

# Unpacking China's Response to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Strategic Ambiguity, Conflict Mediation, and the Rise of the Global South

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# 1. Introduction

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When Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, its immediate objective was regime change in Kyiv and forcing Ukraine back into Russian orbit. Regarding long-term strategic goals, President Putin has framed the war in Ukraine as a battle between Russia and the ‘collective West’, the first step in undoing the post-Cold War international order that has ignored Russia’s national interests and diminished its position in the world. In other words, as seen by Putin, his ultimate goal is to restore Russia’s ‘rightful’ place in the world by joining with the Global South to create a ‘truly multipolar order’ in which numerous countries share power instead of one (the U.S.) dominating it.<sup>1</sup>

There has been a growing perception worldwide that the liberal international order (LIO) is coming to an end.<sup>2</sup> A powerful array of non-Western states seeks to weaken/transform the order, smaller states aim to exit the order while seeking alternative patrons, and Western right-wing networks look to subvert the order from within. Each of these factors interacts and reinforces each other.<sup>3</sup> Russia’s invasion of Ukraine was a watershed moment insofar that it has clearly exposed the fault lines between how the West views the global governance system it fashioned after World War II and how the rest of the world does. Indeed, what is most striking about Russia’s illegal war of aggression against Ukraine is that most of the world outside the West has shown little interest in punishing Russia for its transgressions, adopting instead a position of ‘strategic non-alignment/strategic neutrality’.

On February 25, 2022, in a crucial UN Security Council (UNSC) vote on a resolution deploring the Russian invasion of Ukraine, India and the UAE decided to join China in abstaining, raising eyebrows in the West.<sup>4</sup> Five days later, on March 2, despite 141 member states voting in favour of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution demanding that Russia unconditionally withdraw from Ukraine, the real news was that China, India, South Africa, Vietnam, Pakistan, and Iran were among 32 countries that abstained.<sup>5</sup> As for the largest country in Latin America, although Brazil voted in favour of the March 2 resolution, on April 7 the same year, when the UNGA held a vote on a U.S.-initiated resolution to suspend Russia from the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), Brazil abstained arguing that the resolution would politicize the UNHRC discussions and result in the ‘disengagement of the relevant actors’ thus hindering

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<sup>1</sup> For Russia’s view on LIO, see, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, “President of Russia Vladimir Putin’s Speech at the Meeting with Senior Staff of the Russian Foreign Ministry”; and Alexey Drobnin, “The Vision of a Multipolar World: The Civilizational Factor and Russia’s Place in the Emerging World Order,” *Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Hellenic Republic*, February 21, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed analysis, see, David A. Lake, “The End of the Liberal International Order?,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 19, no. 1 (2026); and Stacie E. Goddard et al., “Liberalism Doomed the Liberal International Order,” *Foreign Affairs*, July 28, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed analysis, see Alexander Cooley and Daniel Nixon, *Exit from Hegemony: The Unravelling of the American Global Order* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> UNSC, “Security Council Fails to Adopt Draft Resolution Ending Ukraine Crisis, as Russian Federation Wields Veto.”

<sup>5</sup> UNGA, “Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on 2 March 2022. ES11/1: Aggression against Ukraine.”

'dialogue for peace'.<sup>6</sup>

At the time of writing a final draft, four years into the conflict, countries in the Global South, despite their long-standing adherence to the principle of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, refuse to either condemn Moscow's invasion of Ukraine or join with the West in sanctioning and isolating Russia. Even more, the West's call for a principled and unequivocal response to the aggression against Ukraine is seen as hypocritical. As Leonard aptly summarized: 'The West's commitment to the principle of sovereignty in Ukraine rings somewhat hollow after years of Western drones patrolling the skies above Pakistan and Afghanistan. Weren't these the same countries that changed international borders in Kosovo, overthrew Muammar Qaddafi in Libya and invaded Iraq?'<sup>7</sup> The countries of the Global South view the Western-led LIO as a tool for promoting Western interests and perceive the war in Ukraine as primarily a European problem. It is thus not surprising that they have chosen to focus on protecting their own interests amid the economic and geopolitical upheaval caused by the war, while largely ignoring the Western narrative, which frames the conflict as a final battle between democracy and tyranny.<sup>8</sup>

