding a pro-Russian position. However, only a small number of the local politicians adhere to such views (e.g., the leader of the Yisrael Beiteinu party Avigdor Lieberman). In general, Israeli politicians build their attitudes towards the Russian Federation on rational assessments of their national interests, or their own political benefits. For example, former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took an active part in Russian public events and demonstrated close relations with Putin³². But this was done to demonstrate his influence internationally and to attract the electorate. Such actions were not evidence of the pro-Russian views of the leader of the Likud party.

30 A. Krechetnikov, Y. Maloveryan, *Россия задерживает поставку ракет Ирану (Russia Delays Delivery of Missiles to Iran)*, "BBC", 17 February 2010 [https://www.bbc.com/russian/international/2010/02/100217_russia_iran_s300]

31 *Israel attends US-led summit on sending more arms to Ukraine*, "The Times of Israel", 26 April 2022 [<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-attending-us-led-summit-on-supplying-ukraine-with-more-arms/>]

32 R. Wootliff, *Netanyahu Touts Friendship with Putin in New Billboard*, "The Times of Israel", 28 July 2019 [<https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-another-league-netanyahu-touts-friendship-with-putin-in-new-billboard/>]

The perception of Ukraine in Israel has its own peculiarities. Issues of historical memory and contradictory assessments of some events and figures in Ukrainian history remain a source of misunderstanding. Israel also remembers Ukraine's position on the Palestinian issue, which does not correspond to Tel Aviv's interests³³. However, all these factors have never been decisive in shaping the position of Israeli society and the political elite on the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.



Among the states of the Middle East, only Syria takes an openly pro-Russian position regarding the aggression against Ukraine

The influence of the memory of the Holocaust on the foreign policy of Israel is worth noting. Any speculation on this topic causes resentment in Israeli society. On the one hand, this leads to a critical perception of the rhetoric of the Ukrainian authorities regarding the genocide of the Ukrainian people implemented by Russia. This is perceived as a challenge to the exclusivity of the tragedy of the Jewish people during World War II. At the same time, historical memory determines the strict rejection of anti-Semitic statements made by Russian authorities, who have accused Israel of supporting so-called "neo-Nazism" in

Ukraine³⁴. Such incidents can create a demand for a tougher policy towards the Russian Federation in Israeli society.

Syria and Iran: Russia's (Un)Reliable Partners

Among the states of the Middle East, only Syria takes an openly pro-Russian position regarding the aggression against Ukraine. Damascus' recognition of the independence of the territories of the "ORDLO" is a clear illustration of Bashar al-Assad's course³⁵. This is not surprising given its geopolitical orientation. Syria has traditionally remained part of Russia's circle of partners. Moreover, al-Assad was able to stay in power during the civil war only with Russian assistance (as well as Iranian support). De facto, his regime lacks international subjectivity. It is fully dependent on Moscow and Tehran in issues of political, economic and security support. Russia contributes to ensuring the food security of Syria (including through the supply of grain which was illegally seized in Ukraine)³⁶. Damascus is paying the price for this by taking an appropriate position on international issues which have importance to the Kremlin. The willingness to facilitate the recruitment of Syrian citizens for participation in the aggression against Ukraine demonstrates the complete loyalty of al-Assad's regime to Russia. This move has no practical effect, but it is well suited for use by Russian propaganda³⁷.

33 *Resolution 2334 (2016) Adopted by the Security Council at its 7853rd meeting*, United Nations, 23 December 2016 [<https://www.un.org/webcast/pdfs/SRES2334-2016.pdf>]

34 *Russia Says Israel Supports Ukraine 'Neo-Nazis' as Row Escalates*, "Al Jazeera", 03 May 2022 [<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/3/russia-says-israel-supports-neo-nazis-in-row-over-ukraine>]

35 *Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Regarding the Severance of Diplomatic Relations with the Syrian Arab Republic*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 30 June 2022 [<https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/statement-ministry-foreign-affairs-ukraine-regarding-severance-diplomatic-relations-syrian-arab-republic>]

36 P. Saidel, *Russia-Flagged Ships Transport Stolen Grain to Syria, Ukraine Says*, "The Wall Street Journal", 10 May 2022 [<https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/russia-ukraine-latest-news-2022-05-10/card/russia-flagged-ships-transport-stolen-grain-to-syria-ukraine-says-XldruHiMyqmJMUyskuRU>]

37 P. Bousset, *Syrian Mercenaries in Ukraine: Delusion or Reality?*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 23 June 2022 [<https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/87382>]

Russia is trying to use al-Assad's statements to legitimise its aggression against Ukraine. It seeks to show support for its actions and the absence of international isolation. However, such a campaign is aimed primarily at the domestic audience. The world understands the dubious legitimacy of al-Assad himself, as well as his total dependence on the Kremlin. At the same time, Russia's aggression against Ukraine complicates al-Assad's situation. It diverts Moscow's attention from the Middle East. Military failures on Ukrainian territory, as well as problems with supply due to the closure of the Black Sea Straits, weaken the Russian military presence in the Middle East.



Despite its traditional partnership with Moscow, Tehran is in no hurry to openly side with it in the war against Ukraine. Iran does not want the issues of the Russian invasion and the imposition of sanctions against the Russian Federation to affect its relations with the West

There are no existential threats to al-Assad's regime. After all, Russia is not giving up its political patronage of him. However, some vacuum of influence was formed, as a result of the withdrawal of part of the Russian contingent. It has been filled by Iran. Thus, the balance of power among Assad's patrons is changing. This affects the internal processes in the Syrian system of

government, strengthening the pro-Iranian forces. Iran and Russia have different goals in Syria. Russia used support for al-Assad as a showcase to demonstrate its foreign policy successes and influence. It was interested in stopping the civil conflict, and had a certain mediation potential, based on the reputation of an external force not involved in local contradictions. On the contrary, Syria remains only a bridgehead for operations against Israel for Iran. Tehran is directly involved in the Shia-Sunni confrontation. Al-Assad's well-being has no such value for the Iranian authorities as it does for the Kremlin. Weakening the Russian presence and strengthening the Iranian proxies could escalate the civil conflict, which is not good news for the Syrian regime.

Iran's opinion of the Russian invasion of Ukraine is determined by its geopolitical positioning. Tehran and Moscow have been considered partners for a long time. Their cooperation grew on the basis of antagonism towards the West. It is not surprising that Iran took a friendly position towards the recent Russian actions within the framework of the UN system. It abstained in the voting on resolutions condemning the Russian aggression against Ukraine³⁸ and its humanitarian consequences³⁹; and it opposed the exclusion of the Russian Federation from the UN Human Rights Council⁴⁰.

Officially, Iran refrained from full support for Russian actions or accusations against Ukraine. It called for a diplomatic settlement of the conflict. However, in practice, Tehran

38 *UN Resolution Against Ukraine Invasion*, "Al Jazeera", 03 March 2022

[<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/3/unga-resolution-against-ukraine-invasion-full-text>]

39 *Ukraine: General Assembly Passes Resolution Demanding Aid Access, by Large Majority*, The United Nations, 24 March 2022 [<https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1114632>]

40 *UN General Assembly Votes to Suspend Russia from the Human Rights Council*, The United Nations, 07 April 2022 [<https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/04/1115782>]

uses the situation to criticize NATO⁴¹. It holds the Alliance responsible for the war, promoting a pro-Russian narrative.

The statements of the majority of the Iranian political elite correspond to this position. The speeches of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei are particularly harsh⁴². However, this is typical of Iran, when the supreme leader speaks less diplomatically than the government representatives. Also, it is worth noting that former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has spoken critically about the Russian aggression⁴³. His reaction is due to confrontation with Khamenei, as well as because of his personal position (rejection of any forms of neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism).

Despite its traditional partnership with Moscow, Tehran is in no hurry to openly side with it in the war against Ukraine. Iran does not want the issues of the Russian invasion and the imposition of sanctions against the Russian Federation to affect its relations with the West. Despite the fact that the conservatives hold total power in Iran after the presidential elections of 2021, Tehran still hopes for a diplomatic solution to the issue of resuming the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (“nuclear deal”). The current situation in the international energy markets

creates additional opportunities, since Iran can partially replace Russia in them. However, this requires implementation of a careful policy regarding the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Providing practical support to Russia would undermine the diplomatic process with the West. This can turn against Iran not only the United States, but also Europe, which in recent years has treated Tehran more gently.

So, Iran has refrained from demonstrative cooperation with the Russian Federation, which could have been interpreted as a support for aggression. For example, the Iranian authorities continue to deny the supply of weapons to Moscow⁴⁴. Russia may be interested in receiving Iranian UAVs, which have already proven their effectiveness in the Middle East. However, such deals could call a definitive halt to Tehran’s negotiations with the West. It is also unknown whether Iran can carry out such deliveries without threatening its own military potential in the face of the escalating confrontations with Israel and Saudi Arabia. In general, the danger of such cooperation with Russia exists⁴⁵. However, it seems that Washington drew attention to this issue in July, 2022, as a preventive measure in order to warn Tehran that such actions will not remain undetected.

41 M. Motamedi, *‘Rooted in NATO’: Iran responds to Russia’s Ukraine attack*, “Al Jazeera”, 24 February 2022 [<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/24/rooted-in-nato-inside-irans-response-to-the-ukraine-crisis-2>]

42 *Key Points of Meeting [of Ayatollah Khamenei] with the President of Russia*, The Official Website of Ayatollah Khamenei, 20 July 2022 [<https://english.khamenei.ir/news/9090/Key-points-of-meeting-with-the-President-of-Russia>]

43 A. Lucente, *Former Iranian president Ahmadinejad praises Ukraine’s ‘resistance’, rebukes Islamic Republic’s support for Russia*, “Al-Monitor”, 03 March 2022 [<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/03/former-iranian-president-ahmadinejad-praises-ukraines-resistance-rebukes-islamic>]

44 S. Z. Mehdi, *Iran denies sending drones to Russia amid Ukraine war*, “Anadolu Agency”, 15 July 2022 [<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/iran-denies-sending-drones-to-russia-amid-ukraine-war/2638063>]

45 M. Berg, *Iran preparing to send ‘several hundred’ drones to Russia, Sullivan says*, “Politico”, 11 July 2022 [<https://www.politico.com/news/2022/07/11/iran-uav-drones-russia-00045195>]

Conclusions

The majority of Middle Eastern states take a neutral position on the issue of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Most of them support declarative calls to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and condemn the use of force to resolve interstate conflicts. However, they refrain from directly blaming the Russian Federation and its leaders. They also avoid joining practical initiatives aimed at supporting Ukraine. Thus, their neutrality is often pro-Russian de facto.



the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine is not a priority security challenge for the states of the Middle East. They have neither legal nor moral and value obligations to offer active support for Ukraine's territorial integrity. Moreover, the spread of anti-Western views in the region forms a distorted perception of events, in which the responsibility for the conflict is assigned not to the aggressor, but to the United States and NATO

Their views are shaped by several factors. An important role is played by their positioning in the context of the global confrontation between the West and its geopolitical opponents (Russia, China). Relations with the United States and the Russian Federation, as well as plans for their further development, are also important. Even Washington's traditional partners are ready to diversify their foreign policy under the conditions of weakening American hegemony. They do not want to break off contacts with the Russian Federation, which provide them with economic benefits. For many states in the region, Putin's authoritarian regime remains a

more reliable and stable partner than the Western liberal democracies. They view the Russian aggression against Ukraine in the context of their national interests, and assess the threats and opportunities that these events create for them.

The Arab monarchies of the Gulf are using the situation to obtain financial profits from their trade in energy resources, as well as to improve relations with the United States and Europe. The West's need for their oil and gas strengthens their position in the negotiation process, which was hindered for a long time by problems over human rights. At the same time, the Gulf states are cautious about Western proposals, and are not ready to meet them at the first time of asking. They seek to bargain for maximum preferences for themselves. They also do not want to abandon the joint OPEC+ mechanism with the Russian Federation, which gives them control over energy prices.

The Republic of Türkiye pursues its own political and economic interests, stemming from a high level of relations with both Ukraine and the Russian Federation. It supports the territorial integrity of Ukraine, and continues to supply weapons to the Ukrainian Armed Forces. At the same time, Türkiye did not join the anti-Russian sanctions. On the contrary, it has intensified economic ties with the Russian Federation. Ankara is trying to use its potential as a mediator for the settlement of the Russo-Ukrainian war. The Turkish authorities are interested in ending the conflict, which destabilises the situation near the Turkish borders, and interferes with the implementation of the traditional Black Sea policy of the Republic. On the eve of the 2023 elections, they need diplomatic successes to ensure electoral support. However, the desire for a visible result under the conditions of Russia's unwillingness to compromise leads to an excessively soft Turkish position towards Moscow.

Israel remains a key US ally in the Middle East. However, it is also interested in maintaining contacts with Russia. This is due to the factor of the Iranian threat. Tel Aviv understands that Russia can strengthen Tehran's military potential, as well as complicate Israeli operations against Iranian facilities in Syria. The Israeli authorities seek to avoid this, refraining from direct confrontation with the Russian Federation, and limiting assistance to Ukraine mainly to the humanitarian.

Russia's traditional partners in the region, Syria and Iran, as expected demonstrate pro-Russian views. However, their positions differ. Syria de facto is not an independent actor. The al-Assad regime remains in power due to external support, and therefore openly supports the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Iran is acting more cautiously. Moscow's propaganda rhetoric about its motives for the invasion is consistent with Tehran's anti-Western position. However, Iran has refrained from supporting the aggression in public, as negotiations on a nuclear deal with the United States continue. The West's need for Iranian energy resources opens a window of opportunity for it and strengthens its diplomatic position. However, the use of that asset will be impossible if Iran openly shows solidarity with Moscow.

In general, the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine is not a priority security challenge for the states of the Middle East. They have neither legal nor moral and value obligations to offer active support for Ukraine's territorial integrity. Moreover, the spread of anti-Western views in the region forms a distorted perception

of events, in which the responsibility for the conflict is assigned not to the aggressor, but to the United States and NATO.

Unfortunately, this approach is due to the trends in the development of the region, the nature of the ruling regimes, public perception of international processes, and the current interests of states. They have no complaints about Ukraine but consider it irrational to support it. Kyiv does not have the opportunity to significantly influence their position. However, under modern conditions, an important task is to spread the Ukrainian point of view on the war to the population and the political elite of the Middle East. Exposing the Kremlin's neo-imperial ambitions, and demonstrating the destructive influence of Russian revisionism on the stability of the global system of international relations gives the chance to sow doubts about the rationality of cooperation with Moscow. The Middle Eastern states have reasonable claims against the world created under the hegemony of the West. This can be overcome only by proving that the post-American international order that Russia wants to build will bring them nothing but additional problems and threats.

Mykola Zamikula, PhD, is a Senior Research Fellow at the National Institute for Strategic Studies in Kyiv, Ukraine. He is also a First Deputy Director of the DLCO "Centre for International Security". His current scientific interests cover international relations in the Middle East and South Caucasus; security and foreign policies of the Republic of Türkiye, Israel, Iran and Saudi Arabia; the Syrian, Libyan and Karabakh conflicts.

ISRAEL AND THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE

Dr Yurii Latysh

*Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv,
Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to the consolidation of the Western world, which has imposed heavy sanctions against the aggressor and is supplying weapons to Ukraine. But in other regions of the world, support for Ukraine is not unequivocal. Often, aid for Ukraine comes down to declarations and humanitarian assistance. Israel is an ally of the US and the Western world, but its interests are centred in the Middle East, and determined by the protracted conflict with the Arab states and Iran. In Ukraine, the Israeli model seems attractive, but the pragmatic position of Israel during the Russian-Ukrainian war, based solely on national interests, disappoints the Ukrainian side.

Introduction

Israel occupies a key place in Ukraine's political discourse. The Ukrainian elite has great sympathy for Israeli politics, particularly in the field of security. Therefore, Israel's attitude to Russia's aggression against Ukraine is very important for Kyiv, which considers Israel's security policy to be a benchmark.

To the question of how he sees the future of Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy answered: "I think all our people will be our great army... we will definitely become a "big Israel" with its own face. We will not be surprised that we will have representatives of the Armed Forces or the National Guard in all institutions, supermarkets, cinemas,

there will be people with weapons"¹. Often the idea "Ukraine is the second Israel" is seen as a means of mobilising a type of economy, encouraging militarisation, and at the same time as a preservation of democracy, pluralism of opinions, overcoming of right and left radicalism². But today, it is most often with an expression of disappointment that Ukraine views the position of Israel.

Foreign Policy on a Powder Keg

In terms of foreign policy, Israel is, on the one hand, an ally of the US and part of the Western bloc, but on the other hand, this country positions itself as a regional power. According to Ambassador to Israel in Ukraine Michael Brodsky, Israel is a small, regional state, "therefore, our interests are

-
- 1 *For the Ukrainian state, the issue of security should be in the first place for the next ten years – the President*, "President of Ukraine. Official website", 05 April 2022 [<https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/dlya-ukrayinskoyi-derzhavi-pitannya-bezpeki-maye-but-na-per-74113>]
 - 2 *Алексей Арестович и посол Израиля в Украине Михаэль Бродский: Как Украине построить Израиль Восточной Европы (Oleksiy Arestovych and Israeli Ambassador to Ukraine Michael Brodsky: How Ukraine can build the Israel of Eastern Europe)*, "Khvyliya", 24 July 2022 [<https://hvylya.net/interview/256368-aleksey-arestovich-i-posol-izrailya-v-ukraine-mihael-brodskiy-kak-ukraine-postroit-izrail-vostochnoy-evropy>]

primarily in the Middle East... Israel is not a European country and not a superpower. Israel is a country with its own problems in the Middle East, which is sitting on a powder keg³. The key issue for Israel is Iran's nuclear programme. The United States is building an anti-Iran coalition in the Middle East, which includes the Arab monarchies of the Persian Gulf, Egypt and Israel.

The trauma of the Holocaust plays a big role in Israeli politics. Historian Yuval Noah Harari, who is ashamed of his country's policies during the Russian-Ukrainian war, believes that the lesson of the Holocaust in Israel is that during the tragedy no one came to the aid of the Jews, so in today's world, it is necessary to take care only of ourselves. First of all, in any situation, Israel must be guided only by its own interests and not have any obligations to anyone in the world⁴. The historian's opinion is confirmed by the words of ex-Prime Minister Naftali Bennett. "The suffering of the citizens of Ukraine is terrible. That is why we are working to help. But at the same time, I clearly understand that no one will fight for us. Not with Iran, not with Syria, not with Gaza. No one will intercede for Jews in trouble. Nowhere, anywhere in the world. We've already been through this. And learned that lesson"⁵.

In relations with Ukraine and Russia, Bennett aimed at maintaining friendly relations with both Kyiv and Moscow. The mosaic coalition,

which included the right-wing political parties, liberal-centrists, the left, the party oriented towards those who came from the former USSR Yisrael Beiteinu ("Israel Our Home"), and the United Arab List, had 61 seats against the opposition's 59. It is often difficult for the government to come to an agreement on many issues.



At the same time, Israel did not agree to supply weapons to Ukraine, and did not join the countries with sanctions against Russia. Israel does not have a law on sanctions and does not apply sanctions in its political actions

After the Russian aggression on February 24, Israel's official position was announced by Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, who called the Russian invasion "an attack that undermines the foundations of the world order"⁶. "Israel has been and will be on the right side of history. Those are our values. Our main ally was and will be the USA"⁷. Lapid also called helping the people of Ukraine a moral obligation, and promised to send emergency humanitarian aid. A field hospital was deployed in the Lviv region, and dozens of Israeli doctors went to Ukraine.

- 3 *Алексей Арестович и посол Израиля в Украине Михаэль Бродский: Как Украине построить Израиль Восточной Европы (Oleksiy Arestovych and Israeli Ambassador to Ukraine Michael Brodsky: How Ukraine can build the Israel of Eastern Europe)*, "Khvyliia", 24 July 2022 [<https://hvylya.net/interview/256368-aleksey-arestovich-i-posol-izrailiya-v-ukraine-mihael-brodskiy-kak-ukraine-postroit-izrail-vostochnoy-evropy>]
- 4 *Юваль Ной Харари про те, як війна в Україні змінить світ (Yuval Noah Harari on how the war in Ukraine will change the world)*, "Forbes Ukraine", 26 May 2022 [<https://forbes.ua/inside/putin-khotiv-zrobiti-rosiyu-velikoyu-a-zrobit-provintsieyu-kitayskoi-imperii-yuval-noy-kharari-pro-te-yak-viyna-v-ukraini-zminit-svit-26052022-6239>]
- 5 *Беннет: «Было проще всего вернуться во флаг Украины, но я выбрал другое» (Bennett: Wrapping up in the flag of Ukraine was easiest, but I chose something else)*, "Vesti. Israel in Russian", 29 July 2022 [<https://www.vesty.co.il/main/opinions/article/ry11efvb69>]
- 6 *Израиль осудил российское вторжение в Украину (Israel condemns Russian invasion of Ukraine)*, "Vesti. Israel in Russian", 24 February 2022 [<https://www.vesty.co.il/main/article/h1ptjane5>]
- 7 *Министр иностранных дел Израиля пообещал Украине поддержку в ООН (Israeli Foreign Minister promised Ukraine UN support)*, "Detali", 28 February 2022 [<https://detaly.co.il/ministr-inostrannyh-del-izrailiya-poobeshhal-ukraine-podderzhku-v-oon/>]

At the same time, Israel did not agree to supply weapons to Ukraine, and did not join the countries with sanctions against Russia. Israel does not have a law on sanctions and does not apply sanctions in its political actions. But also, as Michael Brodsky noted “Other than the grave of Rabbi Nachman of Uman, Israel has no strategic interests in Ukraine”⁸.