The overarching aim of this paper is to elucidate China's strategic calculus in the Ukraine war within the wider context of a shifting global international order. The study is composed of five sections organized around key themes. Following the introduction, Section 2 examines China's diplomatic response to the conflict, including Beijing's voting behaviour in UN fora, the incorporation of the concept of 'indivisible security' into its global security vision, and its opposition to unilateral sanctions against Russia. Section 3 explores China's strategic narratives on the Russo-Ukrainian war, with a focus on China's critical stance towards the U.S., NATO, and the EU's involvement in the conflict. Section 4 discusses China's mediation efforts in the Ukraine conflict, such as the 2023 Peace Plan and the 2024 Six-point Consensus. Section 5 delves into China's short, medium, and long-term strategic calculations in relation to the Russia-Ukraine war. In the short term, it discusses the rationale behind China's assistance for Russia's war effort. The medium-term analysis addresses the internationalization of the RMB to build financial market resilience, the sanction-proofing of the economy, and the revision of military strategy and tactics in light of a possible Taiwan contingency. In the long term, the section examines limitations of the Sino-Russian strategic partnership and China's pivot towards the Global South in the context of an emerging multilateral international order. The findings of the study will contribute to our understanding of the ongoing strategic competition between the U.S. and China.

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<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, "UN General Assembly Resolution on the Suspension of Russia's Membership in the Human Rights Council."

<sup>7</sup> Mark Leonard, "Europe's Self-destructive Identity Crisis," *The Strategist*, May 6, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Timothy Snyder, "Ukraine Holds the Future: The War Between Democracy and Nihilism," *Foreign Affairs* 101, no. 5 (2022); and Roberto Stefan Foa and Xavier Romero-Vidal, "A Rally for Democracy? Authoritarian Resurgence, Ukraine, and Global Democratic Allegiance," *Perspectives on Politics*, 2025.

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## 2. China's Official Position on the War in Ukraine

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Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine presents China with a profound challenge. On the one hand, Russia is an indispensable strategic partner that helps Beijing rally support across the Global South and promote an alternative to the Western model of governance; on the other hand, China has for a long time sought to position itself as a global leader that adheres to principles of sovereign equality and territorial integrity of states. While Beijing needs to preserve the Sino-Russian axis essential for containing Western influence, it cannot afford to disregard the above cherished principles. As a result, China has adopted a policy of strategic ambiguity towards the conflict in Ukraine. Over the past four years, Beijing has strengthened its ties with Russia while avoiding a direct confrontation with the West; it has maintained formal neutrality while signalling support for Russia's justification of the war (i.e. the claim that NATO's eastward expansion provoked Russia's 'special military operation' in Ukraine); it has refused to call Russia's actions in Ukraine an 'invasion' while consistently voicing its support for Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity and never recognizing the annexation of Crimea or the independence of Luhansk and Donetsk. This section examines China's diplomatic response to the conflict, with particular attention to its voting behaviour in UN fora, the incorporation of the concept of 'indivisible security' into its global security vision, and its opposition to unilateral sanctions imposed by the West on Russia.

### 2.1. China's Diplomatic Response to the Conflict in Ukraine

On April 1, 2022, during the EU-China Summit, President Xi outlined China's priorities in resolving the Ukraine crisis, saying China seeks to promote peace talks, prevent a humanitarian crisis, foster lasting peace in the Eurasian continent through a 'balanced, effective and sustainable security framework in Europe', and prevent the regional conflict from escalating.<sup>9</sup> *China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis*, a twelve-point paper published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) on the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion, further clarified Beijing's basic position on the conflict. It called for all parties to uphold the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of all countries, abandon the Cold War mentality, cease hostilities and resume peace talks, resolve the humanitarian crisis and protect civilians and POWs, reduce nuclear weapons-related strategic risks, refrain from imposing unilateral sanctions, facilitate grain exports, and keep industrial and supply chains stable.<sup>10</sup> The paper, without naming Russia, repeats China's opposition to any use of nuclear weapons while

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<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "President Xi Jinping Meets with European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen."