Taking a relatively neutral position, in March 2022, Israel attempted to mediate between Ukraine and Russia

Traditionally, Israelis are primarily interested in domestic policy and security issues. However, the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war roused considerable interest in Israel. According to the survey prepared by the Viterbi Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research of the Israel Democracy Institute in March 2022, more than 70% of Israelis followed the events of the war. 66.7% of respondents believed that Russia, led by Putin, was mainly responsible for the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Among Jews, this opinion was shared by 75.8%, among immigrants from the CIS – 69.3%, among Arabs – 26.6%. But only 22% agreed that “Israel should supply Ukraine with weapons and military equipment, not just humanitarian aid”⁹.

In March and June, the Russian-language website NEWSru.co.il conducted a survey among its readers about their attitude to the Russian-Ukrainian war. A total of 75% of respondents in June expressed their support for Ukraine (74% in March). In the same survey, 46% believed that Israel does not help Ukraine enough, and 39% that Israel should help Ukraine with weapons. Meanwhile, 47% of Israelis said that Israel should join in imposing sanctions against Russia (in March, 42% thought so), and 61% of respondents believed that Israel should accept refugees from Ukraine (four months ago, 57% thought so)¹⁰.

Bennett’s Peacekeeping Mission

Taking a relatively neutral position, in March 2022, Israel attempted to mediate between Ukraine and Russia. Ynet columnist Itamar Eichner reported that Prime Minister Bennett tried to mediate in response to an appeal by the leaders of Germany, France, and Ukraine¹¹. According to US Ambassador Tom Nides, the Biden administration is in “hourly contact” with the Israelis over Russia’s war against Ukraine. “The Prime Minister has not made a move without talking to the White House”¹².

On 3 March, Bennett said that the situation in Ukraine is rapidly deteriorating and called on world leaders to bring the warring parties back to the negotiating table. Referring to his own experience of participating in hostilities, the Israeli prime minister said

8 G. F. Cashman, *Ukraine Russia war likely to get worse before it gets better – Israeli diplomat*, “Jerusalem Post”, 07 July 2022 [https://www.jpost.com/international/article-711406]

9 *Survey on the Conflict Between Russia and Ukraine*, The Israel Democracy Institute, March 2022 [https://en.idi.org.il/media/17649/final-survey-on-the-conflict-between-russia-and-ukraine-march-2022-data.pdf]

10 *Итоги опроса NEWSru.co.il о войне в Украине: разочарование санкциями Запада, всё больше израильтян считают режим Путина угрозой (Results of the NEWSru.co.il poll on the war in Ukraine: disappointment with the sanctions of the West, more and more Israelis consider the Putin regime a threat)*, “NEWSru.co.il”, 21 June 2022 [https://www.newsru.co.il/israel/21jul2022/ukr_war_opros_itogi.html]

11 *Посредник Беннет. За кулисами тайного визита в Москву (Mediator Bennett. Behind the scenes of a secret visit to Moscow)*, “Vesti. Israel in Russian”, 6 March 2022 [https://www.vesty.co.il/main/article/T24XL9BFY]

12 T. Lazaroff, *US in ‘hourly contact’ with Israelis on Russia-Ukraine war, envoy says*, “Jerusalem Post”, 16 March 2022 [https://www.jpost.com/international/article-701406]

that it is very easy to start a war, but very difficult to end it. However, in this speech, he never mentioned Russia¹³.

On 5 March, Naftali Bennett made an emergency visit to Moscow during Shabbat (he observes religious orders and does not move on Saturdays), about which only three ministers in the Israeli government were informed. After that, he visited Berlin and held telephone talks with the presidents of France and Ukraine. However, the prime minister's mission was not successful. The president of Ukraine disappointedly said that he expected more from Israel. He said that he had seen footage of Jews standing near the Western Wall wrapped in Ukrainian flags, but he did not feel that the leadership of Israel was wrapped in Ukraine's flag¹⁴.

On 12 March 2022, a report carried by Israel's Walla news, the Jerusalem Post and the US news site Axios suggested, citing an unidentified Ukrainian official, that Bennett was pressuring the Ukrainian president to accept the Russian president's demands to end the war, and that Kyiv was upset with Israel's stance¹⁵. Both sides denied this information¹⁶. At the same time, there were reports of a diplomatic protest by Israel in response to criticism from the Ukrainian authorities, which also did not receive official

confirmation. "The Israeli reprimand of the Ukrainians, if it did occur, is outrageous: a nation is fighting for its life, and we are commenting on its manners,"¹⁷ Israeli journalist Amit Segal wrote on Twitter.

From the beginning, Bennett's mission had little chance of success. Russia emphasised that it did not need mediation and planned to impose a ceasefire on Ukraine on its own terms. Ukraine refused to sign such a capitulation. Replying to Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the former Israeli prime minister wrote: "I have often been reproached for not declaring an unequivocal position while wrapping myself in the Ukrainian flag. Yes, it is. I didn't say it. I am demonstrating an unequivocal position by wrapping myself in another flag – the Israeli flag"¹⁸.

Israel's Policy Towards Ukrainian Refugees and Returnees from Ukraine

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Israel announced an operation to save Ukrainian Jews, "Arvut Israel". According to Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked (Yamina), about 100,000 Jews "from Ukraine and CIS countries" can move to Israel and obtain citizenship under the Law of Return¹⁹. Regarding citizens of Ukraine who do not

13 Беннет призвал мировых лидеров вернуть Украину и Россию за стол переговоров (*Bennett urged world leaders to bring Ukraine and Russia back to the negotiating table*), "Vesti. Israel in Russian", 03 March 2022 [<https://www.vesty.co.il/main/article/bjnitbrxc>]

14 Зеленський не відчуває, що керівництво Ізраїлю "загорнуте в український прапор" (*Zelenskyy does not feel that Israel's leadership is "wrapped in the Ukrainian flag"*), "Ukrinform", 03 March 2022 [<https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-politics/3419291-zelenskij-ne-vidcuvae-so-kerivnictvo-izrailu-zagornute-v-ukrainskij-prapor.html>]

15 L. Harkov, *Ukrainian defense official: We appreciate Bennett's mediation*, "Jerusalem Post", 12 March 2022 [<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-701093>]


16 *Israel, Ukraine deny report Bennett recommended yielding to Russian demands*, "Jerusalem Post", 12 March 2022 [<https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/article-701064>]

17 E. Kener, *Амит Сегаль: выговоры Израиля Украине – рекорд наглости (Amit Segal: Israel's reprimand of Ukraine is outrageous)*, "7kanal", 08 March 2022 [<https://www.7kanal.co.il/News/News.aspx/237140>]

18 Беннет: «Было проще всего завернуться во флаг Украины, но я выбрал другое» (*Bennett: Wrapping up in the flag of Ukraine was easiest, but I chose something else*), "Vesti. Israel in Russian", 29 July 2022 [<https://www.vesty.co.il/main/opinions/article/ry11efvb69>]

19 Z. Klein, *Interior Minister Shaked announces new plan for Ukrainian refugees*, "Jerusalem Post", 14 March 2022 [<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-700687>]

have the right to repatriation, Israel had to create a policy, as it has no refugee law. On 1 March 2022, Israel allowed entry to Ukrainian tourists with first-degree relatives. For the rest, the host had to pay a deposit of 10,000 shekels and sign an undertaking that their guests would leave the country at the end of their residence permit. However, in a week, a new entry procedure was announced that de facto abolished the visa-free regime for tourist trips. Since then, Ukrainians have had to receive an invitation from an Israeli citizen and apply on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, to get permission to board a plane to Israel, but the 10,000-shekel deposit has been waived. Ayelet Shaked said that the Israeli government will allow Ukrainians with a relative in Israel into the country, and they will be able to stay “for a month or two to rest” and will have to sign a statement that they do not intend to remain. A separate quota will be established for Ukrainian refugees who do not have a relative in Israel²⁰.



After Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Israel announced an operation to save Ukrainian Jews, "Arvut Israel".

The Interior Minister announced that Israel is ready to temporarily accept 25,000 Ukrainians, and this quota includes 20,000 Ukrainian citizens who are already illegally

in Israel²¹. In addition, Israel decided not to expel Ukrainian illegals until the end of the war, and to extend the visas of Ukrainians who entered before February 24. According to the Ukrainian ambassador, as of June, 38,500 Ukrainians have entered Israel, of which about 13,000 have received Israeli passports. More than 14,000 Ukrainians have already left Israel²². Many Ukrainian citizens who have entered Israel as tourists, actually are refugees. The Interior Ministry extends their visas every month. Refugee “tourists” do not have official work permits. But the authorities have announced that they will not punish employers who hire Ukrainians who are in Israel for more than 90 days.

Not everyone in the Israeli government shared Shaked's position. The leftist parties Avodah and Meretz stood up for protection without limits of quotas, religion, or nationality. Diaspora Minister Nachman Shai (Avodah) said that the Jewish people should extend a helping hand to refugees and called the policy of the Interior Ministry shameful²³. The position of the Interior Ministry was criticised by the deputy from the United Arab List, Walid Taha. However, the Yamina coalition held its position, arguing that Israel is, first of all, a Jewish state, therefore, first of all, it should provide asylum to those who have the right to repatriation.

On 3 July 2022, the High Court of Justice (Bagatz) cancelled the decision of Ayelet Shaked to deprive Ukrainian citizens of the right to visa-free entry to Israel. The interior

20 Z. Klein, *Interior Minister Shaked announces new plan for Ukrainian refugees*, “Jerusalem Post”, 14 March 2022 [https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-700687]

21 E. Kener, *Шакед: Израиль готов принять 25 тысяч украинцев (Shaked: Israel ready to accept 25,000 Ukrainians)*, “7kanal”, 08 March 2022 [https://www.7kanal.co.il/News/News.aspx/237133]

22 E. Shleymovich, *Посол Украины: “Моя работа – рассказать, как много Израиль делает хорошего” (Ambassador of Ukraine: “My job is to tell how much good Israel does”)*, “Detali”, 16 June 2022 [https://detaly.co.il/posol-ukrainy-moya-rabota-rasskazat-kak-mnogo-izrail-delaet-horoshego/]

23 *Глава МВД Шакед против министра диаспоры Шая: «Он оклеветал государство Израиль» (Interior Minister Shaked vs. Diaspora Minister Shai: «He brings out the slander of the State of Israel»)*, “NEWSru.co.il”, 09 March 2022 [https://www.newsru.co.il/israel/09mar2022/shaked_705.html]

minister published a reaction to the Bagatz decision, saying that “one cannot accept the unlimited entry of foreign citizens into the country when it is not clear whether they intend to leave and, if so, when.” The Israel Minister of Tourism Yoel Razvozov (Yesh Atid), and Chairman of the Knesset Financial Commission Alex Kushnir (Yisrael Beiteinu) said they would not allow the abolition of the visa-free regime with Ukraine²⁴.

Ukraine’s Attempts to Change the Policy of Jerusalem

On 20 March 2022, the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, spoke online before members of the Knesset.²⁵ His speech was broadcast by the leading Israeli TV channels, and on a large screen he could be watched by the participants of the rally in support of Ukraine on the square in front of the Habima Theater in Tel Aviv, where thousands of Israelis and citizens of Ukraine were present. This address was preceded by a series of successful speeches before foreign parliaments, in which Volodymyr Zelenskyy skilfully used emotions and historical analogies. He often appealed to the citizens of one or another country to put pressure on their government to provide aid to Ukraine. Part of his speech consisted of accusations and reproaches against Israel, which did not introduce sanctions against Russia, does not supply weapons to Ukraine, and has created problems for Ukrainians entering the country. The president of Ukraine recalled the close historical ties between the Ukrainian and Jewish peoples, and also compared the Russian invasion

of Ukraine to the Holocaust, because both events threatened the total extermination of peoples.

However, the reaction of the Israeli society turned out not to be as expected in Kyiv. In Israel, the Holocaust is understood as an unprecedented event in human history. Comparing any other events to the Holocaust is considered a trivialisation or even a denial of the Shoah. Commentators saw in the words of the president of Ukraine about sanctions against Russia and the supply of weapons an accusation of indifference towards Israel. And in response, they put forward a considerable list of claims against Ukraine, including voting in the UN “against the interests of Israel”, a failure to recognise Hamas and Hezbollah as terrorist organisations, no willingness to move the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and maintaining a consulate in Ramallah²⁶. Some of the commentators even recalled a survey conducted at the end of 2021 in Ukraine by the Israeli embassy, when almost 54% replied that they do not support “either side” in the diplomatic conflict between Israel and Iran²⁷.

Criticism of Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s speech came from both government representatives and the opposition. Communications Minister Yoaz Handel and Religious Zionist Party leader Bezalel Smotrich, expressing solidarity with the Ukrainian people, said that comparisons of modern events with the Holocaust were outrageous. Likud deputy Yuval Steinitz went even further, recalling that many Ukrainians during

24 *Развозов и Кушнир выступили против Шaked, они требуют не отменять безвизовый режим с Украиной (Razvozov and Kushnir opposed Shaked, they demand not to cancel the visa-free regime with Ukraine)*, “NEWSru.co.il”, 04 July 2022 [https://www.newsru.co.il/israel/4jul2022/ua_il_110.html]

25 *Speech of President Zelenskyy for Knesset*, 30 March 2022 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSYMqkv5oIM]

26 L. Harkov, *Zelensky strikes the wrong note to bring Knesset to his side – analysis*, “Jerusalem Post”, 20 March 2022 [https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/politics-and-diplomacy/article-701850]; *Ukraine repeatedly votes against Israel in U.N. but is making demands*, “J-Wire”, 20 June 2022 [https://www.jwire.com.au/ukraine-repeatedly-votes-against-israel-in-u-n-but-is-making-demands/].


27 *Украинцы признались, что они думают об Израиле (Ukrainians admitted what they think about Israel)*, “Vesti. Israel in Russian”, 23 December 2021 [https://www.vesti.co.il/main/article/s1375vzsy]

World War II “enthusiastically helped the Nazis exterminate Jews by appropriating their property”²⁸. Representatives of the left and liberal parties refrained from criticizing the speech of the president of Ukraine. On 27 April, in a speech on the occasion of Holocaust Remembrance Day, Prime Minister Bennett said that “as the years go by, there is more and more discourse in the world that compares other difficult events to the Holocaust. But no. Even the most difficult wars today are not the Holocaust and are not comparable to the Holocaust.”²⁹. Undoubtedly, the Ukrainian president is among the intended targets of these words.

The Arab community in Israel reacted even more sharply to Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s speech. Arab commentators noted the pro-Israeli bias of the president of Ukraine. Palestinian member of the Knesset Ahmad Al-Tibi said in a tweet that “Zelenskyy’s speech was a Zionist one by excellence, hitting its bottom when he gave Israel the historical status of victim by quoting Golda Meir.”³⁰ Haifa University political science professor Asad Ghanem, expressed outrage at Russia’s desire to occupy Ukraine and assured that most Palestinians want Ukraine to win. But in his opinion, Zelenskyy, in his speech, reversed the roles of the occupier and the occupied – Israel and Palestine³¹.

The attempt to sway public opinion in Israel to the Ukrainian side, using the personal charisma of the president of Ukraine, a Jew by origin, and through historical

analogies, was not successful. Volodymyr Zelenskyy continues to sharply criticise the Israeli government. “Unfortunately, I have nothing to say about most of the items of the necessary assistance from Israel to Ukraine,”³² he told Hebrew University students in June. Ukraine’s ambassador to Israel Yevhen Korniyshuk, tries to put pressure on the Israeli government to obtain a supply of weapons, to impose sanctions against Russia, and to cancel restrictions on entry to Israel for Ukrainians. However, such tactics in Israel were not successful.



The attempt to sway public opinion in Israel to the Ukrainian side, using the personal charisma of the president of Ukraine, a Jew by origin, and through historical analogies, was not successful. Volodymyr Zelenskyy continues to sharply criticise the Israeli government

Another topic is Russia’s attempts to monopolise the narrative of victory in World War II, which Ukraine has tried to prevent. Ambassador Yevhen Korniyshuk appealed to the Israeli government with a request to change the date of the Victory Day over Nazism, which has been a public holiday in Israel since 2017, from May 9 to May 8. After consultations with Israeli veteran

28 *Министры о речи Зеленского: он – неблагодарный, сравнение с Холокостом возмутительно (Ministers about Zelenskyy’s speech: he is ungrateful, comparison with the Holocaust is outrageous)*, “Vesti. Israel in Russian”, 20 March 2022 [<https://www.vesti.co.il/main/article/h1gav1sf5>]

29 *PM Bennett’s Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day Speech at Yad Vashem*, Prime Minister’s Office, 27 April 2022 [https://www.gov.il/en/departments/news/event_yadvashem270422]

30 Q. Muaddi, Palestinian factions and MKs slam Zelenskyy’s speech before the Israeli Knesset, “New Arab”, 22 March 2022 [<https://english.alaraby.co.uk/news/palestinians-slam-zelenskyy-speech-knesset>]

31 A. Ghanem, *Dear President Zelensky, your support for Israel is a disgrace*, “Middle East Eye”, 22 March 2022 [<https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/russia-ukraine-war-israel-palestine-zelensky-support-disgrace>]

32 *Address by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to the community of major educational institutions of Israel*, “President of Ukraine. Official website”, 23 June 2022 [<https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/vistup-prezidenta-volodimira-zelenskogo-pered-spilnotoyu-pro-76009>]

organisations, instead of the traditional procession, a ceremony was held at the Mount Herzl military cemetery in Jerusalem, near the monument to the fallen Jewish soldiers who fought in the USSR army. The head of the Union of Veterans of World War II, 96-year-old Abraham Greenside, decided not to invite representatives of diplomatic missions³³.

Israel Before Snap Election: Discussions About Ukraine and Russia

In summer, the foreign policy line of Yair Lapid and Benny Gantz began to take shape in the government coalition, a line which began to prevail over Naftali Bennett's attempts to maintain an equidistant policy, which historian Yehuda Bauer compared to fence-sitting – both uncomfortable and causing moral damage³⁴. The representative of Israel took part in the international conference on the supply of weapons to Ukraine at the Ramstein base in April 2022. The minister of defence decided to provide Kyiv with protective gear for its rescue and emergency organisations³⁵.

Due to the prime minister Bennett's resignation in late June, Israel is holding a snap election on 1 November 2022. Up until the elections, the government is headed by Yair Lapid, who is considered one of the biggest sympathisers of Ukraine among Israeli politicians, and became an object of criticism from Russia. The growing influence of left-liberals may strengthen Israel's pro-Ukrainian position. Before US President Joe Biden's visit to Israel in July 2022, Benny Gantz announced that Israel's additional

aid to Ukraine includes 1,500 helmets, 1,500 protective vests, hundreds of mine protection suits, 1,000 gas masks and dozens of hazmat filtration systems for Ukraine's emergency services³⁶. However, it is not worth counting on Israel to start supplying weapons to Ukraine.



There are more and more problems in Russian-Israeli relations, fuelled by such cases as a scandal concerning the anti-Semitic words of Russian minister Sergey Lavrov, or Russia's claims to the Alexander Compound in Jerusalem, and Russia's attempts to close the Jewish Agency

There are more and more problems in Russian-Israeli relations, fuelled by such cases as a scandal concerning the anti-Semitic words of Russian minister Sergey Lavrov, or Russia's claims to the Alexander Compound in Jerusalem, and Russia's attempts to close the Jewish Agency. On 26 July, Netanyahu accused the prime minister and defence minister, his political rivals, of mismanaging Israel's relationship with Russia, amid growing tensions over Moscow's attempt to force the Jewish Agency from its borders. At a press conference, he said that for years "we have led a measured, balanced and responsible relationship" with Russia, but that there was currently "a dangerous crisis" and Prime Minister Yair Lapid and Defence

33 E. Mar'yash, *Праздник раздора: как в Израиле отмечают День Победы (Feast of Discord: how Israel celebrates Victory Day)*, "Detali", 29 April 2022 [<https://detaly.co.il/prazdnik-razdora-v-izraile-vse-taki-otmetyat-9-maya/>]

34 Y. Bauer, *The Russo-Ukrainian War Through a Historian's Eyes*, "Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs", 2022, p. 4 [<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/23739770.2022.2056376?needAccess=true> access: 28 July 2022]

35 E. Fabian, *In policy shift, Israel to send flak jackets and helmets to Ukraine*, "Times of Israel", 20 April 2022 [<https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-policy-shift-israel-to-send-flak-jackets-and-helmets-to-ukraine/>]

36 Gantz approves shipment of Israeli protective gear aid to Ukrainian civilians, "Jerusalem Post", 12 July 2022 [<https://www.jpost.com/international/article-711875>]

Minister Benny Gantz were “babbling” and “endangering our national security”³⁷. However, issues of relations with Ukraine and Russia are unlikely to affect the election results.



Ukraine has not yet managed to change the position of Israel, which is highly immune to international pressure. Disregarding who becomes the prime minister of Israel in November, one should hardly expect changes in policy apropos the Russian-Ukrainian war

The results of the snap election are still difficult to predict. Likud will obviously take first place, and Yesh Atid – the second. Third place will go to a coalition led by Benny Gantz. Benjamin Netanyahu wants to create a coalition of right-wing parties based on Likud, with the participation of the political parties of Orthodox Jews and religious Zionists. Since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the opposition leader has not taken a public position for a long time. If he wins, Israel will take a position of neutrality in the Russian-Ukrainian war. A victory for Lapid and Gantz leaves little chance for Israel to take a pro-Ukrainian position.

Conclusion

Israel considers itself a regional power whose interests are in the Middle East, where the situation is currently tense. Israelis mostly support their government’s policy regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war – condemning aggression, providing humanitarian aid, but not weapons, with the exception of the actual cancellation of the visa-free regime for Ukrainians.

Ukraine has not yet managed to change the position of Israel, which is highly immune to international pressure. Disregarding who becomes the prime minister of Israel in November, one should hardly expect changes in policy apropos the Russian-Ukrainian war. Israel will be guided not by values, but by its own interests, and building an anti-Iran coalition will be at the centre of its policy.

Yurii Latysh, Ph.D. in History (2007 Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv); Associated Professor of Faculty of History at the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv; Visiting Researcher at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Author of more than 100 academic articles. Research Interests: Memory Studies, Historiography, History of Ukraine, Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies.

37 Keller-Lynn C. *Netanyahu blames PM for Russia ‘crisis’; Lapid: You haven’t bothered to get updates*, “Times of Israel”, 26 July 2022 [<https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-blames-pm-for-russia-crisis-lapid-you-havent-bothered-to-get-updates/>]

HOW DOES THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR CHANGE ASIAN GEOPOLITICS?

Alina Hrytsenko

National Institute for Strategic Studies

Russia's war against Ukraine is one of the most significant political events of the decade. The reason for this is the impact of this confrontation, which is not confined to Europe, but affects Asia as well. The war will echo in other regions of the world, including the Indo-Pacific, particularly the part in Asia. The key actors who will have a major impact in this part of the world are China, India, and Japan. Each of them has taken its own position regarding the war and Russia. At the same time, each of them pursues its own national interests and geopolitical ambitions.

Introduction

The ongoing war in Ukraine, along with sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation, delivers a major shock to the world. This war has led to skyrocketing prices for food, fuel and fertilisers, since Russia is one of the main suppliers of these products to world markets and Ukraine is one of the largest grain exporters. However, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has not only economic, but also geopolitical consequences. The ripple effects of this war are spreading across the world, and already hitting East Asia's geopolitical environment.

India's Pragmatic Neutrality

With the outbreak of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, India officially remained neutral. On the one hand, the country does not support Russian aggression openly, and calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities and resolution of the conflict via diplomatic

means. On the other hand, India avoids open criticism of Russia's actions, and refuses to join Western sanctions or to impose its own. Such a neutral position provoked a negative reaction from the West.

New Delhi has been carefully using the language of 'national interest', to offset criticism. India's foreign minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar stated in Parliament that "India's approach should be guided by our national beliefs and values, by our national interest and by a national strategy", and that India's actions are driven by "legitimate pursuits of national interest"¹.

India's foreign policy is based on the idea of "strategic autonomy". From the first days of independence from the British Empire, India has managed to maintain an independent foreign policy course, in fact, playing the role of a "swing power". It is important for India to maintain this policy, the essence of which is in preventing the monopolisation of global

1 External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar's statement during reply on discussion under Rule 193 on the Situation in Ukraine in the Parliament, Ministry of External Affairs of India, 6 April 2022 [https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/35159/External_Affairs_Minister_Dr_S_Jaishankars_statement_during_reply_on_discussion_under_Rule_193_on_the_Situation_in_Ukraine_in_the_Parliament]


political and economic influence by one actor, including in multilateral institutions. This policy is key for India, both in the regional context (preventing the excessive strengthening of China, the development of a multipolar Asia, the policy of balancing between major powers), and in the global context (creating a multipolar world order with a fairer and more equal distribution of influence among the actors).

India's position on Ukraine is also a product of global balance of power considerations. The Russian-Ukrainian war led to an escalation of the confrontation between the US and China, which threatens India's "strategic autonomy." Such autonomy is not just a way to assert its own freedom of choice in foreign policy, but also a means of avoiding an asymmetric alliance with the United States. Reluctance to follow the role of a "minor partner" of the US, drawn into a global confrontation, is also one of the motives for India's neutrality, which New Delhi will continue to maintain. In addition, India, like many other countries in Asia, is preparing for the inevitable transition from a unipolar American world order to a multipolar, post-American and mainly "Asian" one, especially after the US has taken a course to reduce gradually its global involvement in some regional affairs, to concentrate on internal problems, specifically after their strategic withdrawal from Afghanistan. That will possibly lead to the potential rise of a China-led regional order in Asia, which does not correspond to India's geopolitical ambitions.

Therefore, India cannot support the West, since it wants to avoid a major conflict with China due to political and ideological polarisation. For New Delhi, the rapid escalation that can occur as a result of an unprecedented increase in international tension (which is exactly what is happening, in their opinion, against the background of the war in Ukraine) does not meet their interests, given the asymmetry in the balance of power between India and China

in favour of Beijing. Moreover, a potential diplomatic conflict with China would increase the risk of an armed escalation in the disputed border areas of Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh.

Considering the "Kashmiri" issue, the Russian-Ukrainian war creates a potentially dangerous precedent for India. The declaration of independence of the separatist pseudo-republics of "DPR" and "LPR", its recognition by Russia and the full-scale invasion in February 2022 set a negative example for India, which has territorial disputes with neighbouring countries. Particularly, Pakistan actively supports anti-Indian separatists within India-controlled Kashmir, which could potentially lead to an outbreak of anti-government protests.



India's position on Ukraine is also a product of global balance of power considerations. The Russian-Ukrainian war led to an escalation of the confrontation between the US and China, which threatens India's "strategic autonomy"

For all the above-mentioned reasons, India will maintain the regional status quo and balance of power in South Asia. It also claims to be one of the great powers with its sphere of influence. Therefore, it consistently supports the idea of a multipolar world order, where China and India are commensurate powers. In this regard, the main goal of New Delhi is Beijing's recognition of India as one of the poles of power in Asia, having an exclusive sphere of interest in the Indian Ocean and South and Southeast Asia.

India will continue its cooperation with Russia, dismissing all the criticism. Firstly, there is a political reason for that. Russia keeps on weakening and deteriorating.


Increasing sanctions pressure, and isolation by Western countries is pushing Moscow closer to China. Russia risks becoming a Chinese asset in its confrontation with the West, and risks deepening its dependence on Beijing. Russia becoming China's "junior partner" is not in line with New Delhi's geostrategic calculations. Moreover, this will likely entail the geopolitical axis "Moscow-Beijing-Islamabad". Both China and Pakistan want closer ties with Russia. China and Pakistan are considered immediate and enduring threats. Preserving friendly relations with Moscow will help to prevent deepening Russian ties with China, and to limit the Russian temptation to build new strategic ties with Pakistan.

The Russian-Ukrainian war intensifies militarisation within the Indo-Pacific, which concerns India as well. In 2017-2021, India was one of the world's largest weapons importers, accounting for 11% of the global market, on a par with Saudi Arabia². However, much of India's military equipment is still Soviet- or Russian-made. India accounts for almost a third of all Russian arms exports. In 2016-2020, Russia supplied India with arms worth a total of USD 6.6 billion³.

Due to the war in Ukraine, the military cooperation between India and Russia is at risk. In particular, India expects delivery of Russian C-400 air defence systems for their further deployment along the "Line of Actual Control" with China. However, due to logistical problems and Western sanctions, the agreement about weapons supply has come under question.

On the other hand, this situation also provides opportunities for India. The

war and Western sanctions give the Indian authorities the chance not only to partially refocus on other partners, thus to strengthen regional cooperation, but also to invest more resources in their own arms industry, especially since this idea can now be supported by the United States. In particular, Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said⁴ that he offered the American investors the chance to support "Make in India", and to expand joint production of defence products.



Considering the "Kashmiri" issue, the Russian-Ukrainian war creates a potentially dangerous precedent for India. The declaration of independence of the separatist pseudo-republics of "DPR" and "LPR", its recognition by Russia and the full-scale invasion in February 2022 set a negative example for India, which has territorial disputes with neighbouring countries

The war in Ukraine and Western sanctions have made energy import problematic. The share of Russian oil in India's imports used to be small – only 2-3%. The largest suppliers of oil to India are the countries of the Middle East and the USA. Western sanctions compelled Russia to increase the sale of energy to Asian markets with a significant discount, and that is what India, which is 80% dependent on energy import, is interested in. At the same time, this situation allowed the Indian government to launch national projects aimed at increasing

2 SIPRI Yearbook 2022, SIPRI [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/yb22_summary_en_v3.pdf]

3 Ibid

4 Rajnath invites US defence companies to carry out joint R&D, manufacturing & maintenance in India, "New India Express", 21 April 2022 [<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/apr/21/rajnath-invites-us-defence-companies-to-carry-out-joint-rd-manufacturing--maintenance-in-india-2444758.html>]

its own production, including through attracting Western capital. Taking advantage of the world crisis and the desire of the USA to drag India to its side, New Delhi offers the West assistance in finding alternative (preferably inexpensive) options.

In the medium-to-long term, Russia's war on Ukraine deepens the division between the West and the East, both politically and ideologically, as well as concerning the future of the world financial system. Sanctions introduced against Russia triggered discussions about the gradual "de-dollarisation", the development of alternative payment systems, better protected from the monopoly of specific states, with a more active role for non-Western countries and institutions. India, as an active member of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, can enhance its role in reforming the international financial and economic system based on the Bretton Woods agreement. The key goal in this regard will be establishing a system of reserve currencies, increasing the role of national currencies, and the creation of parallel non-western financial institutions. Russia has already offered India the opportunity to use a payment system alternative to SWIFT.

India-China relations are going to be the key dilemma for the future of Asian geopolitics. On 25 March, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited India, for the first time in two years, after skirmishes at the Sino-Indian border in 2020. During the negotiations with his Indian counterpart, the Chinese minister emphasised that China and India are the two oldest world civilizations, the two centres of power, which promote multipolarity as the basis for world order, economic globalisation, civilizational diversity and the democratisation of international relations. Wang Yi called for the strengthening of bilateral communication and coordinating

positions, to protect the interests of both sides. Importantly, he also called for a resolution of the border dispute "which should not affect the overall development of bilateral relations". China seems to have seen India's neutral stance on the Russian-Ukrainian war as evidence of differences between India and the West (USA) and probably saw this as an opportunity to win over India to its side. In New Delhi, this visit was considered as an opportunity to maintain communication.

India is seeking to establish strategic relations with many countries in the Indo-Pacific region, which are also alarmed by China's rise. Particularly, the USA, Japan, Australia, and Singapore. It is betting on the regional "maritime democracies". India's relations with these states can be described as a "soft balancing" strategy. It implies that these relations are not aimed at creating an anti-Chinese (military) union, but at finding political allies. At the same time, India is increasing its presence in the Indo-Pacific, and is designing comprehensive security architecture in the region.

For India, the Russian-Ukrainian war is an opportunity to display leadership, while maintaining "strategic autonomy" in its foreign policy. This significantly increases the prestige of New Delhi among minor neighbouring countries. In addition, the war has had a significant impact on the economy, energy and food security of Asian countries, including India. Finally, the crisis in Sri Lanka was aggravated by the Russian-Ukrainian war, because of fuel price increases, although in fact, a complex series of factors caused the Sri Lankan crisis. India is quite actively involved in the settlement of the crisis, supplying Colombo with financial and humanitarian assistance. This will also positively influence the significance of Delhi as a regional leader.


China's Antagonism

The Russian-Ukrainian war has produced both negative and positive effects for China's international stance. Firstly, it created an extremely toxic situation that has threatened Beijing's reputation and economic stability. Secondly, Western sanctions and Russia's isolation have had an impact on China's grand project "One Belt, One Road", in which Beijing has already invested more than USD 4 trillion and received USD 2 trillion in 2021⁵. Many transportation routes that ran through Russian territory are no longer in use. Because of the breakdown in logistics chains, China is forced to invest more in alternative routes, such as those through Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey. Alternative routes and reorientation to maritime trade, which is more dependent on other countries, including America's partners, and is also partially dependent on Russian seaports, are not easy options.

The war has enabled the United States, China's main rival, to consolidate alliances in Europe and Asia. The US has also increased its influence on pro-American elite groups in various countries, and attempted to win over those states Washington requires in its efforts to assemble a new global anti-China coalition, but which tried to maintain balance and neutrality. This is especially true of states such as Germany, France, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Israel, Singapore, and Pakistan. Singapore became the first Southeast Asian country to join Western sanctions against Russia. In Pakistan, the conflict between pro-Western and pro-Chinese elites heated up, resulting in a severe political crisis that ended on 10 April with the resignation of pro-Chinese Prime Minister Imran Khan.

One of the examples of the impact on industries is neon. The war hampered the export from Ukraine of neon, which is an

important component in the production of semiconductors, a huge industry in China. As a result, long-term disruptions in supplies of neon, which was previously delivered by sea, may have an impact on the Chinese semiconductor manufacturing sector's competitiveness.




However, the war in Ukraine has also created significant opportunities for China. Firstly, the weakening of Russia brings it closer to the status of China's "junior partner" in regional and world affairs, which has long been a preferred format for Beijing, rather than the emergence of a powerful regional state capable of challenging not only the West, but also the Celestial Empire

The Russian-Ukrainian war is causing major problems for China's food security. Although Beijing has increased its strategic reserves in recent years, Russia's invasion of Ukraine poses serious challenges for China in this regard in the medium to long term. It is currently difficult to find alternative delivery routes. The reorientation of grain imports only to Russia is not in China's plans, which were aimed at diversifying supplies, rather than them being monopolised by one actor. Other major suppliers of food are mostly the USA and its allies (Australia, France, Canada, Germany, and Poland), on whom Beijing does not want to become dependent in such a critical issue. The neutral players such as Argentina and Kazakhstan also remain an option, but their capabilities are limited, and they will not be able to replace completely the loss of Ukrainian and Russian imports. Therefore, it is very important for China that the war be resolved as soon as possible, preferably

5 *The Belt and Road Initiative* [<https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/the-belt-and-road-initiative.html>]

with the opening of the Black Sea ports and the restoration of grain supplies within the next 1-2 years.

However, the war in Ukraine has also created significant opportunities for China. Firstly, the weakening of Russia brings it closer to the status of China's "junior partner" in regional and world affairs, which has long been a preferred format for Beijing, rather than the emergence of a powerful regional state capable of challenging not only the West, but also the Celestial Empire. Therefore, China needs a Russia that will be sufficiently amenable to Beijing's external influence. Russia not as a global power, but as a regional player, a supplier of raw materials and a situational partner on regional security (Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Black Sea, the Middle East and North Africa).



***sanctions against the
Russian defence complex
give China the opportunity
to replace Russia as a major arms
exporter in the world market***

Secondly, the war forced the West to react, and thus revealed the tools of their pressure and influence, including in trade, economic, financial and technological spheres. Western sanctions showed China what it should prepare for in case of a further confrontation with the US. China is likely to use the experience of Russia's war in Ukraine as an opportunity to improve its planning for a possible conflict over Taiwan.

Western sanctions against Russia have also allowed assessment of the level and depth of Washington's and their allies' control over the international financial system. The sanctions, although justified by many states, demonstrated the vulnerability of most countries to a US-dominated dollar system,

especially with the arrest of the Central Bank of Russia dollar reserves. The same applies to foreign trade. China will use the current crisis to push the issue of creating protected bilateral trade systems, converting this into national currencies, persuading other countries to increase the share of their gold and foreign exchange reserves in yuan, as Russia has done in the past few years.

The war in Ukraine potentially aggravates the socio-economic situation in different regions due to rising inflation, as well as increasing prices for essential goods, food and energy. Sanctions exacerbate these problems, therefore creating opportunities for China to increase its influence, and even give more room for manoeuvre, since the countries that have joined the sanctions will not want to enter into a confrontation with China as well.

Fourthly, the war has deepened the split between the West and all other countries, especially those that are tired of Western institutions' dominance in the world order. For China, it is a chance to consolidate their influence over countries not under pressure exerted by Washington, or those which do not want to follow the path of the West, such as the countries of the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia.

Finally, sanctions against the Russian defence complex give China the opportunity to replace Russia as a major arms exporter in the world market. China benefits from a slight weakening of Russia, which will give it the opportunity to expand its sales due to the Western isolation of Russia, as well as to strengthen its economic presence in Russia (e.g., replace Visa and Mastercard with UnionPay), and make Moscow more dependent on Beijing.

The US is still going to be China's main global rival for decades to come, but Beijing is not yet ready for a head-on confrontation with Washington, and intends to strike a balance

between cooperation and rivalry in the future. This was demonstrated by Xi Jinping's actual proposal during the negotiations with Joe Biden to take a break and reach interim agreements regarding a bipolar American-Chinese world order. China views the war in Ukraine as a part of the global confrontation between the conventional "West" (Europe, North America, and Oceania) and "East" (the Greater Middle East and Asia). For China, this process is more an element of inevitable global developments that should cause a collision between the interests of the West, which is losing unconditional initiative on the world stage, and the Global South (not only Asia and Oceania, but Latin America and Africa), which wants to play a more active role in the international system.



a tough anti-Russian stance should first confirm Japan's reputation as a champion of liberal values, such as democracy, human rights, and a market economy. In addition, the move was to demonstrate that Japan is ready to cooperate actively in the international arena, independently choosing which side of the conflict to join

The war has also heightened tensions between China and some of its neighbours. As the rivalry between Washington and Beijing has intensified, many East Asian nations have adopted hedging strategies, to balance ties to both powers. But the conflict in Ukraine has driven some of these countries to lean more heavily towards the United States⁶. China's attempts to consolidate its relations with friendly countries and expand its influence

over small states – as demonstrated by Foreign Minister Wang Yi's Pacific Islands tour – have not been successful. This creates a major problem for China in a geopolitical confrontation with the United States. Thus, Beijing, in its effort to reshape the international relations system will have to resort to reconciliation with the US.

Japan's Bifurcation

Japan has taken a more unequivocal position than India and China regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war. Tokyo stood shoulder to shoulder with the G7 and joined Western sanctions against Russia. It can be mistakenly assumed that Japan stood up for Ukraine as a sign of its solidarity with the West, because it does not betray its foreign policy traditions and follows in the wake of its partner, the USA. However, in reality, a tough anti-Russian stance should first confirm Japan's reputation as a champion of liberal values, such as democracy, human rights, and a market economy. In addition, the move was to demonstrate that Japan is ready to cooperate actively in the international arena, independently choosing which side of the conflict to join.

Russia is added to the list of countries that pose a threat to Japan's national security. A clear anti-Russian position eliminates the vague prospect of the conclusion of a peace agreement between the two countries following the outcome of World War II. The former Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe planned to resolve the issue of the status and affiliation of the Kuril Islands through this agreement. Prime Minister Kishida said that Abe's conciliatory position towards the Russian president has not yielded results for Japan. Later, during the parliamentary debate, speaking about the status of the Kuril Islands, Japanese Foreign Minister

6 Y. Xuetong, *China's Ukraine Conundrum*, "Foreign Affairs", 2 May 2022
[<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2022-05-02/chinas-ukraine-conundrum>]

Yoshimasa Hayashi called the southern part of the islands (Kunashir, Iturup, Hamobai, and Shikotan) an “integral part of Japan”⁷. Later, the director of the European Affairs Department of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hideki Uyama directly said that the Southern Kuriles are occupied by Russia⁸. On 21 March, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation published a statement, proclaiming its refusal to negotiate over the Kuril Islands and conclude a peace agreement⁹. However, Moscow placed all the blame for the rapid deterioration of bilateral relations on Tokyo. Therefore, since the Russian side has frozen the negotiations, Japan and Russia are formally at war again. As a result, the Russian-Ukrainian war clearly led to the deterioration of Russian-Japanese relations, making Russia a potential threat to Japanese national security.

At the same time, Japan does not reject bilateral cooperation completely. Energy and fisheries will remain fully functioning spheres of agreement between Japan and Russia. Dependence on Middle Eastern energy suppliers (almost 90% of Japanese energy imports come from the Persian Gulf countries) is a major concern for Tokyo, as the shipping route runs through the South China Sea. Beijing’s control over the South China Sea will mean further expansion of its political and economic influence, as well as increased energy independence, which will further strengthen China’s influence over neighbouring countries. Because of this, the security of energy supplies to Japan, and

consequently, the energy security of Japan will be under serious threat. For this reason, Tokyo is trying to reduce their dependence on Middle Eastern countries and diversify their sources of supply. One of the alternative options is Russia. The Japanese government is striving to maintain the share of Japanese companies in the Sakhalin-2 project. Thus, if in the field of economic cooperation, one should expect a significant worsening of relations, the development of energy cooperation fully coincides with the national interests of Japan.

In the short term, the loss of the Russian market will have a negative, but not critical, effect on the Japanese economy. Most importantly, the aggravation of relations with Russia will provide a strong incentive for the final review of Japan’s role both in the region and in the world, as well as for changing its defence system. Japan will more confidently follow the path of regaining its status as a fully sovereign state with a full-fledged army. Prime Minister of Japan Fumio Kishida has already made several important statements, namely concerning the need to strengthen significantly the country’s defence capabilities¹⁰. Before that, Tokyo used the North Korean nuclear missile program as well as China’s active activities in the East and South China Seas, as a justification for increasing and strengthening its defence potential.

In the face of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and an increasingly tense situation in Asia with missile tests from North Korea and a

-
- 7 Япония назвала южные Курильские острова “незаконно оккупированными” (*Japan called the southern Kuril Islands “illegally occupied”*), “Voice of America”, 22 April 2022 [<https://www.golosameriki.com/a/japan-russia-islands/6540456.html>]
 - 8 I. Reynolds, *How Ukraine War Fuels Japan’s Island Feud With Russia*, Bloomberg, 03 March 2022 [<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-03/how-ukraine-war-fuels-japan-s-island-feud-with-russia-quicktake>]
 - 9 *Заявление МИД России об ответных мерах на решения Правительства Японии (Foreign Ministry statement on measures in response to the decisions of the Government of Japan)*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 21 March 2022 [https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1805541/]
 - 10 *Kishida Vows to Strengthen Defense Capabilities*, “Nippon”, 26 May 2022 [<https://www.nippon.com/en/news/yjj2022052600142/>]

more assertive China, the Liberal Democratic Party recently proposed raising the defence budget, which has long hovered around 1% of gross domestic product, to around 2% of GDP within five years. Spending proposals include funding for weapons to destroy enemy missile bases and their command-and-control centres if an attack on Japan appears imminent. A budget plan for next year and a new national security strategy are due later this year. The push for 2% conforms to NATO's defence spending goals, and is undoubtedly part of Kishida's larger vision of a bolstered Japan-NATO relationship. There is also an intensifying debate among Japanese lawmakers on whether Japan should acquire weapons capable of striking missile launch sites in enemy territory. The moves demonstrate Japan's recognition that it must bolster its own deterrent power, rather than simply rely on its alliance with the United States, to protect it or its interests in Asia.