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Guanyu Zhengzhi Jiejue Wukelan Weijide Zhongguo Lichang [China's Position on a Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis]."

alluding to Moscow's violations of Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity; without naming the U.S. and EU, it criticizes their 'Cold War mentality' and reiterates China's opposition to unilateral sanctions. The way China framed its position on resolving the Ukraine conflict shows that its primary audience has been the Global South, a group of countries crucial for advancing China's vision of global order.

Turning to China's voting behaviour in UN fora, on February 25, 2022, in a crucial UNSC vote on a resolution deploring the Russian invasion of Ukraine, China's representative abstained, arguing that the UNSC should act to 'defuse and not add fuel to the fire.' The resolution failed due to a Russian veto, amid 11 votes of support, and China, India, and the UEA's abstentions.<sup>11</sup> On March 2, China abstained from a vote at the UNGA for a non-binding resolution condemning Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. China's Ambassador to the UN said that the draft resolution 'does not highlight the importance of the principle of indivisible security, or the urgency of promoting political settlement and stepping up diplomatic efforts. These are not in line with China's consistent positions. Therefore, we have no choice but to abstain in the voting.'<sup>12</sup> On March 24, China abstained from voting on the UNGA resolution on the humanitarian consequences of the aggression against Ukraine, arguing that it opposes elements of the resolution that go beyond the 'humanitarian context.'<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, China supported a competing resolution proposed by South Africa, which did not mention Russia, but the resolution was not put to a vote.<sup>14</sup>

Although China abstained in the majority of votes in the UNSC and UNGA, it voted against the April 7 resolution suspending Russia from the UNHRC. China's ambassador to the UN stated that this resolution would jeopardize peace efforts and 'set a new dangerous precedent' for the UN governance system.<sup>15</sup> As for the UN International Court of Justice (ICJ), on March 16, 2022, Xue Hanqin, a judge nominated by China, voted against provisional measures ordering Russia to suspend its military operations in Ukraine.<sup>16</sup> In another development, on May 26, 2022, China's envoy to the World Health Organization (WHO) voted against a U.S. proposal that condemned Russia for creating a health emergency in Ukraine.<sup>17</sup>

Regarding the BRICS's position on the war, on May 19, 2022, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi chaired the annual BRICS Summit, which brought together the foreign ministers of Brazil, Russia, India,

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<sup>11</sup> UNSC, "Security Council Fails to Adopt Draft Resolution on Ending Ukraine Crisis, as Russian Federation Wields Veto."

<sup>12</sup> Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations, "Explanation of Vote by Ambassador Zhang Jun at the UN General Assembly on the Resolution on Ukraine."

<sup>13</sup> UNGA, "Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on 24 March 2022. ES11/2: Humanitarian Consequences of the Aggression against Ukraine."

<sup>14</sup> United Nations, "General Assembly Adopts Text Recognizing Scale of Humanitarian Woes Arising from Russian Federation's Ukraine Offensive as Unseen in Many Decades."

<sup>15</sup> United Nations, "UN General Assembly Votes to Suspend Russia from the Human Rights Council."

<sup>16</sup> ICJ, "Allegations of Genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Ukraine v. Russian Federation)."

<sup>17</sup> Emma Farge et al., "WHO Condemns Russia's Aggression in Ukraine in Rare Vote, Rejects Moscow's Counter Proposal," *Reuters*, May 27, 2022.

China and South Africa. The five foreign ministers released a joint statement affirming their support for dialogue between Russia and Ukraine and concern over the humanitarian situation: ‘The Ministers recalled their national positions concerning the situation in Ukraine as expressed at the appropriate fora, namely the UNSC and UNGA. They supported talks between Russia and Ukraine. They also discussed their concerns over the humanitarian situation in and around Ukraine and expressed their support to efforts of the UN Secretary-General, UN Agencies and ICRC to provide humanitarian aid in accordance with UN General Assembly resolution 46/182.’<sup>18</sup> The focus of the joint statement is on ‘supporting talks between Russia and Ukraine’, while Russia’s invasion is not mentioned. In this statement, Brazil, China, India, and South Africa reiterated their neutral stance on the war and emphasized the leading role of the UN in the peace process, but refused to formally condemn Russia’s aggression.