The Russian-Ukrainian war has changed public opinion in Japan regarding security issues. Now that the majority of lawmakers in the Japanese Diet are in favour of constitutional reform, which will imply the abolition of the 9th “pacifist” article

This will contribute to Japan's more confident cooperation with “like-minded” nations, gradually moving away from the asymmetrical alliance with the US, although officially recognising it as a key player for stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, Japan will do so with

the states which are geopolitically on the same level as Japan, among the US allies: Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and the UK. For example, in May 2022, a meeting between Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and his British counterpart Boris Johnson took place in London. During the visit, the parties reached an “agreement in principle” on a bilateral defence pact. In particular, it concerns conducting joint exercises between the Royal Armed Forces and the Japan Self-Defence Forces, as well as the Future Combat Air System Program and military-technical cooperation¹¹.

The Russian-Ukrainian war will definitely contribute to more active work by Japan in strengthening its international status. This is also confirmed by Kishida's proposal during the congress of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party of Japan to join the process of reforming the UN Security Council, due to Russia's aggressive actions, implying, in addition to limiting the right of veto, that Japan should take the place of one of the permanent members of the Security Council.

The Russian-Ukrainian war has changed public opinion in Japan regarding security issues. Now that the majority of lawmakers in the Japanese Diet are in favour of constitutional reform, which will imply the abolition of the 9th “pacifist” article, the likelihood of success of this reform is increasing. That means that Japan will begin to develop a full-fledged offensive potential in a relatively short time. This confluence of events gives Kishida a challenge – and an opportunity – to connect the public's concerns about potential conflicts nearby and support for increased spending in the aggregate, to more specific policies that would give Japan a broader set of tools to

11 *Japan and U.K. agree on defense pact amid China's rise in Indo-Pacific*, “Japan Times”, 06 May 2022
[<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/05/06/national/uk-japan-defense/>]

ensure its security in the future¹². If he succeeds, it will truly mark a new era for Japanese defence and security policy.

Conclusion

Overall, Russia's attack on Ukraine has launched the process of reorganisation of the geopolitical situation in Asia.

Japan will continue to build up its defence capabilities. Given the new policy towards South Korea, which is aimed at ameliorating bilateral relations, the process of strengthening the Japanese defence potential will be progressive, so as not to risk facing criticism from the South Korean authorities. However, criticism will inevitably follow from China, which will perceive such actions by Japan as revanchist, and as an attempt to revive militarism.

Japan and China are on opposing sides. Japan openly supports the West and the United States, China's main geopolitical rival. It can be assumed that relations between China and Japan will deteriorate as Japan fulfils its geopolitical ambitions. The territorial dispute in the East China Sea and the ongoing Japan-Taiwan interaction will be additional reasons for that.

Japan will also become stronger politically, thanks to allies who are united by a common goal – to contain the growing power of the Celestial Empire. One of these is India. India, as well as Japan, will seek

to further strengthen its political potential and influence, not least through the strengthening of the armed forces. Potential negotiations to resolve the border dispute should not give false hopes for a thaw in India-China relations. Since the border war in 1962, little has changed in New Delhi's perception of Beijing; India continues to be highly suspicious and distrustful of China.

Recently, China has been extremely active in trying to rally potential allies around itself, both in Southeast Asia and in Oceania, to consolidate the countries of the Global South and create a kind of counterbalance to Western alliances and blocs, such as QUAD. However, due to the specific foreign policy caused by the equidistance of other countries, no one or few people are ready for a sincere alliance with China. Instead, less influential states on the international stage prefer to have stable relations with both China and the West. This chain of events somewhat weakens China as a major power.

Alina Hrytsenko is a senior consultant at the National Institute for Strategic Studies. PhD candidate at the National Institute for Strategic Studies. MA in International Relations from Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (Institute of International Relations). Civil servant at the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine (2018-2020) Research interests: national security and foreign policy analysis, international security, Indo-Pacific international relations.

12 C. Kafura, *Does the Russia-Ukraine War Herald a New Era for Japan's Security Policy?* "The Diplomat", 16 May 2022 [<https://thediplomat.com/2022/05/does-the-russia-ukraine-war-herald-a-new-era-for-japans-security-policy/>]

ASIAN NEUTRALISM, SECURITY, AND THE UKRAINIAN FACTOR

Dr Ihor Lossovskiy

*Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Envoy
of Ukraine of the First Class*

This article deals with the phenomenon of political neutralism in the Asia-Pacific. It focuses on the concepts of fighting for peace, international cooperation, and struggles against the threat of war. It is designed to ensure mutual respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations; non-aggression; non-interference in others' internal affairs; equality and mutual benefits; and peaceful coexistence. The Western presence and the Cold War confrontation persuaded the SEA states to pursue a policy of sub-regional integration, non-alignment, and neutralism. The organisational configuration of this subregional consolidation is to be found in ASEAN. The attitude of the countries of SEA, India and China to Russia's aggression against Ukraine is considered. The position of these countries corresponds to the principles of neutrality.

The Asia-Pacific as the Homeland of Foreign Policy Concepts of “Neutralism” and “Non-alignment”

Neutralism and non-alignment are associated with the name of the first prime minister of independent India, J. Nehru (1889-1964). He introduced the “geopolitical code” of India, which descended from the ancient traditions of the Indo-Buddhist civilisation. This code included a policy of “*positive neutrality*”, aimed at fighting for peace, international cooperation, and against the threat of war. It suggested five main principles of international relations: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; mutual non-aggression; non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence. On the basis of these principles, following India's initiative, a broad international “*Non-Aligned Movement*” was established. In Delhi, international conferences were held in 1947 and 1949, with the aim of creating a united front of Asian states, including former

colonies, in countering the dominance in international politics of the countries of the West and the USSR. However, already at this stage, serious disagreements arose on a number of issues. Several countries took a “neutral” position or were more aligned with the communist bloc, – while others were more pro-Western. Thus, already in the early 1950s, the united front of neutral Asian states began to fall apart.

By 1955, the leaders of the Asian states still supported the initiative to create the Non-Aligned Movement, and develop a common international position for Asian and African countries. The same year, an international conference was held in Indonesia, declaring the creation of the “*Non-Aligned Movement*” and the “*Asian and African Solidarity Movement*”. At the Conference, a new term was born, “third world”, in relation to countries that declared that they were “not for capitalism and not for communism.” The ideas of non-alignment and neutralism outlived Nehru, but after his death, India lost

its leading role in this movement¹. The ideas of neutralism and non-alignment continued to exist, finding full implementation mainly in the countries of the “third world” in Asia and Africa. In Europe, these ideas were not implemented due to the clear division between the two opposite camps of the Cold War. The traditional neutrality of Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland is not relevant here, and can be considered as an exception to the rule.

Non-Alignment Shifts to Southeast Asia

The wide political and military presence of Western countries in the Asia-Pacific, the expansionist policies of China and the USSR, as well as manifestations of confrontation between the two Cold War blocs in the region, persuaded the states of Southeast Asia (SEA) to adopt a policy of integration, non-alignment, and neutralism. That was marked by the creation in 1967 of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which initially included five countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines). The main ideological core was the idea of “Asian neutralism” and anti-communism. At the same time, neutralism did not exclude individual defence agreements with external states, or the modernisation and build-up of their own armed forces; however, it was directed against the active military-political interference of external states, primarily the US, USSR and PRC, as well as attempts by the latter to involve SEA countries in

their conflicts. Although the results in the military-political dimensions of ASEAN were still quite modest, the merits in this area were mainly in the creation of a political community to promote the concept of neutralism², as well as the creation of a “security community” in SEA³.

The initiative of sub-regional consolidation and neutralism came from Malaysia, which was aware of pressure from the great powers, primarily from China, which supported the communist resistance within the country, as well as from former metropolis): Great Britain and the US. While the first prime minister of independent Malaysia A. Rahman (1957-1969) pursued a clear pro-Western anti-communist policy and rejected the idea of “non-alignment” (until 1965 Singapore was part of the Federation of Malaysia), the second prime minister, A. Razak (1970-1976) put emphasis on regionalism and “non-alignment”. In 1970, the country became a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, calling for the neutrality of SEA for the first time⁴.

After the end of the Vietnam War and the withdrawal of American troops from the region, there was a need to rethink the security strategy and create a neutral SEA. In November, 1971, at the ASEAN Meeting in Kuala Lumpur, a new non-military approach to regional security was proclaimed, the concept of the *Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZFPN)*⁵. Its implementation was intended to fill the security vacuum in the subregion. After five more countries joined

1 R. Mukhaev, Геополитика (*Geopolitics*), Unity Dana, 2007, p. 623.

2 V. Kulagin, Современная международная безопасность (*Modern International Security*), KnoRus, 2012, p. 432.

3 A. Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the problem of regional order*, Routledge, 2009, p. 322.

4 I. Lossovskiy, *Международная политика стран АСЕАН второй половины 20-го – 1-го десятилетия 21-го столетий (International Politics of the ASEAN countries of the second half of the 20th century and first decade of the 21st century)*, “Исторична панорама (Historical Panorama)”, # 13, 2011, pp.93-122. And A. Baginda, *Malaysia's Defence & Security since 1957*, Malaysian Strategic Research Centre, 2009, p. 226.

5 1971 *Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality Declaration*, 27 November 1971
[https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/Transnational_zone.pdf]


ASEAN by the end of the 1990s, the zone expanded to the size of the entire subregion (with the exception of East Timor, which applied in 2011 to join the Association, and Papua New Guinea, which is an observer in ASEAN). Most of the ASEAN countries at that time adhered to a pro-Western policy, and only Burma (Myanmar) was completely neutral⁶. This “partial” neutrality limited the potential for implementing the *concept of zonal neutrality* in SEA. For its full implementation, it was necessary to obtain security guarantees from the US, China, and the USSR, which in a situation of complex intertwining of national interests and conflicts was a difficult task.

This U-turn in security policy changed the attitude of the non-communist countries of the subregion towards the war in Vietnam, communist China, the socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the USSR. The policy of peaceful coexistence began to be openly professed. Diplomatic relations were gradually established with the USSR, China and other socialist countries. Such a change was the reaction of the countries of SEA to the Nixon Doctrine, proclaimed in July, 1969. According to this, the US gradually withdrew its troops from Vietnam and shifted the responsibility for the defence of its allies to the countries themselves, continuing to offer help, but not fighting.

The fall of the Saigon regime in 1975 and the Cambodian crisis of 1978-1981 caused flows of refugees to other regional countries, but also caused the threat of intervention from Vietnam into the territory of Thailand, hence forced states of the subregion to look for new ways of enhancing their security. In search of a new formula, the ASEAN countries concluded that it was necessary to expand cooperation in this area and involve

the extra-regional great powers, primarily China and the USSR, which contributed to the strengthening of regional security⁷.

The end of the Cold War created a security vacuum. Under these conditions, considering the trend of active growth of China, the countries of SEA formulated concepts of deepening regional integration and neutralism, the full implementation of which was aimed at the ASEAN strategy. In 1995, within the framework of the Association, the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) Treaty was signed.



The end of the Cold War created a security vacuum. Under these conditions, considering the trend of active growth of China, the countries of SEA formulated concepts of deepening regional integration and neutralism, the full implementation of which was aimed at the ASEAN strategy

Today, confrontation between the great powers for dominance in SEA continues to be observed. On the one hand, there is the US-Japan strategic tandem, seeking to maintain its position, and limit the expansion of China. On the other, there is China, which seeks to bind the adherence of the countries of SEA more tightly to it, ensuring its dominance and ousting competitors. At the same time, the voice of a third force, the ASEAN countries themselves, is becoming louder. Huge efforts are being made by the most developed ASEAN countries – Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, seeking to integrate the subregional bloc, maintain

6 A. Baginda, *Malaysia's Defence & Security since 1957*, Malaysian Strategic Research Centre, 2009, p. 226.

7 A. Baginda, *Malaysia's Defence & Security since 1957*, Malaysian Strategic Research Centre, 2009, p. 226.

a multi-vector balance of interests, and keep mutually beneficial relations with the US, Japan and China. Within the framework of such a policy of equidistance, the political elites of the leading ASEAN countries, sensing a threat from China, are increasingly in favour of restoring the balance of power and developing economic ties with Japan, as well as intensifying the American presence in SEA. The latter contributes to security and stability in the subregion, given the challenges posed by the rise of China, Islamic radicalism in the Philippines, Indonesia, and southern Thailand, and energy security concerns. Such a strategy contrasts with the policy of the SEA countries 10-20 years ago, when "Asian unity" and the displacement of the US by creating a single sub-regional market were pursued. Thus, as the expansionist pressure of one of the great powers increases, the countries of the subregion, trying to maintain a strategic balance, create certain advantages for the other side of the regional balance of power. The US has been such a side for the last decade, given the growing distrust of China, which is proportional to the growth of its presence in the subregion⁸.

The model of containment in Europe, which prevented a war, could not prevent armed conflicts in the Asia-Pacific. That is why the political and military elites of the countries of the region put emphasis on strength and individual protection of national interests. This explains the difficulties in shaping collective security structures in the region, as well as in duplicating the European experience. During the Cold War, attempts by the USSR and US to create regional security structures similar to the European

architecture of bloc confrontation failed in the Asia-Pacific. Both great powers built up relations with the countries of the region on a bilateral level⁹.

Difficulties in enhancing security promote the build-up of armaments in the countries of SEA, despite the intensification of subregional integration. Significant work was carried out to ensure the defence of each country individually after the end of the Cold War. The purchase of new modern weapons and military equipment continues to guarantee a high level of security in accordance with regional threats. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)¹⁰, the last two decades have seen a steady increase in military spending in SEA. In 2010, about USD 30 billion were spent on defence in the states of the subregion, which is 60% more than in 2001. Over the past decades, SEA has experienced the highest growth in military spending among all regions. In Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, arms imports in the period of 2000-2004 increased by almost 150%, and in 2005-2009 – by more than 720%. Singapore has become the first ASEAN country included in the list of top 10 arms importers since the Vietnam War. Based on 2021 data, SEA countries imported arms worth USD 45.5 billion US dollars, which is 5.2% more than in the previous year.¹¹.

This is in line with the global arms race trend, triggered by the growing destabilisation of international relations. Regional conflicts demonstrate the vanity of hopes for international security guarantees, as the Ukrainian case has proved. The best

8 D. Mosiakov, ЮВА в поисках консолидации и внешнеполитического равновесия (*SEA in search of consolidation of international political balance*), "Азия и Африка сегодня (Asia and Africa Today)", #8, 2008, pp. 33-36.

9 V. Kulagin, Современная международная безопасность (*Modern International Security*), KnoRus, 2012, p.432.

10 SIPRI-2011, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [www.sipri.org/yearbook]

11 SIPRI-2021, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [www.sipri.org/yearbook]

protection of sovereignty is strengthening of armed forces. Another geopolitical factor forcing the transition to a self-reliance strategy is the “winding down of the nuclear umbrellas” of the great powers after the end of the Cold War. SEA countries for the most part have a limited military industry of their own and, therefore, increase the import of weapons “just in case”¹². A country may solve the problem of the security vacuum either by creating (joining an existing) a military-political organisation for collective security, or by possessing its own nuclear weapons. Both are unlikely to be applicable to the countries of SEA.



ASEAN countries have closer and more developed relations with Russia than with Ukraine.

Russia for them is a great power with a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, rich in raw materials, and an important supplier of weapons

The key ASEAN norms and principles are as follows: non-use of force and the peaceful settlement of disputes; regional autonomy (minimising outside intervention in SEA), and collective self-reliance; the doctrine of non-interference in internal affairs; rejection of an ASEAN military pact and the preference for bilateral defence cooperation¹³.

The Ukrainian Factor in Asian Neutrality

The Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014, and especially the full-scale military invasion in 2022, revealed obvious differences and special approaches among ASEAN countries to the largest war in Europe after World War II. ASEAN countries have closer and more developed relations with Russia than with Ukraine. Russia for them is a great power with a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, rich in raw materials, and an important supplier of weapons. In November 2018, at the ASEAN-Russia summit, a statement was signed on the establishment of a strategic partnership between the parties. In October 2021, the Comprehensive Action Plan for the implementation of the strategic partnership for 2021-2025 was adopted¹⁴. Such a level of relations and a significant trade turnover, including in the military-technical sphere, prevented the countries of the subregion from outright condemnation of Russia's aggression. However, on 3 March 2022, ASEAN foreign ministers expressed their deep concern over the military actions and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Ukraine, and called for a ceasefire and continued political dialogue¹⁵.

On 12-13 May 2022, the US-ASEAN summit was hosted in Washington, D.C., following which the US President and the leaders of the Association countries issued a

12 S. Kortunov, Диалектика национальной и международной безопасности: некоторые методологические проблемы (*Dialectic of National and International Security: Some Methodological Problems*), “Политические исследования (Polis. Political Studies)”, #1, 2009, pp. 7-28.

13 A. Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the problem of regional order*, Routledge, 2009, p. 322.

14 *The Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) is aimed at implementing mutually beneficial cooperation for the period 2021-2025 between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Russian Federation*, ASEAN, 28 October 2021 [<https://asean.org/comprehensive-plan-of-action-cpa-to-implement-the-association-of-southeast-asian-nations-and-the-russian-federation-strategic-partnership-2021-2025/>]

15 *ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement Calling For A Ceasefire In Ukraine*, ASEAN, 3 March 2022 [<https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/ASEAN-Foreign-Ministers-Statement-calling-for-Ceasefire-in-Ukraine-EN.pdf>]

joint statement on the importance of an immediate end to the conflict in Ukraine. The statement notes that the countries supported the efforts of the UN Secretary General aimed at finding “a peaceful way out of the situation and creating conditions that allow the conflict to be resolved ... Called for peace and noted the importance of practical steps to achieve it”¹⁶.

Singapore made the toughest statement against Russia, strongly condemning the “unprovoked invasion”, and stating the need to respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine¹⁷. Singapore and Cambodia, which chairs the Association in 2022, co-sponsored a UN General Assembly resolution condemning Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. Singapore also imposed unilateral sanctions against Russia, which had previously been applied by this country only once, in 1978, after the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea. In addition to the suspension of flights and restrictions on financial transactions with a number of Russian banks and organisations, Singapore has introduced export controls on items that can be used as weapons.

A similar position was expressed by the key US ally in the subregion – the Philippines. During the emergency session of the UNGA on 28 February 2022, Manila

openly condemned the invasion of Ukraine. President R. Duterte declared full support and readiness, within the framework of allied obligations, to provide the military infrastructure of the Philippines for the deployment of US troops if the armed conflict spreads to Asia.¹⁸

Indonesia, which chairs the G-20 this year, has not considered the request of Western leaders to cancel the invitation to President Putin for the November summit of the G-20 in Bali, even under the threat of a boycott. The invitation to the Ukrainian President to take part in the summit, and the visit of the president of Indonesia J. Widodo to Kyiv and Moscow on 29-30 June 2022, became an obvious manifestation of the traditional neutrality and balanced approach professed by this country and, to one degree or another, by all ASEAN countries¹⁹.

Other ASEAN countries have shown greater restraint, confining themselves only to words of concern and the importance of respecting territorial integrity. At the same time, only Vietnam and Laos abstained from voting on UNGA Resolution ES-11/1 on 2 March 2022 “Aggression against Ukraine”, condemning Russia. Eight other ASEAN countries supported the resolution. The same two countries voted against suspension of Russia’s membership of

16 A. Murphy, *The 2022 U.S.-ASEAN Summit. A New Era in Relations?* The National Bureau of Asian Research, 23 May 2022 [<https://www.nbr.org/publication/the-2022-u-s-asean-summit-a-new-era-in-relations/>]

17 *MFA Press Release: Remarks by Minister for Foreign Affairs K Shanmugam, 2nd Minister for Foreign Affairs Grace Fu, SMS for Foreign Affairs Masagos Zulkifli and SPS for Foreign Affairs Sam Tan in Parliament during the Committee of Supply Debate on 5 March*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, 5 March 2022 [<https://www.mfa.gov.sg/Newsroom/Press-Statements-Transcripts-and-Photos/2014/03/MFA-Press-Release-Remarks-by-Minister-for-Foreign-Affairs-K-Shanmugam-2nd-Minister-for-Foreign-Affairs>]

18 The reaction of individual countries of SEA to the war in Ukraine is shown in more detail in: F. Kudrin, *Як українсько-російська війна випробовує єдність Південно-Східної Азії (How the Ukrainian-Russian war tests the unity of Southeast Asia)*, “Український ТИЖДЕНЬ (Ukrainian WEEK)”, 11 May 2022 [<https://tyzhden.ua/World/254927>]

19 T. Matiash, Президент Індонезії запросив Зеленського особисто взяти участь у саміті G20 (*The President of Indonesia invited Zelensky to personally participate in the G20 summit*), “LB.UA”, 29 June 2022 [https://lb.ua/news/2022/06/29/521624_prezident_indonezii_zaprosiv.html]

the UN Human Rights Council, while the Philippines and Myanmar voted in favour, and the other six countries of the association abstained. This discrepancy between the countries of the subregion is explained by the different levels of trade, economic and military cooperation (Russian weapons import) with Russia, as well as by the communist ideology of the regimes in Vietnam and Laos.²⁰



Singapore made the toughest statement against Russia, strongly condemning the “unprovoked invasion”, and stating the need to respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine

However, none of the countries of the subregion provided Ukraine with the much-needed weapons they now have in sufficient quantities²¹. In addition, in mid-July, the US Department of the Treasury named Singapore among 18 countries through which the export of sanctioned goods to Russia and Belarus continues²².

India’s position on the war in Ukraine is based on its traditional principles of neutrality. The Russian-Ukrainian war negatively affects the balance of power in the region. India cannot

unequivocally support the West, because this would lead to a confrontation with China, for which New Delhi does not feel ready. The similarity of views on the future of the world (a multipolar world with spheres of influence) determines New Delhi’s desire to maintain relations with Russia, while it does not actually support Russia’s aggression in Ukraine. India would not benefit from the weakening of Russia to the status of a junior partner of China, since this would change the already asymmetric balance of power in the region in favour of the latter. It wants to preserve its strategic autonomy, and prevent the US or China from monopolising their global influence. The support of one of the parties would mean undermining the balance of power, so a change in New Delhi’s neutral position towards the Russia-Ukraine war is unlikely.

Although India has become noticeably closer to the US in the last decade, it is nevertheless not ready to give up close relations with Russia. At the same time, it will not openly support Russia, inter alia due to the rapprochement of Moscow with Pakistan and China. India’s neutral position does not imply support for the Kremlin’s actions in Ukraine, as it constantly emphasises the need to comply with international law. However, India has not joined Western sanctions against Russia. Favourable neutrality in relation to Russia has put India in a fairly advantageous position: each of the great powers (the US,

20 Y. Pnyurik, *Позиція держав-членів АСЕАН щодо російської агресії в Україні та її економічні наслідки для країн регіону (Position of the ASEAN member-states on Russia’s aggression in Ukraine and its economic consequences for countries of the region)*, Інститут всевітньої історії НАНУ (The World History Institute of the National Academy of Science of Ukraine), 2022 [<https://ivinas.gov.ua/viina-rf-proty-ukrainy/pozytsiia-derzhavchleniv-asean-shchodo-rosiiskoi-ahresii-v-ukraini-ta-ii-ekonomichni-naslidky-dlia-krain-rehionu.html>]

21 *Indonesia president to visit Ukraine, Russia on peace-building mission*, “REUTERS”, 26 June 2022 [<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/indonesia-president-visit-ukraine-russia-peace-building-mission-2022-06-26/>]

22 US Department of the Treasury, 28 June 2022 [<https://www.fincen.gov/sites/default/files/2022-06/FinCEN%20and%20Bis%20Joint%20Alert%20FINAL.pdf>]

Russia, and China) is trying to win it over to its side. Maintaining strategic autonomy in foreign policy allows the country to manoeuvre between different poles. The neutrality that India has adopted in relation to the Russian-Ukrainian war is based on the calculation that strong ties with Russia will help balance China and contain Pakistan. In Indian politics, the historical parallels of traditional friendship with the USSR are also still alive, from which Russia inherited not only political and psychological associations, but also the role (albeit weakening) of an important supplier of weapons²³.

As relations with the West are worsening due to the aggression against Ukraine, the Russian regime seeks to deepen its strong relations with China in an attempt to reduce the impact of Western sanctions. Russia hoped to get an ally which would approve its policy, “turning a blind eye” to its military aggression, and which would provide military and financial support. However, the reality was not so rosy for Moscow. Even at the beginning of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine in 2014, China declared that it supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and suggested a plan for resolving the conflict, expressing its readiness to become a mediator. However, the Chinese initiative was not followed up.

In early March of 2022, as a result of significant military defeats, the Russian side turned to China with a request for military assistance²⁴. On 1 April 2022 the EU-China summit was held, during which the European side initiated a discussion of China’s position regarding the war in Ukraine. As a result, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China published a press release in which the position of Beijing was presented. Regret was expressed about the situation in Ukraine, and assurances were made that China always stands on the side of peace²⁵. The international community was called upon to satisfy the legitimate security interests of all parties, create favourable conditions for peace negotiations, and not add fuel to the fire. As a result of the work done by the EU and the USA, Russia did not receive a positive response from China to its request for the provision of weapons²⁶. Although China has not declared its support for Western sanctions against Russia, a number of its steps testify to the fact that they share the concerns of the West regarding the threats caused by the Russian aggression. However, Beijing abstained from voting on the UNGA Resolution condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and voted against the exclusion of Russia from the UN Human Rights Council. Such duplicitous behaviour of China may indicate its neutrality in relation to the war in Ukraine²⁷.

-
- 23 N. Butyrська, *Дешева нафта кров'ю не пахне (Cheap oil does not smell like blood)*, “Дзеркало Тижня (Mirror of the Week)”, 24 June 2022 [<https://zn.ua/ukr/international/desheva-nafta-krovju-ne-pakhne.html>]
- 24 *Russia Asked China for Military and Economic Aid for Ukraine War, U.S. Officials Say*, “New York Times”, 13 March 2022 [<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/13/us/politics/russia-china-ukraine.html>]
- 25 *China on the right side of history over Ukraine war, foreign minister says*, “Reuters”, 20 March 2022 [<https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-right-side-history-over-ukraine-war-foreign-minister-2022-03-20/>]
- 26 *Beijing chafes at Moscow's requests for support, Chinese officials say*, “Washington Post”, 02 June 2022, [<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/06/02/china-support-russia-ukraine/>]
- 27 О. Оліянук, *Позиція Китаю щодо російської воєнної агресії проти України (China's position on Russian military aggression against Ukraine)*, “Інститут всесвітньої історії НАНУ (The World History Institute of the National Academy of Science of Ukraine)”, 2022 [<https://ivinas.gov.ua/viina-rf-proty-ukrainy/pozytsiia-kytaiu-shchodo-rosiiskoi-voiennoi-ahresii-proty-ukrainy.html>]

According to Chinese experts²⁸, neutrality is crucial for China not only from the point of view of protecting national interests, but also for ensuring stability in the world. China's neutrality in the Ukraine issue, which the Chinese side defines as "objective and impartial"²⁹, is quite evident due to the fact that both Russia³⁰ and Ukraine³¹ are its strategic partners. This neutrality is fundamental to ensure a balanced and durable security for all parties. A recent study in China showed that 30% of respondents support Russia's "special military operation", 20% are on the side of Ukraine, and 40% remain neutral³². China's principled neutrality can be considered quite favourable for Ukraine, since Beijing is seen in Russia as the main factor in the question of its survival in the confrontation with the West.

Ihor Lossovskiy, Ph.D., Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Envoy of Ukraine of the First Class. He is currently a Deputy Head of the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience. He occupied different diplomatic positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine from 1993 to 2021, including Consul General of Ukraine in Toronto, Canada (2002-2006), Ambassador of Ukraine to Malaysia (2009-2010), and Ambassador at Large with the Ukrainian MFA (2014-2016). Dr. Lassovsky has an M.Sc. from T. Shevchenko Kyiv National University (1979) and an MPA from Ukraine National Academy of Public Administration under the President of Ukraine (2006). In 1989, he obtained a Ph.D. from the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. Dr. Lossovskiy is the author of about 150 research articles and 3 monographs in the field of international relations, regional security, the foreign policy of Ukraine, Russia and the Asia-Pacific, as well as 30 research works in the field of oil and gas exploration, and energy security.

-
- 28 В. Юу, *Нейтралитет Китая в новом мрачном мире (China's neutrality in a dark new world)*, "Россия в глобальной политике (Russia in Global Politics)", Vol. 20, # 3, 2022, pp. 118-124
[<https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/nejtralitet-kitaya/>]
- 29 В. Юу, *Нейтралитет Китая в новом мрачном мире (China's neutrality in a dark new world)*, "Россия в глобальной политике", Vol. 20, #3, 2022, p. 118-124,
[<https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/nejtralitet-kitaya/>]
- 30 *China calls Russia its chief 'strategic partner' despite war*, "ABC News", 07 March 2022
[<https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-russia-chief-strategic-partner-war-83292299>]
- 31 *Political Relations between Ukraine and China*, Embassy of Ukraine to the People's Republic of China
[<https://china.mfa.gov.ua/en/partnership/political-relations-between-ukraine-and-china>]
- 32 В. Юу, *Нейтралитет Китая в новом мрачном мире (China's neutrality in a dark new world)*, "Россия в глобальной политике (Russia in Global Politics)", Vol. 20, #3, pp. 118-124
[<https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/nejtralitet-kitaya/>]

THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR AS A TURNING POINT FOR UKRAINE'S RELATIONS WITH CHINA

Yurii Poita

*Center for Army, Conversion and Disarmament
Studies (Ukraine)*

The Russian-Ukrainian war may become a turning point in Ukrainian-Chinese relations, which have developed intensively for 30 years. China considered Ukraine as a supplier of high-quality agricultural products; a source of military technology for the People's Liberation Army; an important element in infrastructure projects within the "One Belt, One Road" initiative. At the same time, China's position regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war, despite Beijing's declaration of neutrality, is pro-Russian in many respects. In addition, Ukraine's desire to join the EU and NATO, intensification of the US's strategic competition and Russia's partnership with China will obviously significantly weaken Kyiv's relations with Beijing. This article focuses on the dynamics of the Ukrainian-Chinese partnership before the full-scale war, Beijing's position regarding the Russian invasion, and the further prospects of Ukraine's relations with China.

Overview of Ukrainian-Chinese Relations

Ukrainian-Chinese relations before the full-scale war with Russia were viewed by the Ukrainian authorities exclusively positively. Bilateral documents signed in 2011 and 2013 between the two countries declared a strategic level of partnership¹, while the level of trade has been constantly growing. In recent years, China has become one of Ukraine's key partners (and since 2019, the largest trading partner). In addition to trade, China was seen as a potential source of investment, urgently needed by the Ukrainian economy. Ideas about the

construction of Chinese enterprises and industrial parks in Ukraine, the improvement and development of infrastructure, possible joint projects in the fields of mechanical engineering and aircraft construction, etc. were widespread in the Ukrainian political, expert, and media environments².

China's launch of the global initiative "One Belt, One Road" (to which Ukraine joined in 2017), which announced the goal of building logistics corridors, high-quality infrastructure, and enterprises on the territory of the participating countries, was aimed at providing an additional impetus to investment cooperation, and bringing it to a

1 *Political relations between Ukraine and China*, MFA of Ukraine, Embassy of Ukraine in China, [<https://china.mfa.gov.ua/spivrobitnictvo/185-politichni-vidnosini-mizh-ukrajinoju-ta-kitajem>]

2 S. Kamyshev, *Nam nuzhno po-novomu posmotret na Kitaj*, „Gazeta Den”, #39, 2007

[<https://day.kyiv.ua/ru/article/den-planety/sergey-kamyshev-nam-nuzhno-po-novomu-posmotret-na-kitaj>]

strategic level, creating a belt of prosperity and security. In addition, the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, signed in 2014, geographical proximity to the European Union, and its high-quality labour force were considered by the Ukrainian side as advantages that would facilitate the arrival of Chinese manufacturers to Ukraine.

Another prospective direction was military-technical cooperation, which provided Ukrainian defence companies with an opportunity to export to the promising and capacious Chinese market. Significant Chinese orders for Ukrainian defence companies, in turn, made it possible for Ukraine not to lose the scientific and industrial potential that remained in Ukraine after the USSR. Since 2008, military-technical cooperation with China has been considered by some military analysts as an opportunity not only to sell, but also to purchase weapons that the Ukrainian Armed Forces needed: primarily missiles, air defence and anti-missile defence³. This became relevant after the Bucharest NATO summit, at which Ukraine was denied a Membership Action Plan; and the issuing of territorial claims on Ukraine by Russia. The purchase of arms in China would have meant ensuring the military security of Ukraine under conditions of the inefficiency of international mechanisms for regional security, the sharp deterioration of Ukraine's defence capabilities, and complications in the military and political environment⁴.

At the same time, most of Ukraine's hopes did not come to fruition. China did not become either a driver of economic growth⁵ or a source for ensuring Ukraine's military

security. Beijing continued to buy raw materials with little added value, while more than 90% of China's exports were high-tech products. Chinese exports to Ukraine exceeded Ukrainian exports to China by several times: the trade was unbalanced. Chinese investments accounted for a small share. According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, direct investment in the Ukrainian economy from China in 2015-2019 was only USD 127 million, bringing China's share over this period to only 0.07% of all foreign investment in the country⁶. In addition, the investments were not aimed at the reindustrialisation of Ukraine, but were focused on improving China's access to Ukrainian raw materials and agricultural products. Last but not least, a significant part of the financing from China was expensive loans accompanied by risks of corruption and inefficiency.



Another prospective direction was military-technical cooperation, which provided Ukrainian defence companies with an opportunity to export to the promising and capacious Chinese market

It was impossible for Ukraine to benefit from cooperation in matters of defence: China continued to buy weapons and technologies that its defence industry needed, but avoided selling weapons to Ukraine. In addition, it was not possible to create joint defence enterprises with China either on

3 V. Badrak, S. Zhurets, D. Bogdanov, V. Kopchak, O. Nabochenko, A. Yarovoj, *Ukraine – China*, „Project-to-Project Cooperation to Strategic Partnership”, 2009 [<https://www.slideshare.net/cacds/uk-china-en231109>]

4 Ibid.

5 *O «novom okne vozmozhnostej»* „Gazeta Den”, #39, 2020 [<https://day.kyiv.ua/ru/article/den-planety/o-novom-okne-vozmozhnostej>]

6 State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2021 [<http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/>]

the territory of China or in Ukraine. Beijing, having received the necessary technology or a sample of weapons (including through the intelligence activities of the Chinese special services in Ukraine), quickly mastered the technology and independently organised production (including unlicensed copying) on its territory, subsequently refusing to buy Ukrainian products, and launching competition with Ukraine in the world arms market. The real threat was China's attempts in 2016 to take over the Ukrainian company "Motor-Sich" outside the official channels of military-technical cooperation. Had it succeeded, Ukraine would have suffered colossal industrial and technological losses, lost opportunities to develop aviation, unmanned and missile programs, and significantly worsened its relations with its NATO partners⁷.



At the same time, most of Ukraine's hopes did not come to fruition. China did not become either a driver of economic growth or a source for ensuring Ukraine's military security

However, for the Ukrainian authorities, such prospects did not seem threatening or problematic. Ukraine earned money from exports to the Chinese market, continued to hope for the arrival of Chinese investments and called their relations with China 'strategic'. In the new Foreign Policy Strategy of Ukraine issued in 2021, China was named as a strategic partner, with prospects for the development of trade

and implementation of joint projects in the fields of infrastructure, energy, transport, and industrial production⁸. It can be concluded that the negative experience of the cooperation of other countries with China, the strengthening of global strategic competition between the United States and China, the constant threats to Ukraine from Russia, and new challenges for Ukraine from China have not been seen as factors for reviewing and adjusting Ukraine's approaches to cooperation with a "strategic partner".

China's Position on the Russian-Ukrainian War

Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine has fully demonstrated the failure of the Ukrainian-Chinese so-called "strategic partnership". China has adopted a position that is often called "pro-Russian neutrality" or "tacit consent". In Russian expert circles it is called "Russia-friendly neutrality." On the one hand, China declares its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, but on the other hand, it never criticises Moscow for invasion and war crimes, placing the blame on the US and NATO, which allegedly provoked the conflict with their irresponsible actions. In addition, China consistently votes against the UN resolutions on Ukraine; intensively develops political, economic, military and military-technical relations with Russia; criticises sanctions imposed on it, saying that they harm the world economy; opposes the West's arms supplies to Ukraine, saying that they do not resolve the conflict, but only add fuel to the fire; spreads disinformation, for example, about the activities of the so-called 20 American biolaboratories in Ukraine (in which biological weapons are supposedly

7 Y. Poita, *Why Ukraine is Reassessing its Defense Cooperation with China*, 2021 [https://chinaobservers.eu/why-ukraine-is-reassessing-its-defense-cooperation-with-china/]

8 *Strategy of Foreign Policy Activity of Ukraine*, 2021 [https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/4482021-40017]

being developed)⁹ and even about the revival of Nazism in Ukraine¹⁰. In addition, China provides full diplomatic support to Russia, claiming that its “legitimate security concerns” should be respected. From the Chinese perspective, Ukraine should not join NATO, but should be a “bridge between the West and the East”¹¹, a position which actually denies the possibility for Ukraine to make a choice and turns it into a buffer, a grey zone between the West and Russia, with Moscow’s predominant influence.



Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine has fully demonstrated the failure of the Ukrainian-Chinese so-called “strategic partnership”. China has adopted a position that is often called “pro-Russian neutrality” or “tacit consent”

The efforts of Ukrainian diplomacy to change China’s position turned out to be futile. China not only held its position, but also continued to spread pro-Russian narratives in national and international media. The heavy bombing and partial destruction of Ukrainian cities, and Russia’s war crimes did not change China’s position. In the Chinese political, media and expert discourse, there are no mentions of Ukraine’s right to self-defence and independence, or the genocide against the Ukrainian people. Instead, Ukraine is

depicted in the Chinese media as in Russia’s zone of influence, and temporarily under the control of the West.

All of that makes it impossible to ensure the voice of Ukraine will be heard in China (contents about Ukraine in the Chinese media is carefully censored; the description of events in Ukraine is carried out through the lens of the Russian media; interviews with Ukrainian officials, experts, representatives of society – with the exception of a single interview with the minister of foreign affairs Dmytro Kuleba, – are not published). In the sixth month of the war, the South China Morning Post published an interview with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy¹², including his request to the leader Xi Jinping to hold direct negotiations and try to influence Russia. But that only demonstrates the failure of the strategic partnership, since diplomatic channels in fact do not work, and the president of Ukraine has to address the Chinese leader through the media. Any official response from China about their readiness for negotiations has been vague. During the daily press conferences, the speaker of the Chinese MFA, Hua Chunying, has avoided a direct answer to the journalists’ questions, noting: “China maintains close communications with Ukraine and other parties in the Ukraine crisis”¹³.

This significantly changed the perception of China in the Ukrainian expert and media community, and in society as a whole. It is also the reason for the revision of relations with China by the Ukrainian government.

9 *Disinformation Resilience Index in Central and Eastern Europe in 2021*, EAST Center, 2021 [https://east-center.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/DRI-report-2021.pdf]

10 Y. Jerry, *Analysis: How Ukraine has been Nazified in the Chinese information space?* 2022 [https://medium.com/doublethinklab/analysis-how-ukraine-has-been-nazified-in-chinese-information-space-81ce236f6a55]

11 *Ukraine should be bridge between East, West, not frontline for confrontation: Chinese envoy*, “Xinhua”, 2022 [https://english.news.cn/20220304/2dff24d71ce74c22b55c699e5d806c3/c.html]

12 A. Chew, *Volodymyr Zelenskyy seeking ‘direct talks’ with China’s Xi Jinping to help end Russia’s invasion of Ukraine*, “South China Morning Post”, 04 August 2022 [https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3187580/volodymyr-zelenskyy-seeking-direct-talks-chinas-xi-jinping-help]

13 *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying’s Regular Press Conference*, 04 August 2022 [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/202208/t20220805_10734891.html]

Prospects for the Development of Ukrainian-Chinese Relations

The “Pro-Russian neutrality” of China, the aggravation of strategic competition between China and the United States, the deepening of Beijing’s partnership with Moscow, and Ukraine’s European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations will all significantly affect Ukraine’s relations with China.

Ukraine, which is gradually integrating into the European economic and security institutions, will have to share EU and NATO approaches to China in one way or another. According to “EU-China – a Strategic Outlook”¹⁴ China is simultaneously a partner, a competitor, and a rival. In “NATO 2022 Strategic Concept”¹⁵, China is defined as a challenge to NATO’s interests, security, and values, listing the specific actions of China that pose a threat to the Alliance. Thus, Ukraine will have to give up its strategic partnership with China.

Ukraine will need to make a comprehensive assessment of the potential and real challenges related to China, significantly strengthen expertise on China, and increase the number of studies conducted together with their EU and NATO partners. That will contribute to a better understanding in the Ukrainian political, expert, scientific and media environment of China’s real regional and global goals, and the opportunities and challenges for Ukraine in relations with China, including regarding the hybrid methods of China’s influence on Ukraine. It will also contribute to the establishment of a broad discussion on these issues, the building of a stable consensus, which will

help to develop the optimal strategic long-term position of Ukraine towards China.

Ukraine is likely to significantly limit its relations with China, leaving room for cooperation exclusively in trade, while banning cooperation in a number of other sectors. For example, the ban may refer to the construction of 5G networks by the Chinese company Huawei, and the prevention of the access of Chinese companies to critical infrastructure in Ukraine¹⁶.



Ukraine will need to make a comprehensive assessment of the potential and real challenges related to China, significantly strengthen expertise on China, and increase the number of studies conducted together with their EU and NATO partners

Ukraine’s defence cooperation with China will probably be stopped. This is determined by the approaches of the EU and NATO, in which an embargo on arms supplies to China is being introduced; China’s attempts to acquire Ukrainian defence technologies; the need to organise the effective protection from China of sensitive technologies that will be transferred to Ukraine by the NATO partners. Termination of the defence cooperation with China will ensure the necessary level of trust between Ukraine and its EU and NATO partners. It will also prevent the threat to Ukraine’s allies from the PLA in the Asia-Pacific region, where Ukrainian technologies could have been employed.