## 2.2. The Principle of Indivisible Security

The concept of ‘indivisible security’ can be traced back to the Helsinki Final Act (1975), in which the participating states recognised the ‘indivisibility of security in Europe.’ The concept broadly holds that the security of each state is inextricably linked with the security of every other state; it also implies that the security of one state cannot be achieved at the expense of another. In Russia’s eyes, the notion of ‘indivisible security’ applies to a whole pan-European common security space – NATO’s eastward expansion, however, has pushed the states remaining outside the bloc out of this common space and resulted in its fragmentation.<sup>19</sup> It is thus not surprising that in its justification of the invasion of Ukraine, Russia often refers to the concept of ‘indivisible security’, arguing that NATO’s five rounds of eastward expansion has strengthened the West at the expense of Russia.

In early February 2022, three weeks before Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov sent a letter to his counterparts in the U.S., Canada, and European countries. Lavrov’s letter states:

The Charter for European Security signed at the OSCE Summit in Istanbul in November 1999 formulated key rights and obligations of the OSCE participating States with respect to indivisibility of security. It underscored the right of each participating State to be free to choose or change its security arrangements including treaties of alliances, as they evolve, [...]. The same paragraph of the Charter directly conditions those rights on the obligation of each State not to strengthen its security at the expense of the security of other States. It says further that no State, group of States or Organization [...] can consider any part of the OSCE area as its sphere of influence. [...]

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<sup>18</sup> Ministry of External Affairs of India, “BRICS Joint Statement on ‘Strengthen BRICS Solidarity and Cooperation, Respond to New Features and Challenges in International Situation’.”

<sup>19</sup> Tuomas Forsberg and Christer Pursiainen, “On Indivisible Security: Historical Roots, Conceptual Evolution, and Current Relevance in the OSCE Context,” *TAPRI Studies in Peace and Conflict Research*, no. 111, 2025.

However, the Western countries continue to pick up out of it only those elements that suit them, and namely – the right of States to be free to choose alliances for ensuring exclusively their own security. [...] The principle of indivisible security is selectively interpreted as a justification for the ongoing course toward irresponsible expansion of NATO.<sup>20</sup>

It soon became clear that Russia had weaponized the concept to justify its invasion of Ukraine. For Moscow, proclaiming indivisible security was a diplomatic strategy to present itself as a norm-abiding state to win over the Global South, despite its obvious violations of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, China had endorsed the principle of indivisible security in joint statements with Russia, but the concept had not featured in any Chinese security-related documents.<sup>21</sup> Following the invasion, China has incorporated the principle into its official security discourse, as attested by the *Global Security Initiative Concept Paper* published by the MOFA in February 2023. This is not, however, an ad hoc development but the result of a gradual shift in China's global security outlook under President Xi – a shift towards a broad vision of security that spans traditional and non-traditional domains, emphasizes the security-development nexus, eschews military alliances, and promotes a multi-layered network of institutions that underpin the global security architecture, while remaining rooted in the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference.

In his May 2014 speech at the 4<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) held in Shanghai, President Xi promoted the establishment of a new regional security architecture based on four interlocking ideas: 1) common security [共同安全] understood as ensuring the security of each and every country, 2) comprehensive security [综合安全] that comprise both traditional and non-traditional fields, 3) cooperative security [合作安全] which promotes the security of both individual states and the region as a whole through dialogue and cooperation, and 4) sustainable security [可持续安全] that calls for promoting both economic development and security to make regional security durable. This came to be called a 'New Asian Security Concept (NASC) [亚洲新安全观]'.<sup>22</sup>

In October 2016, China hosted the 7<sup>th</sup> Xiangshan Forum in Beijing, during which then-Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin outlined a framework for a regional security architecture to address the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Liu expanded upon President Xi's NASC, introducing five organizing principles that

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<sup>20</sup> Sergey Lavrov, "Text of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Mr. Sergey Lavrov's Written Message on Indivisibility of Security Addressed to the Heads of Foreign Affairs Ministries of the US, Canada, and Several European Countries."

<sup>21</sup> For example, in a joint statement on China-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership published in 2014, both parties agree to 'unswervingly defend the principle of indivisible security in international relations' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "ZhongE Guanyu Quanmian Zhanlue Xiezuo Huoban Guanxi Xin Jieduande Lianhe Shengming [The Joint Statement on China-Russia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Entering New Stage]").