14 *EU-China – a Strategic Outlook*, 2019 [<https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf>]

15 *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept*, 2022 [<https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>]

16 Y. Poita, *Dangerous China: how to minimize risks for Ukraine in cooperation with a “strategic partner”*, 2021 [<https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/experts/2021/12/6/7131099/>]

Ukraine will probably stop cooperation with China within its investment initiatives, including “One Belt, One Road”, and will adopt a law on screening foreign investments regarding national security threats. China’s participation in the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine will be either significantly limited or completely absent. This is due to both geopolitical and technical-legal reasons: the post-war recovery will be financed by European funds and based on EU principles, which will impose significant restrictions on the participation of Chinese companies.

Conclusions

Despite the fairly intense development of the Ukrainian-Chinese partnership, China has neither become a driver of economic growth in Ukraine, nor a guarantor of security. China’s economic projects in Ukraine, the importance of Ukraine as a supplier of agricultural products, and the long history of defence cooperation with Kyiv did not cause China to express clear diplomatic support for Ukraine. In contrast, China’s diplomatic, informational

and economic support to Russia, is acting contrary to international law and against the national interests of Ukraine.

The position of Beijing towards the Russian-Ukrainian war will probably lead to a significant revision by Kyiv of its approaches to China, which will develop in the sphere of trade, but will be significantly limited in the political sense, and in the investment, technological, and defence sectors.

Yurii Poita, *Head of the Asia-Pacific Section at the Center for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies and the Asian Section at the New Geopolitics Research Network, Ukraine. He is a scientist and researcher of regional security issues, the development of the socio-political situation in Central Asia, China’s influence in the post-Soviet space, Ukrainian-Chinese relations, and hybrid methods of influence. He is currently a PhD candidate at Kazakh National University al-Farabi, and a Futures Fellow at Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS).*

WILL CHINA TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Vladyslav Faraponov
Internews Ukraine

Russia's full-scale war on Ukraine has drastically shifted US foreign policy priorities. China was seen to be the major rival for America in various dimensions, but now the administration is deeply involved in assisting Ukraine in order to deter Russia's war of choice. At the same time, China's possible alignment with Russia and Beijing's silence on the Russia-Ukraine war put the Biden Administration into a difficult position, which means containing both strategic rivals with the risk of direct military confrontation.

Introduction

The emerging Joe Biden foreign policy doctrine can be summarised as the fight between democracies and autocracies. Given two remaining years in office, it would be expected for the Biden administration to become more active in its Asia policy while making sure the US allies and partners are ready to assist Washington if necessary. The recently announced US approach towards China as “invest, align, compete” seems to be rather theoretical.¹ Thus, this article will examine what the US can do and what it cannot do in the region, considering this new approach.

In this article, we will summarise Biden's policy towards Asia as a whole, with a clear

focus on China, considering the AUKUS agreement and restoring cooperation with Japan and South Korea. Second, the article will explain how the potential China-Russia coalition will impact US foreign policy interests. Third, we would suggest how the Biden administration's policy may look towards China, specifically in the context of the China-Russia declaration (February 2022).² The piece will also touch upon an explanation of the stakes for Washington if China escalates the situation with Taiwan.

The Joe Biden Administration has been unofficially following the same approach towards China, set by the Donald Trump Administration (2017-2021). The United States, in its National Security Strategy under Trump's tenure, acknowledged China

1 Antony J. Blinken, *The Administration's Approach to the People's Republic of China*, Speech of Secretary of State, the George Washington University, Washington D.C., May 2022
[<https://www.state.gov/the-administrations-approach-to-the-peoples-republic-of-china/>]

2 *Xi and Putin urge Nato to rule out expansion as Ukraine tensions rise*, “Guardian”, 04 February 2022
[<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/04/xi-jinping-meets-vladimir-putin-china-russia-tensions-grow-west>]

as a strategic competitor.³ That is the current strategy, not to mention the Interim Strategy presented by Joe Biden in March 2021.⁴

Three months after Russia launched its full-scale war on Ukraine, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken reaffirmed that the US views China as the most serious long-term challenge to the international order. Besides, he recognised that only China had both the desire to reshape the existing world order and enough diplomatic, military, economic, and technological power to do so.⁵ Taking into account the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Biden's team had to postpone the release of its coherent national security strategy, but also to rewrite it in a way that reflects the agenda and challenges that are posed by Moscow, not just Beijing.⁶ At the same time, the Biden Administration went far beyond uniting its allies in the Indo-Pacific, and even managed to proceed with new strategic agreements.

US Does Not Shift Its Approach towards China, but Strengthens Ties with Partners

By creating, in mid-September 2021, the AUKUS Alliance, which stands for first letters of its members, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the US secured a new high-level partnership to counter China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific.⁷ The

AUKUS agreement means not only building nuclear-powered submarines for Australia, but the deep mutual integration of security and defence-related science, technology, industrial bases, and supply chains.⁸ This is definitely the most alarming point in the deal for China, and one of the most beneficial for the United States.

The long-awaited US pivot to Asia, first announced by Barack Obama, has been continuing under the 46th President's term, despite being not named as such. The Biden Administration has tried to make sure it has enough resources and attention for all the regions, and will not officially recognise that one particular region is more important to them. In that regard, the current US strategy could be perceived as creating new small alliances and ensuring the stability and coherence of the existing ones.

First, in addition to AUKUS, and QUAD, now the US has initiated the creation of the new coordination group, which is called the Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP). It includes Japan, New Zealand, Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The initiative resulted in the allocation of USD 2.1 billion as combined assistance to the region, and closer diplomatic and economic ties between its members. Thus, it is too early to describe this newly established group as having real impact, but it is an additional way for

3 *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, The White House, December 2017 [https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf]

4 *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, The White House, March 2021 [https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf]

5 A. J. Blinken, *The Administration's Approach to the People's Republic of China*, #2

6 J. Gould, *White House aims to release overdue security strategies within weeks*, "Defense News", 01 August 2022 [https://www.defensenews.com/pentagon/2022/08/01/white-house-aims-to-release-overdue-security-strategies-within-weeks/]

7 S. Erlanger, *The Sharp U.S. Pivot to Asia Is Throwing Europe Off Balance*, "The New York Times", 17 September 2021 [https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/17/world/europe/biden-china-europe-submarine-deal.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article]

8 *Joint Leaders Statement on AUKUS*, The White House, 15 September 2021 [https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/15/joint-leaders-statement-on-aukus/]

America to deepen cooperation and maintain high-level confidence in each of the nations.⁹ Second, given the fact that Kurt Campbell, the incumbent White House Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific, argues that the current China-US competition lies in the realms of economy and technology, and American success in it requires reinvestments so as to compete properly, it is fair to assume that the US finds the region one of the key priorities in its foreign policy as a whole.¹⁰



The current American strategy in Asia may be summed up as learning from China's mistakes and moving forward with additional small alliances, to make sure the region does not fall into Beijing's hands

Third, it is possible that Washington will continue to compete in attempts to gain influence over Kiribati, which left the Pacific Islands Forum in a possible pro-Beijing move in July 2022¹¹. It is notable that Kiribati is less than 2,000 miles from the US state of Hawaii, where the United States Indo-Pacific Command is located.¹² It is another indicator that both China and the US are raising the

stakes in the region, and continue to create more and more persuasive coalitions.

Fourth, the QUAD group, consisting of India, Japan, and Australia, alongside the US, remains an important alliance for Washington, as it includes India. At the same time, India has purchased even more energy supplies from Russia since Moscow invaded Ukraine. Besides, India is still buying its military hardware from Russia.¹³ In addition, India's imports from Russia in the first half of 2022 added up to at least USD 8.3 billion, almost three times more than for the same period in 2021¹⁴. In that regard, QUAD may be seen as a very limited pact for Washington, which may not survive long if one of its members has completely the opposite approach towards one of the world's most unpredictable crises. The American establishment will face a hard choice: to continue engaging in that format or to reshape other forms of cooperation with those countries if India does not change its approach to the Ukraine-Russia war.

The current American strategy in Asia may be summed up as learning from China's mistakes and moving forward with additional small alliances, to make sure the region does not fall into Beijing's hands, both in terms of the economy and military expansion.

9 *Statement by Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States on the Establishment of the Partners in the Blue Pacific (PBP)*, the White House, 24 June 2022 [<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/06/24/statement-by-australia-japan-new-zealand-the-united-kingdom-and-the-united-states-on-the-establishment-of-the-partners-in-the-blue-pacific-pbp/>]

10 K. Campbell, *The China Challenge Can Help America Avert Decline*, "Foreign Affairs", 03 December 2020 [<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2020-12-03/china-challenge-can-help-america-avert-decline>]

11 *Kiribati's Shock Withdrawal Overshadows Pacific Leaders Meeting in Fiji*, "VOA", 11 July, 2022 [<https://www.voanews.com/a/kiribati-s-shock-withdrawal-overshadows-pacific-leaders-meeting-in-fiji/6653385.html>].

12 S.Tiwari, *China's Military Base Near USA: As Beijing Extends Its Reach To Kiribati Islands, Hawaii's Missile Defense Remains A Pipe-Dream*, "The EurAsian Times", 27 May 2022 [<https://eurasianimes.com/chinas-military-base-near-usa-beijing-extends-its-reach-to-kiribati-islands/>]

13 *Joe Biden: invasion of Ukraine shows need for free and open Indo-Pacific*, "The Guardian", 24 May 2022 [<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/may/24/russias-invasion-of-ukraine-underlines-need-for-free-and-open-indo-pacific-biden-says>]

14 N. Masih, *India turns to Russian fertilizer, showing challenge of isolating Moscow*, "Washington Post", 04 August 2022 [<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/04/india-russia-fertilizer-oil-imports/>]

The US views China as a revisionist state in terms of its desire to break or reshape the US-led world order. In that regard, America is doing its best to make sure its allies and partners in the region support its initiatives. At the same time, some analysts argue that Beijing's failure to translate economic might into political dominance is too obvious for the United States.¹⁵ That is why Biden's team rushed to establish the new coordination format to ensure better connected economic ties with the Indo-Pacific, namely Thailand, Vietnam, Australia, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Singapore. Notably, the aspects of cooperation include cross-border data flow and data localisation, and application of the artificial intelligence and clean energy, anti-money laundering, and anti-bribery regimes, a clear hint on China's influence and the way Beijing approaches business globally¹⁶.

China's Half-Hearted Approach to the Russia-Ukraine War Leaves Washington in the Dark

From a realistic perspective, it is in the strategic interests of the US that China does not form any sort of alliance with Russia during or after the Russia-Ukraine war. At the same time, China views Russia as a partner in its strategic competition with the United States. In that context, the war is only a trigger to demonstrate that situation.

In addition, right before Russia launched its unprovoked, unjustified war on Ukraine, during the Winter Olympics of 2022, the

Chinese and Russian leaders explicitly agreed to deepen their cooperation, claiming the bonds between the two countries had no limits, as there are no areas forbidden to cooperation.¹⁷ Such an announcement certainly came as a surprise to Ukraine, and even the fact that the Chinese leader Xi Jinping hosted Russia's President Vladimir Putin was intended to send a signal to the world that China is strategically binding with Russia, and that their cooperation would only be strengthened.



it is in the strategic interests of the US that China does not form any sort of alliance with Russia during or after the Russia-Ukraine war. At the same time, China views Russia as a partner in its strategic competition with the United States

At the same time, China's strategy over the full-scale Ukraine-Russia war, which lacks public condemnation of the invasion or even acknowledgment of Russia's so-called "special military operation" as a full-scale war, will not last forever. It is very likely that US and EU anti-Russian sanctions will make China declare its position sooner rather than later. It seems particularly relevant in terms of helping Russia evade sanctions technically. In the worst-case scenario both for Washington and Ukraine, China will provide military assistance to Russia and help it finance the war.

15 M. Schuman, *China Is Doing Biden's Work for Him*, "The Atlantic", 24 May 2022 [<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2022/05/joe-biden-asia-quad-china/630172/>]
16 *Fact Sheet: In Asia, President Biden and a Dozen Indo-Pacific Partners Launch the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity*, White House, 23 May 2022 [<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/23/fact-sheet-in-asia-president-biden-and-a-dozen-indo-pacific-partners-launch-the-indo-pacific-economic-framework-for-prosperity/>]
17 A. Roth, V. Ni, *Xi and Putin urge Nato to rule out expansion as Ukraine tensions rise*, "The Guardian", 4 February 2022 [<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/04/xi-jinping-meets-vladimir-putin-china-russia-tensions-grow-west>]

Nevertheless, China's major interest in the war as of mid-2022 is to observe the amount of US assistance to Ukraine, the Administration's involvement, its interaction with Congress, the willingness of the US lawmakers to help, and the way NATO members support Ukraine. For China, this is a test at a distance, and the opportunity to study various scenarios if it decides to invade Taiwan. The test applies to factors such as Western unity, and NATO's resilience.



For China, this is a test at a distance, and the opportunity to study various scenarios if it decides to invade Taiwan. The test applies to factors such as Western unity, and NATO's resilience

At the same time, China is also cautious in its ambitions to take control over Taiwan, not only because the US has special relations with Taipei, but also fearing the severity of Western sanctions and the cutting of economic ties, which provide a great part of China's influence in the world. However, as TIME magazine pointed out, if Western sanctions against Putin's inner circle, Russia's economy and the oligarchs fail, China would note the US decline as a superpower.¹⁸ For Ukraine, it means that the US Administration would not be forced to give more attention to applying new sanctions, but to make sure that those already imposed have a real impact and do not allow Russia to easily avoid their impact, with China's help.

Besides, China would like to see the US and Europe get tired of the Ukraine-Russia war and exhaust their resources, including military assistance.¹⁹ Russia's full-fledged invasion reveals essential information for China about which particular military equipment the Western countries possess, and what they can provide to Ukraine. They watch not only which ammunition and arms Ukraine's partners hold back or even refuse to deliver but also their rhetoric, and explore their willingness to help.

Taiwan Remains a Major Point for a Clash between the Two Superpowers

Chinese public reassurance of their readiness to hit the plane of the US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi in August 2022, should have made the United States realise that China was ready for a rapid escalation in hostilities. This is a major shift when it comes to the Chinese side in public discourse over the last few years. Such rhetoric as a precursor to turning another but more hostile page in Washington-Beijing relations came at a bad time for Joe Biden both in terms of domestic approval rate and the upcoming midterm elections, where the Democrats could potentially lose their majority in both chambers of the US Congress, and the timeline with regard to extensive US financial and military support to Ukraine.

The Joe Biden Administration has allocated almost USD 10 billion as security assistance since the beginning of this administration at the time of writing this paper. In addition, according to the most recent

18 Ch. Campbell, *China's Embrace of Putin Is Looking More and More Costly*, "TIME", 01 April 2022 [<https://time.com/6163807/china-russia-putin-ukraine/>]

19 B. Lin, J. Blanchette, *China on the Offensive*, "Foreign Affairs", 01 September 2022 [<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/china-offensive>]

Gallup Poll, the 46th American President has the lowest approval rate for an elected president since the middle of the 20th century.^{20,21} Combining those two factors for Biden, and possibly the upcoming game-changing 2022 midterm elections, hinting at Republican control at least over the House of Representatives and potentially the Senate too²², would constitute one of the worst-case scenarios for the Democratic Administration, especially if China invades Taiwan right at that time. The situation where one party controls the White House and another has a majority in Congress is called a divided government in America, and it is a rare occurrence for any administration. It mainly diminishes the president's authority as his/her initiatives in the foreign policy sphere are not necessarily backed by political opponents. Such a situation may directly impact the allocation of foreign aid. It may lead not only to slowing it down, but also to significantly decreasing the amount.

The US has provided Ukraine with unprecedented amounts of aid as per one country during one fiscal year. According to the US Congressional Research Service, in total, the United States 2022 fiscal year appropriations include USD 12.55 billion as security assistance provided through the US Department of Defense (DoD) via presidential drawdown authority, USD 6.3 billion for DOD's Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative; and USD 4.65 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Ukraine.²³ Moreover, Washington has not

only allocated a significant amount of aid, but has done its best to amend the assigned assistance to cater for Ukraine's needs as the war changed its course. In addition, the United States led the efforts of the newly created Ukraine Defence Contact Group, which brings together more than 40 nations worldwide to coordinate efforts and allocate aid. Thus, such comprehensive involvement has required a lot of attention and coordination from the highest officials within the administration.

In May, 2022, during the US Senate hearing, the director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Lt. Gen. Scott D. Berrier, claimed that Taiwanese officials were learning lessons from the Ukraine war, noting the significance of effective training with the right weapons systems; perhaps hinting at the US-sold arms systems.²⁴ The United States legislation, namely, the Taiwan Relations Act, requires the United States to provide Taiwan with weapons. The law states it as the provision of arms of a defensive character to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardise the security, or social or economic system, of the people of Taiwan. This act also declares that in furtherance of the principle of maintaining peace and stability in the Western Pacific area, the United States will make available to Taiwan such defence articles and defence services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defence capacity, as determined by the US President

20 \$1 Billion in New U.S. Military Assistance for Ukraine, US Embassy in Ukraine, 08 August 2022 [https://ua.usembassy.gov/1-billion-in-new-u-s-military-assistance-for-ukraine/]

21 J. Jones, *Biden Job Approval Dips to New Low*, "Gallup", 29 July 2022 [https://news.gallup.com/poll/395378/biden-job-approval-dips-new-low.aspx]

22 *Republicans are favored to win the House*, "FiveThirtyEight", 02 August 2022 [https://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/2022-election-forecast/house/]

23 *U.S. Security Assistance to Ukraine*, "Congressional Research Service", 02 August 2022, [https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12040]

24 E. Wong, A. Qin, *U.S. Presses Taiwan to Buy Weapons More Suited to Win Against China*, "The New York Times", 07 May, 2022 [https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/07/us/politics/china-taiwan-weapons.html]

and the Congress.²⁵ Some US lawmakers even suggested the stockpiling of large amounts of munitions in Taiwan.²⁶

President Biden made it clear that he would follow the legislative path and would provide Taiwan with the necessary weapons, and he even promised to defend Taiwan, stressing that America would go much further in defending Taiwan than its help for Ukraine to deter Russia's full-scale war.²⁷ Such a statement raised different interpretations and analogies with the Russia-Ukraine war and US commitment. In particular, it implies the United States might deploy troops to train the military of Taiwan, not to mention possible military intervention on Taiwan's side.²⁸



Taiwanese officials are not only watching the Russia-Ukraine war but take it as an example of US assistance, and they are assessing how substantial it could be. Thus, they might ask for similar types and comparable amounts of weapons to defend the island

Notably, this posed the following question from Ukraine's perspective: if the US had had similar legislation regarding Ukraine, would the US response to Russia's aggression back in 2014 have been different, or even that of early 2022? Despite that, such a persuasive statement from Biden means renouncing the so-called strategic ambiguity of his

predecessors, who maintained the status quo and preserved the One China Policy.

The Biden Administration will likely face another challenge over compressions regarding the policy on Taiwan and Ukraine. Kyiv officials may ask to increase US involvement, possibly obtaining assistance and facilitating more training for Ukraine's armed forces. Taiwanese officials are not only watching the Russia-Ukraine war but take it as an example of US assistance, and they are assessing how substantial it could be. Thus, they might ask for similar types and comparable amounts of weapons to defend the island.

In the near future, China's relations vis-à-vis the United States will most likely remain dependent on the situation over Taiwan and the American response when/if China decides to escalate. At the same time, the United States will have to decide whether to split its focus, including when providing military aid to Ukraine and Taiwan. There is a significant difference in that regard. Taiwan, like Japan, South Korea, and another 16 nations, are designated as US major non-NATO allies. It means increased cooperation, intelligence exchange, and training facilities. Ukraine does not have such a status and it is feasible that US lawmakers may refer to these obligations more often in the future if the Russia-Ukraine war is longstanding. A few, like India or Japan, have also signed security treaties with America, which in some cases require the administration to provide critical security assistance to countries if those are under attack.

25 *Taiwan Relations Act*, H.R.2479, 96th Congress (1979-1980), [<https://www.congress.gov/bill/96th-congress/house-bill/2479>]

26 E. Wong, A. Qin, #20

27 Biden Pledges to Defend Taiwan if It Faces a Chinese Attack, "The New York Times", 24 May, 2022 [<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/23/world/asia/biden-taiwan-china.html>]

28 I. Kanapathy, *Taiwan Doesn't Need a Formal U.S. Security Guarantee*, "Foreign Policy", 26 April 2022 [<https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/04/26/taiwan-us-security-guarantee-defense-china-ukraine-war/>]

Conclusions

The United States, under any administration, will continue to compete with China in various fields, such as the economy, military, and technology, in terms of world dominance. The key to winning this competition lies in Asia. At the same time, Putin's war of choice in Ukraine has raised the stakes globally and made many countries decide which side they are on, including China. The US Administration seems to be ready for various scenarios when it comes to policy. But its resources are limited, and that is going to make a difference when it comes

to US involvement worldwide, including its assistance to Ukraine, even during the full-scale war against Russia.

Vladyslav Faraponov is an analyst and project coordinator at Internews-Ukraine and UkraineWorld. His main research interests include US domestic and foreign policy and Ukraine-US relations. Faraponov is a columnist for several Ukrainian and European media outlets, where he writes on US-related issues. He had previously worked at Ad Astra think tank. Faraponov graduated from Wright State University, Ohio (USA).

IN PURSUIT OF INTEREST: INDIA AND RUSSIA'S WAR AGAINST UKRAINE

Olha Vorozhbyt

*Ivan Franko National University of Lviv
Ukrayinskyi Tyzhden weekly*

After Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, there was an expectation that India would join the coalition of countries that stood up against it. Yet New Delhi has continued to walk a diplomatic tightrope, condemning the war atrocities, but abstaining during the voting for UN resolutions that condemned Russia for the war in Ukraine. Besides that, New Delhi has boosted economic cooperation with Moscow in recent months, while Western countries imposed sanctions on Russia. India explains such a position as one that is neutral in terms of the conflict and follows its national interests. This paper provides an overview of the reasons and visions that have shaped such an approach.