<sup>22</sup> Shunji Cui, "Zhongguo Yazhou Anquan Renzhi Xin Qushi: Jiyu Feichuantong Anquan Huayude Fenxi [New Trends in China's Perception of Asian Security: From the Vantage Point of Non-Traditional Security]," in *Zhongguo Feichuantong Anquan Yanjiu Baogao 2014-2015* [Report on China's Non-Traditional Security Studies 2014-2015], ed. by Xiaofeng Yu and Zhijiang Wei (Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe, 2015), 44-77.

form China's vision for a new Asian security architecture: 1) the common-comprehensive-cooperative-sustainable (CCCS) security model, 2) international law and international norms, 3) partnerships [伙伴关系] rather than alliances, 4) comprehensive and multi-layered network of institutions focused on enhancing existing security architecture, and 5) promotion of common development and prosperity.<sup>23</sup> By that time, it was already clear that Beijing aspired to build an alternative regional security order by weaving together a web of existing organizations and institutions and bending them towards Beijing's desired strategic ends.

The Global Security Initiative (GSI) [全球安全倡议] was first proposed by President Xi at the Bo'ao Forum for Asia in 2022, and subsequently expanded on in a concept paper published by the MOFA in February 2023. The paper opens with six founding commitments, namely advancing the 'common-comprehensive-cooperate-sustainable' security model, respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, abiding by the principles of the UN Charter, taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously, peacefully resolving disputes between countries through dialogue and consultations, and maintaining security in both traditional and non-traditional domains.<sup>24</sup>

Section 3, titled 'Priorities for Cooperation', details how the PRC would address transnational security challenges and achieve stability in geopolitical hotspots across the world. Here, the focus is on supporting the UN New Agenda for Peace, a new model of 'major-country relations' [大国关系], preventing nuclear war and upholding the comprehensive prohibition of chemical and biological weapons. Section 4 lists 'platforms and mechanisms' for cooperation in the security realm. In addition to the UN Security Council, the concept paper calls for utilizing several existing China-led organizations and security forums to promote security and defence dialogue. The list includes the SCO, the BRICS, the CICA, the China-Central Asia Summit, the East Asia Summit, the Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Neighbouring Countries of Afghanistan, the China-Horn of Africa Peace, Governance and Development Conference, the China-Africa Peace and Security Forum, the Middle East Security Forum, the Xiangshan Forum, and the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum.<sup>25</sup>

The principle of indivisible security [安全不可分割原则] has been incorporated into the fourth founding commitment, namely the obligation to take the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously. The paper states:

The legitimate and reasonable security concerns of all countries should be taken seriously and addressed properly, not persistently ignored or systematically challenged. [...] We uphold the

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<sup>23</sup> Zhenmin Liu, "Waijiaobu Fubuzhang Liu Zhenmin Zai Diqijie Xiangshan Luntan Diyici Quanti Huiyishangde Fayan [Speech by Vice Foreign Minister of China, Mr Liu Zhenmin, at the First Plenary Session of the 7<sup>th</sup> Xiangshan Forum]," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, October 11, 2026.

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Quanqiu Anquan Changyi Gainian Wenjian [The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper]."

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

principle of indivisible security, advocating the indivisibility between individual security and common security, between traditional security and non-traditional security, between security rights and security obligations, and between security and development.<sup>26</sup>

From the above quotation, it is clear that the principle of indivisible security has been incorporated into a pre-existing narrative that emphasizes the obligation to take the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously. It is also clear that the concept has been redefined. While the foundational idea that the security of one state cannot be achieved at the expense of another has been retained, the concept has been expanded to emphasize the indivisibility of traditional and non-traditional security, and to embrace a developmental approach to security.<sup>27</sup>

Overall, the GSI can be interpreted as a manifesto for an alternative system of global governance to the current LIO led by the U.S. Although many of its ideas (including the paramount importance of state sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of states, the policy of eschewing formal alliances, and opposition to unilateral sanctions and bloc confrontation) are not new, the Ukraine conflict has provided China with an opportunity to present a comprehensive vision of a global security order to a global public with a clear aim of elevating the developing countries' interests at the expense of American power. The GSI, however, does not aim for a wholesale overturning of the existing order; rather, it calls for reform of global governance that would accommodate the interests of the Global South.