India's Pre-war Approach

Since the annexation of Crimea and the start of the war in Donbas in 2014, India has chosen the path of a 'silent position' on the conflict and the violation of international law. Except for the short commentary by the then National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon that there were "legitimate Russian interests involved"¹ in Ukraine, other statements were purely neutral. Yet, in fact, it meant a politically pro-Russian position (a "special and privileged strategic partnership"² with Russia established in 2010 was further ongoing) with multiple

meetings between Russian and Indian leaders, and the continued boosting of economic cooperation with both Ukraine and Russia, and a slowly decreasing military dependence on Moscow.


After the full-scale invasion in February 2022, the approach has hardly changed. The current position of local politicians and governors has been called 'neutral'³, yet in fact, it has a pro-Russian bias. Over the course of five months, India has abstained during voting in the United Nations (before the full-scale invasion, it voted against the annual Ukrainian resolutions on

-
- 1 *Russia has legitimate interests in Ukraine: Shivshankar Menon, NSA*, "The Economic Times", 6 March 2014 [<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/russia-has-legitimate-interests-in-ukraine-shivshankar-menon-nsa/articleshow/31546699.cms>]
 - 2 *Joint Statement: Celebrating of India-Russian Federation Strategic Partnership and Looking Ahead*, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 21 December 2010 [bit.ly/3BTSqAc]
 - 3 *Ukraine-Russia crisis: MEA says India's stand neutral, hopes for peace*, "Business Standard", 24 February 2022 [https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/ukraine-russia-crisis-mea-says-india-s-stand-neutral-hopes-for-peace-122022400716_1.html]

human rights violations in Crimea and the militarisation of the peninsula), condemned the hostilities, but at the same time sharply increased the level of imports from Russia (namely crude oil and fertilisers). Among the representatives of the Indian political elite, like former Secretary General of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Ram Madhav⁴, or prominent foreign policy speaker of the main opposition party Indian National Congress (INC) Shashi Tharoor⁵, this war is also seen as an opportunity to gain global power while becoming a mediator in the conflict.

Just before the full-scale invasion, the level of attention in India concerning the situation in Ukraine was very high. One of the reasons was that around 20,000 Indian citizens had stayed in the country. Over 18,000 of them were students, whose parents, taking into consideration the news about a possible full-scale war and the evacuation of the citizens of other states, were pushing their local MPs and the government to evacuate their children⁶. After the Russian attack, India announced an evacuation operation under the name 'Operation Ganga'. On February 28, four ministers were sent to neighbouring countries (Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, and Poland) to coordinate the evacuation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally met students who returned from Ukraine during his election campaign tour in Uttar Pradesh. Some observers⁷ stressed that the PM was using the war in Ukraine as one of his campaign issues in that state (Modi spoke about the success of the evacuation, though one of the students was killed in Kharkiv⁸ by Russian shelling, and one was injured⁹).



Just before the full-scale invasion, the level of attention in India concerning the situation in Ukraine was very high. One of the reasons was that around 20,000 Indian citizens had stayed in the country

The issue of the students is one of those that bring the Russian war in Ukraine much closer to the attention of the Indian audience. In the Indian media, there were a number of articles that criticised the Indian government¹⁰ for its delay in making decision on those students who had to flee Ukraine. They have no other options on where to study. The students' issue was

-
- 4 R. Madhav, *How India needs to deal with the Ukraine question*, "The Indian Express", 12 July 2022 [<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/how-india-needs-to-deal-with-the-ukraine-question-8023368/>]
 - 5 Sh. Tharoor, *Why the world needs peace in Ukraine*, "The Hindu", 12 July 2022 [<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/why-the-world-needs-peace-in-ukraine/article65626597.ece>]
 - 6 *Parents of Students in Ukraine anxious, seek govt help*, "The Indian Express", 15 February 2022 [<https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/parents-of-students-in-ukraine-anxious-see-govt-help-7775510/>]
 - 7 U. Poddar, *Ukraine Pradesh: How Modi is Trying to turn Putin's invasion into an election issue in UP*, "Scroll.in", 02 March 2022 [<https://scroll.in/article/1018516/ukraine-pradesh-how-modi-is-trying-to-turn-putins-invasion-into-an-election-issue-in-up>]
 - 8 I. Qureshi, *Ukraine Invasion: Indian Student Killed as He Tried to Buy Food*, "BBC News", 01 March 2022 [<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-60567585>]
 - 9 *Indian Student Shot at While Fleeing Kyiv*, "The Times of India", 04 March 2022 [<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/god-gave-me-second-life-injured-indian-student-in-ukraine-makes-fervent-appeal-to-embassy/articleshow/89994404.cms>]
 - 10 M. T. Raju, *5 months on, education of Indian med students from Ukraine still uncertain*, "The News Minute", 28 July 2022 [<https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/5-months-education-indian-med-students-ukraine-still-uncertain-166302>]

one of the main topics of conversation between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy when they corresponded in late February and March.

UN Voting

Since 2014, India has voted against the annual Ukrainian resolutions on Crimea in the United Nations: *Resolution: Problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov and Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine*. There were also cases when representatives of the illegal occupational government in Crimea visited India¹¹. In the Russian¹² and local media, the trip was presented as a working visit, but the Indian government, according to statements in the press¹³, rejected such a presentation, saying that it was a private one.

Since the start of the full-scale invasion on February 24 2022, India has abstained during voting on the UN resolutions that condemned Russian aggression. This was seen as a partial climb-down after the previous positioning. Yet it was also greatly criticised, as there was an expectation

that India as the world biggest democracy would take a stronger stand against Russian aggression. During the first vote in the UN Security Council on February 25, India together with China and the UAE abstained, with an explanation afterwards that “it urges that all efforts are made for the immediate cessation of violence and hostilities”. It also stressed that “the contemporary global order has been built on the UN Charter”¹⁴. Voting on March 2, India again abstained on the resolution that deplored Russian aggression against Ukraine. India was also among 12 nations that abstained from voting on the UN Human Rights Council resolution seeking to address the deteriorating situation in Ukraine “stemming from Russian aggression”¹⁵. During the July 29 UNSC discussions on Ukraine, deputy permanent representative of India to the UN, R. Ravindra repeated the previous position of his country on respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the states, and stressed that PM Modi had talked to the presidents of both countries, and reiterated the Indian position and calls for dialogue¹⁶.

The UN voting became an important political marker in the relations between Ukraine and India. It also created debates in the Indian media¹⁷ on why India should

11 *Crimean politician in delegation sets tongues wagging*, “The Times of India”, 12 December 2014 [https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/crimean-politician-in-delegation-sets-tongues-wagging/articleshow/45485336.cms]

12 *Sergej Aksënov, vmeste s prezidentom RF posetil Indiu*, “Argumenty i Fakty”, 11 December 2014 [https://krym.aif.ru/politic/gover/1403972]

13 *Crimean politician in delegation sets tongues wagging*, “The Times of India”, 12 December 2014 [https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/crimean-politician-in-delegation-sets-tongues-wagging/articleshow/45485336.cms]

14 T.S. Tirumurti, *Explanation of vote*, Statement by Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti, Permanent Representative of India to the UN, UNSC Adoption of Resolution on the situation in Ukraine, 25 February 2022 [bit.ly/3R0nank]

15 *India, Pakistan Among 12 countries that abstained from UNHRC vote on Ukraine*, “The Economic Times”, 13 May 2022 [https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/india-pakistan-among-12-countries-that-abstained-from-unhrc-vote-on-ukraine/articleshow/91530909.cms]

16 *UN Security Council Session on the situation in Ukraine*, Online recording, 29 July 2022 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmtLmmjVRNE&t=4714s]

17 *Times when Ukraine had voted against India in UNSC*, “NewsBharati”, 26 February 2022, [https://www.news Bharati.com/Encyc/2022/2/26/Times-when-Ukraine-had-voted-against-India-at-UNSC.html]

support Ukraine in the UN, if Kyiv had previously rejected resolutions important for New Delhi (Ukraine opposed India's nuclear tests in 1998). But there are other more significant arguments explaining the reasons for such positioning of India in the UN. Historically, India has not supported resolutions that criticised Russia and previously the USSR. Thus, it abstained from voting for resolutions that condemned the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968) and later of Afghanistan (1979). Also, it voted against condemning Russian actions in Chechnya and Abkhazia¹⁸.



The UN voting became an important political marker in the relations between Ukraine and India. It also created debates in the Indian media on why India should support Ukraine in the UN, if Kyiv had previously rejected resolutions important for New Delhi

The case of Czechoslovakia resembles the current Indian stance on Ukraine. While there was widespread popular sympathy for the Czechs in India, the Indian government only expressed mild “regret” and abstained in the Security Council vote¹⁹. Similarly, in the case of the Russian war against Ukraine, irrespective of the influence of Kremlin propaganda, there is also popular sympathy

for the Ukrainians. Thus, according to a global survey by Ipsos, 72% of urban Indians supported taking in refugees from Ukraine²⁰, while at the same time almost 79% rejected the idea of Indian military involvement in the conflict.

Self-vision as a Global Player and a Mediator

Among the politicians on different parts of the political spectrum in India, there is a common vision of New Delhi as a possible mediator in Russia's war against Ukraine. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has repeatedly stated that he supports the path of dialogue and diplomacy between Russia and Ukraine. During the debates in the Lok Sabha (lower house of the Indian parliament) on April 5, when representatives of different political parties expressed their visions on the position of India in the conflict, this idea was supported in many presentations. Shashi Tharoor, MP from the opposition Indian National Congress party (INC), stressed this issue during his speech, as well as in his later publications in the local media²¹. A right-wing politician, and former National General Secretary of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Ram Madhav²², in an op-ed, also called for India to take the role of mediator in the war. He stressed that India had such experience during the Korean War in 1953. During the debate, an MP from the local Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam party (DMK), Thamizhachi Thangapandian also said that “India should take more

18 G. Price, *Ukraine war: Why India abstained on UN vote against Russia*, Chatham House, 26 March 2022 [<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/03/ukraine-war-why-india-abstained-un-vote-against-russia>]

19 H.V. Pant, *Indian Foreign Policy: An Overview*, Orient BlackSwan, 2019, p.103

20 7 in 10 urban Indians support taking in Ukrainian refugees: Ipsos survey, “National Herald”, 13 May 2022 [<https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/national/7-in-10-urban-indians-support-taking-in-ukrainian-refugees-ipsos-survey/>]

21 Sh. Tharoor, *Why the world needs peace in Ukraine*, “The Hindu”, 12 July 2022 [<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/why-the-world-needs-peace-in-ukraine/article65626597.ece>]

22 R. Madhav, *How India needs to deal with the Ukraine question*, “The Indian Express”, 12 July 2022 [<https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/how-india-needs-to-deal-with-the-ukraine-question-8023368/>]

responsibility to be the honest mediator between Ukraine and Russia”²³. In March, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was seeking such an opportunity, speaking multiple times with President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, as well as President of Russia Vladimir Putin. Moreover, that interest was strengthened by the desire of the Indian government to successfully evacuate its citizens from Ukraine. At the same time, at the end of March, Ukrainian foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba, commenting to Indian media channel NDTV on such a possibility, said that if Prime Minister Modi was willing to play such a role, Ukraine would welcome his efforts²⁴. At the beginning of April, Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov visited India, and said that India might support the process of mediation if it wanted “to play the role”²⁵. Yet over the period of almost six months of Russian war against Ukraine, New Delhi left this possibility just as a part of the talks and discussions.

Irrespective of their political party, during the April 5 debates, the politicians stressed that India must maintain this ‘neutral’ position, though it was also ‘not to sit on the fence’. “Friends also have to be told”, stressed Manish Tiwari from the INC, pointing out that India has to express its condemnation of Russian aggression “privately”. He also stated that the “Anglo-American alliance bears equal responsibility”, and what is more, “Ukraine should have been far more sensitive to Russian concerns”²⁶. President of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference party, Farooq Abdullah, during

the same debate, called the war a “failure of the UN”, but also said that Ukraine was asked by Russia “please don’t have an enemy on my border”, probably referring to Russian propaganda on NATO membership as a reason to start the war.

Foreign minister S. Jaishankar, while speaking to the MPs in the Lok Sabha, pointed out that “foreign policy is a matter of consensus” in India. This is what can be derived from the speeches on the Russian war against Ukraine there on April 5. It is also a summary of the decades-long position of various Indian political parties: while disagreeing on internal issues, their foreign policy positions stayed close. “We are against the conflict. In this age dialogue and diplomacy are the right answers to any disputes. If India has chosen a side, it is a side of peace,” said the Indian foreign minister during his speech. But it is not just Mahatma Gandhi’s legacy that influences him. One of the core principles of Jaishankar’s foreign policy is what he himself calls “plurilateralism”. It could be defined as working with unlikely partners for the common good. French researcher C. Jaffrelot, while explaining Indian plurilateralism, points to the famous quote from Jaishankar’s book “The India Way”: “This is a time for us to engage America, manage China, cultivate Europe, reassure Russia, bring Japan into play, draw neighbours in, extend the neighbourhood and expand traditional constituencies of support”²⁷. In interviews, the foreign minister stresses that India has been capable of managing the China problem, which means that other rivalries

23 T. Sumathy Thamizhaci Thangapandian, *Discussion Under Rule 193 on the Situation in Ukraine*, 05 April 2022 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8McsSobWbI]

24 “If PM Modi is Willing to Play Role of Mediator...”: Ukraine Minister to NDTV, NDTV, 30 March 2022 [https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/welcome-it-if-pm-modi-considers-being-mediator-ukraine-minister-to-ndtv-2853257]

25 *India can be a mediator between Russia and Ukraine: Lavrov*, The Statesman, 01 April 2022, [https://www.thestatesman.com/world/india-can-mediator-russia-ukraine-lavrov-1503056702.html]

26 M. Tiwari, *Discussion Under Rule 193 on the Situation in Ukraine*, 05 April 2022 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HsTiSDaGUc&t=530s]

27 S. Jaishankar, *The India Way. Strategies for an Uncertain World*, HarperCollins Publishers India 2020

and wars could also be processed through dialogue²⁸. C. Jaffrelot also adds that from the current Indian foreign policy vision “a strong Russia is important because it adds a pillar to the multipolar world that New Delhi wants to see”²⁹. The fact that Russia is too far from India to pose a threat to the country also influences such an approach. Both countries also share the same strategic approach to world order, and are strong



Indian cooperation with and long-time friendship with the USSR, and Russia as its state successor, have had one of the most significant impacts on the Indian position in Russia's war against Ukraine

proponents of spheres of influence³⁰. For the Indian ‘plurilateral’ approach in foreign policy, Russia is seen as an important pillar.

S. Jaishankar also sees the Russian war in Ukraine through the lens of Indian postcolonial criticism of the West. “Europe has to grow out of the mindset that its problems are the world’s problems, but the world’s problems aren’t Europe’s problems³¹,” he said, answering a question

on India’s position on the war. He mentioned that India has one-fifth of the world’s population, and is among the biggest economic players, which makes it entitled to take its own sides and “weigh his own interests”. While speaking about an increase in the level of trade with Russia, the Indian foreign minister also redirected this issue to Europe which “is still much bigger consumer of Russian energy resources”.

The USSR Legacy in the Indo-Russian Friendship

Indian cooperation with and long-time friendship with the USSR, and Russia as its state successor, have had one of the most significant impacts on the Indian position in Russia’s war against Ukraine. There were historical episodes where observers in India supposed that Soviet support was essential to New Delhi. Mainly, there is a shared conception that Soviet engagement during the 1971 conflict helped to deter US military action against India³². In 1971, India also signed its first political treaty with another nation, and it was with the USSR – the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, thus deviating its position as a non-aligned state during the Cold War. This history is transmitted into Indo-Russian relations, together with its core element – military cooperation. A total of 86% of the equipment,

28 *Europe ‘mischaracterizing’ India’s position in Ukraine conflict: Jaishankar*, “Business Standard”, 07 June 2022 [https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/europe-mischaracterising-india-s-position-in-ukraine-conflict-jaishankar-122060300888_1.html]

29 C. Jaffrelot, *Indian debates on the War in Ukraine: All Roads Lead to a Consensus*, Institut Montaigne, 07 June 2022 [<https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/blog/indian-debates-war-ukraine-all-roads-lead-consensus>]

30 S. Lalwani, F. O’Donnell, T. Sagerstrom, A. Vasudeva, *The Influence of Arms: Explaining the Durability of India-Russia Alignment*, “Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs”, 15 January 2021 [<https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2473328/the-influence-of-arms-explaining-the-durability-of-indiarussia-alignment/#sdcndnote92sym>]

31 *Europe ‘mischaracterizing’ India’s position in Ukraine conflict: Jaishankar*, “Business Standard”, 07 June 2022 [https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/europe-mischaracterising-india-s-position-in-ukraine-conflict-jaishankar-122060300888_1.html]

32 S. Lalwani, F. O’Donnell, T. Sagerstrom, A. Vasudeva, *The Influence of Arms: Explaining the Durability of India-Russia Alignment*, “Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs”, 15 January 2021 [<https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2473328/the-influence-of-arms-explaining-the-durability-of-indiarussia-alignment/#sdcndnote92sym>]

weapons, and platforms currently used by the military in India is of Russian origin³³. This arms supply dependence has its roots in Soviet-era cooperation, and the necessity to counter threats from both Pakistan and China.

In the last few years, India has been looking for an opportunity to diversify its arms supplies through purchases from France, Israel, and the US. Washington is the second largest defence partner of India, yet the quantity of deliveries is far lower than those from Russia. Other countries have boosted arms sales from nothing to USD16–18 billion since 2005. At the same time, India signed USD15 billion contracts for arms sales with Russia, just between 2018 and 2019. S. Lalwani also mentions the Russian options that make cooperation with Moscow so attractive to New Delhi. For over a decade, India has been seeking to deepen indigenisation of production. “Russia was more open to India’s demand for licensed production or joint development on some technologically advanced systems, like cruise missiles, nuclear submarines, fighter aircraft, nuclear energy, and surface ships (including an aircraft carrier)”³⁴.

The US is also working on decreasing Russian arms deliveries to the individual states, which they are actively cooperating with. Since 2017, Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) is aimed at punishing Moscow for its aggression. In 2020, Turkey was sanctioned under this act for buying an S-400 surface-to-air missile

system. Since last year, India and the US have been actively negotiating about the cancellation of the Indian agreement with Russia on buying S-400 systems. Such a deal should have been sanctioned under the CAATSA. Yet, New Delhi did not cancel the agreement, stating that such systems are of urgent need, and will be stationed on the country’s border with China. The first system was delivered by Russia in December 2021, and is now stationed on the northwest India border, to repel the threat both from China and Pakistan. However, India cancelled other military agreements with Russia, namely the purchase of 48 additional Mi-17 V5 medium-lift helicopters, as well as “deferred” the acquisition of 21 more MiG-29 and 12 Sukhoi-30MKI fighters³⁵. In July 2022, the US House of Representatives voted on an exemption from CAATSA for India. If India were sanctioned, this would worsen its relations with the USA significantly, and the strong cooperation between the two states is seen by both as necessary in terms of countering Chinese threats in the region. Indian-American Congressman Ro Hanna, who introduced the amendment, said that the “US should take additional steps to encourage India to accelerate India’s transition of Russian-built weapons”³⁶.

Interest-based Neutrality

In recent months, India has increased its imports from Russia. According to information provided by the Indian Ministry of Commerce, the total number of imports from Russia grew by almost three times for

33 S. Singh, *86 per cent of Indian military equipment of Russian Origin: Stimson Center Paper*, “The Indian Express”, 22 July 2020 [<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/86-per-cent-of-indian-military-equipment-of-russian-origin-stimson-center-paper-6517136/>]

34 S. Lalwani, F. O’Donnell, T. Sagerstrom, A. Vasudeva, *The Influence of Arms: Explaining the Durability of India-Russia Alignment*, “Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs”, 15 January 2021 [<https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2473328/the-influence-of-arms-explaining-the-durability-of-indiarussia-alignment/#sdcndnote92sym>]

35 R. Pandit, *India to deploy 2nd S-400 squadron at China Front as PLA jets buzz near LAC*, “The Times of India”, 25 July 2022 [<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-to-deploy-2nd-s-400-squadron-at-china-front-as-pla-jets-buzz-near-lac/articleshow/93096672.cms>]

36 R. Singh, *Explained: US exempts India from CAATSA, what is it*, “The Indian Express”, 15 July 2022 [<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/us-caatsa-india-russia-s400-missile-weapons-system-8016536/>]

the period of April-May 2022, in comparison to the previous year. For only three months (from April to June), India imported two-thirds of its previous yearly import of fertilisers from Russia³⁷ – 7.74 million tons. It is a similar situation with spending on Russian energy. During April-June, oil imports from Russia rose to 682,200 bpd from 22,500 bpd in the same period last year³⁸. Previously, Russia has also been the second largest supplier of crude oil to India, but since February 2022, it has boosted its share up to 19.8% in June. Iraq, which was the biggest supplier of oil to India in June, had a share of 26% of all imports.



India calls its position in Russia's war against Ukraine 'neutral' and 'based on national interests'. Yet this stance is just as much a result of post-colonial history, and previous active cooperation between Moscow and New Delhi

Such an economic approach corresponds with the political position that the conflict is 'European centred', and Asian countries can follow what they see as a convenient path for themselves. Both active politicians like foreign minister S. Jaishankar, as well as former ones who represent the expert community, now point to this narrative while commenting on the Indian position on the Russian war against Ukraine. Another justification is that Russia, with its invasion of Ukraine is doing the same as the West was doing in Asia in earlier times. Former national security advisor in the government

of Manmohan Singh, Shivshankar Menon has repeatedly mentioned this, naming the US invasion of Iraq and the Vietnam War as examples. Taking into consideration such an approach, India sees itself as free to make decisions on its trade partnerships. Also, its close partnership with Russia, and a long-time portrayal of the country as a close friend, influence the narratives and positions. In the Indian mainstream media, it is often mentioned that the current 'neutral' position in the Russian war against Ukraine corresponds with Indian national interests, as Russia is a big security guarantor for the country – it provides the largest number of arms to India. These supplies are vital for India, which has territorial disputes with both China and Pakistan.

Conclusion

India calls its position in Russia's war against Ukraine 'neutral' and 'based on national interests'. Yet this stance is just as much a result of post-colonial history, and previous active cooperation between Moscow and New Delhi. Countries have a similar vision of the world order, and support the idea of spheres of influence. Their current position on the conflict also resembles the Indian stance towards the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, when Indians shared a common sympathy towards the Czechs whose freedom was destroyed by the Soviet invasion, but officially 'abstained' in the UN and did not express harsh criticism.

Among the Indian elite, there is also a vision of this war as a 'European' conflict, which Europe and the West must manage along with Russia. At the same time, India

37 N. Masih, *India turns to Russian fertilizer, showing challenge of isolating Moscow*, "The Washington Post", 04 August 2022 [<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/04/india-russia-fertilizer-oil-imports/>]

38 N. Verma, *Russia's share of India's June oil imports surges to record*, "Reuters", 11 July 2022 [<https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/russias-share-indias-june-oil-imports-surges-record-2022-07-11/>]

is ready to be a mediator between the two sides of the conflict. Many speakers also see the Russian invasion as an understandable reaction to the desire of NATO to expand along the Russian borders. Thus, the current Indian position is rooted in the deep history of relations with the West, and Ukraine could try to challenge it only through cooperating with the Western countries. Only a mutual approach of the West and Ukraine can make the position of the biggest democracy in the world truly pro-democratic.

Olga Vorozhbyt is deputy editor-in-chief of the Ukrainian weekly 'Ukrainskyi Tyzhden'. She is also a PhD candidate at the Ivan Franko National University in Lviv where she is writing her dissertation on the institutionalization of the Indian party system. Olga graduated from the National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy in 2013 with an MA in European and German studies. Since 2013, she has worked both as a journalist and a researcher.

FROM DOWN UNDER: WHY IS AUSTRALIA SO INVOLVED IN THE WAR IN UKRAINE?

*Dr Izabela Pereira Watts
University of Wollongong and
University of New South Wales (Australia)*

Geographically, Australia is far from the war raging in Ukraine; nevertheless, it is the largest non-NATO contributor of defence assistance to Ukraine. Since the Russian invasion, it has been a close ally by providing military, financial, humanitarian, and political support. Why is Australia so involved in a war in which the battlefield is so far away? This paper analyses the engagement of Australian foreign policy and the geopolitical security power balance through AUKUS and ANZUS. It will also argue that Australian involvement in the conflict has lingered since 2014 by evoking the memories of MH17. It will additionally examine the Australian multicultural social fabric that corroborates with the #StandwithUkraine movement and the impact of the war on the Australian domestic economy. Lastly, it will conclude by identifying what lessons Australian foreign policy should learn from Ukraine, and advocating for the need to focus on the post-war recovery.

Foreign Policy: Geographically Distant but Not Neutral

Since 24 February 2022, Australia has officially advocated and supported Ukraine. It is an integral part of the Australian Foreign Policy principles, the belief in a global order built on the UN Charter, international law and institutions, and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. On a multilateral level, it has condemned Russia's invasion, through several official statements claiming

that "Australia is part of this strong, unified coalition against Russia's illegal war"¹. It has also advocated for the protection of civilians, humanitarian access inside Ukraine and safe passage for civilians trying to flee the violence. Australia has voted in favour of Ukraine in all UN General Assembly's resolutions on the matter. That includes the unprecedented majority vote for UN General Assembly Resolution ES11/1² on 02 March, condemning the unilateral aggression and claiming for complete complete withdrawal,

1 H. M. Payne, *Statement to the Senate on Ukraine*, 2022
[<https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/marise-payne/speech/statement-senate-ukraine>]

2 *UN General Assembly Resolution ES 11/1* (Resolution passed with 141 voting in favour out of 193 members. Only 5 Russia, Belarus, Syria, North Korea and Eritrea voted against and there were 35 abstentions)
[<https://www.un.org/en/ga/sessions/emergency11th.shtml>]

as well as for the suspension of Russia from the UN Human Rights Council on 07 April. It has also shown diplomatic support for the decision of the International Court of Justice on 16 March.^{3,4}



Australia is the most significant non-NATO contributor to Ukraine in defence of its sovereignty.

Australia alone has provided USD100 million in military assistance

On a bilateral level, there is evidence of a strong and continuous relationship. President Zelenskyy addressed the Australian Parliament on 31 March 2022, and presented to other Australian audiences, including universities. Notably, Australian political support has been constant, despite the internal shift in domestic politics after the federal elections on 21 May 2022. The visit of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to Kyiv in July demonstrated the clear support of Australia, as well as the national uniformity of the Australian foreign policy on this conflict, regardless of political parties' disputes.

Military and Economic Support

Australia is the most significant non-NATO contributor to Ukraine in defence of its sovereignty. Australia alone has provided USD100 million in military assistance,

including 14 armoured personnel carriers, 60 Bushmaster protected mobility vehicles, 28 Armoured Vehicles M113AS4, and demining equipment supplied by Australia's defence industry⁵. It is worthwhile observing that on each Bushmaster, a Ukrainian flag was painted on either side with the words "United with Ukraine" stencilled in English and Ukrainian, to acknowledge the commitment and support of Australia⁶. Moreover, understanding the importance of cyber security in this conflict, US\$6 million has been donated to assist Ukraine's Border Guard Service in upgrading border management equipment, and enhancing border operations in the field. Additionally, almost USD2 million in financial and equipment aid was donated regarding radiation detection through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), to help protect against chemical attacks⁷. The additional contribution to NATO's Ukraine Comprehensive Assistance Package Trust Fund brings Australia's total military assistance to Ukraine to approximately USD 270 million⁸. More than just tanks, USD 45 million in humanitarian assistance has been provided through trusted partners, to help meet the urgent needs of the Ukrainian people. To support Ukraine's energy security, 70,000 tonnes of thermal coal worth USD 22.6 million has also been delivered. The supply of humanitarian relief was also announced in cooperation with

3 *Joint Statement on Supporting Ukraine in Its Proceedings at the International Court of Justice*, European Council, 2022.

4 D. Crowe, *Australia Asked to Help in Ukraine War Crimes Investigation*, "The Sydney Morning Herald", 2022 [<https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/joint-statement-supporting-ukraine-its-proceedings-international-court-justice>]

5 *Australia to Gift 20 Bushmasters to Government of Ukraine*, Australian Government Defense news release, 2022 [<https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/peter-dutton/statements/australia-gift-20-bushmasters-government-ukraine>]

6 *Australia Increases Support to Ukraine*, Australian Government Defense news release, 2022 [<https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/rmarles/media-releases/australia-increases-support-ukraine>]

7 *Invasion of Ukraine by Russia*, DFAT news release, 2022 [<https://www.dfat.gov.au/crisis-hub/invasion-ukraine-russia>]

8 *Visit to Kyiv and Further Australian Support to Ukraine*, Prime Minister of Australia news release, 2022, [<https://www.pm.gov.au/media/visit-kyiv-and-further-australian-support-ukraine>]

the United Kingdom, including blankets, hygiene kits, kitchen sets and lighting for displaced Ukrainians⁹. A special 8000 visa program was implemented, to assist further Ukrainians who have been forced to flee¹⁰.

With its partners, including Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States, Australia prohibited imports of Russian gold, to reduce its ability to fund the war, and implemented duty-free access for Ukrainian imports to Australia for a period of 12 months¹¹. They have also banned the import of Russian oil, petroleum, coal and gas, prohibited the export of alumina, bauxite and luxury goods to Russia, and introduced an additional tariff of 35% on imports from Russia and Belarus.



It can be argued that the Australian involvement in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict dates back to 17 July 2014, when Malaysian commercial aircraft MH17 was shot out of the sky over territory in eastern Ukraine controlled by the Russian proxies

At the same time, Australia and its partners are imposing a high economic toll on Russia, by focusing on the elites and high-level political decision-makers in Russia and Belarus. Australia has listed more than

843 individuals and 62 entities, including President Putin and his circle of oligarchs. This represents the largest ever imposition of sanctions by Australia against a single country. Notably, the listings include 80% of Russia's banking sector and all government entities that handle Russia's sovereign debt. Lastly, Australia committed almost USD 1 million to support the International Criminal Court investigation into reported Russian war crimes¹².

Memories of MH17 and the Australian National Interest

So, why is Australia so involved in a war that is geographically so far away? It can be argued that the Australian involvement in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict dates back to 17 July 2014, when Malaysian commercial aircraft MH17 was shot out of the sky over territory in eastern Ukraine controlled by the Russian proxies. All 298 people on board, including 38 Australians, were killed. Since then, under the premise of National Interest, Australia has been in a close relationship with Ukraine through a joint investigation team (JIT), in partnership with Belgium, Malaysia, and the Netherlands. Five years later, the JIT concluded that the plane was shot down by a Russian missile from its 53rd Antiaircraft Missile Brigade. Claiming for justice, Australia has been a vivid advocate for resolutions on the matter, including at the UN Security Council¹³. The evidence files have been on hold in Canberra, waiting for the right political momentum, to be handed

9 *Invasion of Ukraine by Russia*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2022.

10 O. Oleinikova, J. Dantas, T. Bogachenko, *Australia's Special Visa Program for Ukrainians to End, Despite War Raging On*, "The Conversation", 15 July 2022 [<https://theconversation.com/australias-special-visa-program-for-ukrainians-to-end-despite-war-raging-on-186829>]

11 *Trade Assistance to Ukraine*, Minister for Trade and Tourism news release, 2022

[<https://www.trademinister.gov.au/minister/don-farrell/media-release/trade-assistance-ukraine>]

12 *Invasion of Ukraine by Russia*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2022.

13 N. O'Malley, *Mh17: Votes Unanimously to Support Australia's Resolution for Access to Crash Site*, "The Morning Herald", 22 July 2014 [<https://www.smh.com.au/world/mh17-un-votes-unanimously-to-support-australias-resolution-for-access-to-crash-site-20140722-zvvhm4.html>]

over as a former case to the International Criminal Court. On the 8th anniversary of the tragedy, the Australian Government states that it “will pursue every available avenue to ensure Russia is held to account”¹⁴.

The memories of MH17 are still very present in Australian people. Due to the death of Australian citizens, the episode makes Australians equal victims of Russia’s aggression in a war that is technically not theirs. To keep the Australian Government engaged in supporting Ukraine, President Zelenskyy strategically referred to that incident when addressing the Australian Parliament and other Aussie audiences.¹⁵

#StandwithUkraine

It is estimated that a community of Ukrainian-born people or their descendants of 30,000 to 50,000 lives in Australia. Although the first and second migration waves came after WWI and WWII, respectively, a more significant wave of migration arrived following Ukraine’s independence in 1991¹⁶. According to the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations, the Australian Ukrainian community is proactive in encouraging its members to maintain their religion, language, culture and heritage, whilst being active members of the broader Australian community.

Australia’s social fabric is multi-cultural, where 50% of its population has either been born overseas or one of the parents comes from abroad. Thus, Australian citizens have a strong sense of empathy through diversity.

This so-called mateship, allied with a robust sense of equality and justice, explains why the Australian people #standwithUkraine and join forces on an individual level to support Ukrainians, expressing this through protests on the streets and donations. But the advocacy towards the Ukrainian cause might exceed common sense in the domestic bread-and-butter affairs. There are allegations that the Russian community, and consequently former Soviet citizens as well, from countries such as Kazakhstan, Estonia and Belarus, have been discriminated against in Australia despite this not being their personal war, as they are just normal working people, and they were mainly born here. Some claim to have lost their jobs or not been able to find one because of their Russian background. Nevertheless, there is also the beauty of unity in multiculturalism. In an act of solidarity, when the invasion started, hundreds of Australians of Ukrainian descent joined those with Russian heritage to demonstrate against the Russian invasion of Ukraine in downtown Sydney¹⁷.

AUKUS, AUZUS, and Geopolitical Security: The Middle Power Syndrome

The past 25 years under prime ministers Howard, Rudd, Gillard, Abbott, and Turnbull were years of sclerosis and decline in Australia’s foreign policy. Despite being a natural regional leader in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, Australia has gradually acquired the image of the “cute little koala” that follows the United Kingdom and US foreign policy via an

14 *Anniversary of the Downing of Flight Mh17*, Australia Minister of Foreign Affairs news release, 17 July 2022 [<https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/media-release/anniversary-downing-flight-mh17>]

15 E. Sakzewski, *How Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s Speeches to Parliaments Tap into Key Sensitivities*, “ABC News”, 2022 [<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-04-01/volodymyr-zelensky-speech-to-australian-parliament-meaning/100913466>]

16 *Ukraine Born Community Information*, Department of Home Affairs, 2016.

17 *Ukrainians, Russians in Australia Unite against Putin’s War*, “Aljazeera”, 2022

[<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/27/ukrainians-and-russians-in-australia-unite-against-putins-war>]

unquestioned strategic alignment. By just coping with policies without any creativity, it has limited its power of bargain and prestige in the vast international arena. Particularly since the Afghanistan war in 2001, Australia has adopted a play-it-safe foreign policy, based on the orthodoxy of national security. Nevertheless, with the increased perception of the necessity to counterbalance China's economic and military presence, it exacerbates the middle power syndrome long taken for granted¹⁸.



By showing strong support for Ukraine, this is also an opportunity to regain a position on the international stage for further national interest negotiation. But most of all, to re-earn its reputation in spheres of human rights

When the Russian military seized the Donbas region in 2014, there seemed little doubt that the balance of power had moved in Russia's favour. But geopolitical security architecture is not something only exclusive to Eurocentrics. A NATO-alike platform has been in place since 1951 between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States (ANZUS or ANZUS Treaty) for collective security on military matters in the Pacific Ocean region. Despite some disagreement regarding New Zealand's choice of a nuclear-free zone in its territorial waters, and the historical changes in international order since the end of Cold War, ANZUS has been reignited since 2007. The treaty provides that an armed attack from anywhere, not only in the region, on

any of the three parties, would be deemed dangerous to the others, and that each should act to meet the common threat. Australia and New Zealand agree that the war in Ukraine is a Russian war, not the West versus Russia as if we were back in the era of the bipolar order¹⁹.

The wider Indo-Pacific region has witnessed a rise in tension, such as China's actions in the South China Sea, and towards Hong Kong and Taiwan, the military coup in Myanmar, and the threat to regional peace and stability posed by North Korea's repeated ballistic missile tests. To stabilise the new balance of powers in the global order, in late 2021, a trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (AUKUS) was established, and included nuclear submarine purchase and cooperation on artificial intelligence, cyber, quantum, underwater systems, and long-range strike capabilities. All this reaffirmed the Australian foreign mantra of "trade profitably with China while securely protected by US military power". China has little tolerance for Australia trying to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. On this complex chessboard, fighting against Russia can directly impact the ambiguous Sino-Australian relations. And therefore, it limits its influence in any major international affair.

In the pragmatic game of politics, it is well known that there is no free lunch. By showing strong support for Ukraine, this is also an opportunity to regain a position on the international stage for further national interest negotiation. But most of all, to re-earn its reputation in spheres of human rights and respect for international

18 T. Kevin, *Australian Foreign Policy Needs a Shake-up after Two Decades of Sclerotic Decline*, "The Conversation", 01 October 2015 [<https://theconversation.com/australian-foreign-policy-needs-a-shake-up-after-two-decades-of-sclerotic-decline-48016>]

19 *Jacinda interview by New Zealand Prime Minister Ardern*, 07 July 2022 [<https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/address-new-zealand-prime-minister-jacinda-ardern>]

law long lost with its policy of stopping the boats full of refugees, offshore asylum detention, Aboriginal segregation, a poor record on climate change and even the use of illegal listening devices in sovereign offices abroad. Furthermore, it is also a call to seek a more independent foreign policy, such as that held by New Zealand, as the US is not the prudent custodian of international peace it once allegedly was. To continue supporting Ukraine is fundamental to defending the sacrosanct principle of sovereignty in international law. But it is also time to revive the art of diplomacy, both in style and substance, from a broader perspective with a little more questioning and forethought.



Australia is far from the war raging in Ukraine. Yet, Australia has been very close to the action, as it has been intensely involved with the conflict in Ukraine since 2014, by providing political, financial, military, and humanitarian support

The AUKUS submarine deal will initially cost at least US\$116 Million, not including the additional US\$584 million in compensation to France. With a historical deficit in Australia's balance of trade for decades and an economy in decline, it is not clear to the taxpayers where all the financial and military support to Ukraine will come from. Nevertheless, all military assistance to Ukraine equally helps the arms industry within Australia, both for job creation and to review its production capabilities.

Uke Lessons to Kangaroos

The Ukrainian military reinvented itself in the space of 8 years, and their people have shown herculean resistance. It is fundamental to identify lessons from the Ukraine situation.

First, if AUKUS is to empower the Australian military capacity in the event of a conflict within its sphere of direct influence, it will be expected to do a much heavier lifting than it is doing so far away²⁰. If that is the case, the political and financial means must be foreseeable. Canberra is not moving fast enough to prepare for a future in which Australian sovereignty and strategic interests might be directly challenged by a hostile great power. The Australian Defence Forces (ADF) must review its strength, structure, size and operational fighting capability. It lacks the range and depth to pose dilemmas for a highly capable adversary in Australia's immediate region, such as China. Although the ADF has dismissed its longstanding assumption that Australia would have 10 years of strategic warning in advance of any conflict, too many of its planned military investments are set to deliver at some time in the 2030s and 2040s²¹. If the incidence and severity of climate-related disasters impacting the Pacific neighbours increase, Australia has a moral and strategic responsibility to do more and to do so more rapidly. The current warfare in Ukraine and the use of the asymmetrical responses, as well as a certain type of ammunition, provide a lessons-learned opportunity for Australia.

Second, if the Russian invasion of Ukraine turns into a long war, a key factor will be whether material support to the Ukrainians

20 E. Buchanan, *Australia's Ukraine Policy*, Australian Institute of International Affairs, 04 March 2022 [<https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/australias-ukraine-policy/>]

21 A. Townshend, *Russia's Ukraine Invasion Must Be Australia's Clarion Call*, United States Study Center, April 2022, #26 [<https://www.uscc.edu.au/analysis/russias-ukraine-invasion-must-be-australias-clarion-call>]

is sufficient to sustain their operational success. As the case of Afghanistan shows, defence forces cannot be solely dependent on foreign supplies. Although AUKUS will assist with equipment and technology, not a single missile is currently produced in Australia²².

Third, President Zelenskyy has strategically been able to capture as much support as possible worldwide, not only in Europe or among NATO members²³. The more assistance he gets, the greater his country's resilience to win the war and to recover from it. Thus, it is time for Australia to recapture the spirit of being a middle power and to review its foreign policy with more independence from the UK and US. Importantly, with the decline of the US as the hegemon, Australia must seek further alliances with more regional strategic partners, such as Japan and India, under the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD). In addition, Australia is one of the NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partners, alongside Ukraine, Finland, Georgia, Jordan, and Sweden. Each of the partners has a tailor-made relationship with NATO, based on areas of mutual interest. Nevertheless, that is a space to enhance the bilateral relationship between Australia and Ukraine, as well as with allies and partners that have made significant contributions to NATO-led operations and missions under the NATO Partnership Interoperability Initiative (PII).

Conclusion

Australia is far from the war raging in Ukraine. Yet, Australia has been very close to the action, as it has been intensely involved with the conflict in Ukraine since 2014, by providing political, financial, military, and humanitarian

support. Most importantly, the Australian people #standwithUkraine, including the Russian and Ukraine community.

If Kangaroos can learn anything, it is that it is time to get ready for great power competition worldwide. Though this European security crisis is unfolding far beyond the region, Australia's response aligns with its strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific. And therefore, it is creating the momentum to revisit its role as a middle power.

Notably, the support to Ukraine must be continuous to be sustainable. Not just a one-time announcement in the heat of the moment, and a photo opportunity of visits to a devastated area. It is time for the international community to start thinking about the post-recovery. The long-term financial impact of all the military, economic and humanitarian support might also result in a catastrophe in the domestic economy and a too-high political cost for a recently elected government. Nevertheless, this is necessary. The Australian involvement in the war in Ukraine goes beyond a simple and genuine act of solidarity and justice. It also advances Australia's international image and the perspectives of realpolitik from down under.

Izabela Pereira Watts, PhD, is a Lecturer in International Studies and Political Sciences at the University of Wollongong and in Global Development at the University of New South Wales in Australia. She is a former UN peacekeeper and an expert in peacebuilding, democracy building and fragile states. Book author of "Peace or Democracy? 14 peacebuilding dilemmas after civil wars (upcoming Routledge-UK 2022)."

22 M. Shoebridge, *Seven Lessons for Australia from Ukraine*, "Australian Review", 08 April 2022 [https://www.afr.com/policy/foreign-affairs/seven-lessons-for-australia-from-ukraine-20220405-p5ab2c]

23 *More Than Applause: What Zelensky Needs from His Address to the Australian Parliament*, ASPI Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 30 March 2022 [https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/more-than-applause-what-zelensky-needs-from-his-address-to-the-australian-parliament/]

UA: UKRAINE
ANALYTICA

Issue 2 (28), 2022

ISSN 2518-7481