### 2.3. Opposition to Western Sanctions

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has long regarded unilateral sanctions as hegemonic instruments of economic coercion that tend to victimize non-Western states like China. In line with this, Beijing has steadfastly opposed the West's unilateral sanctions imposed on Russia, arguing that they lack legitimacy because they were not authorised by the UN Security Council. In June 2022, at the 14<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit, President Xi criticized the use of unilateral sanctions: "Sanctions [can be compared] to a boomerang, to a double-edged sword. Politicizing, instrumentalizing and weaponizing the world economy and using the dominance of international financial and monetary systems to impose arbitrary sanctions will ultimately harm [the initiators of sanctions]."<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, in its *Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis*, China's MOFA criticizes the use of sanctions in the conflict and denounces the collateral damage produced by sanctions across the Global South: "Unilateral sanctions and maximum pressure

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> For an analysis of the developmental approach to security in China's security thinking, see Maria Tanaka, "From the Digital Silk Road to the Governance of Cyberspace: China's Norm Diffusion Strategy in Central Asia," *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies* 25, no. 2 (2025).

<sup>28</sup> Jinping Xi, "Zhiyou Jianchi Tongzhougongji, Tuanjie Hezuo, Caineng Zhansheng Jingji Weiji [Only by Standing Together and Working in Unity Can We Overcome the Economic Crisis]," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, June 22, 2022.

cannot solve the issue; they only create new problems. [...] Relevant countries should stop abusing unilateral sanctions [...] against other countries, [...] and [should instead] create conditions for developing countries to grow their economies and better the lives of their people.”<sup>29</sup>

Other countries of the Global South have similarly expressed criticism of Western sanctions against Russia. In the *2023 Johannesburg Declaration* adopted at the 15<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit, member states: “express[ed] concern about the use of unilateral coercive measures, which are incompatible with the principles of the UN Charter and produce negative effects, notably in the developing world.”<sup>30</sup> As Gill correctly observed, the Global South’s reluctance to participate in the current sanctions against Russia is both ideological and structural. Ideologically, the criticism of Western sanctions reflects a view of the world shaped by centuries of Western imperialism. Structurally, Global South states can now draw on a wealth of South-South trade and investment resources, thereby being able to pursue a more independent foreign policy, including their refusal to participate in sanctions against Russia.<sup>31</sup>

Despite all the criticism of unilateral economic sanctions, China has been cautious about breaching Western sanctions on Russia, with Chinese companies and banks generally complying with them to avoid being affected themselves. This does not mean, however, that Chinese companies have exited the Russian market – most major Chinese companies have continued operating in Russia, while carefully navigating the risk of secondary sanctions.<sup>32</sup> As for China-led multilateral development banks (MDBs), the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) suspended activities related to Russia and Belarus until further review - as of February 2026, the status of these projects is ‘on hold.’<sup>33</sup> The New Development Bank (NDB), the financial institution established by the BRICS states, decided to put on hold new loan disbursements and new projects in Russia. On balance, while voicing strong opposition to unilateral sanctions imposed on Russia, Chinese business entities and financial institutions have largely obeyed the Western sanctions. Concurrently, Beijing has pushed for the development of a comprehensive toolset to circumvent sanctions – this development is discussed in Section 5.3. of the paper.

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<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “Guanyu Zhengzhi Jiejue Wukelan Weijide Zhongguo Lichang [China’s Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis].”

<sup>30</sup> BRICS Information Centre, “XV BRICS Summit Johannesburg II Declaration.”

<sup>31</sup> Farwa Sial, “Sanctions and the Changing World Order: Some Views from the Global South,” *Developing Economics*, September 1, 2022.

<sup>32</sup> For a detailed analysis, see Jeffrey Sonnenfeld et al., “Yale CELI List of Companies Leaving and Staying in Russia,” last modified March 21, 2026.

<sup>33</sup> Iori Kawate, “China-backed AIIB Freezes Lending to Russia and Belarus,” *Nikkei Asia*, March 4, 2022.

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## 3. China's Strategic Narratives about the War in Ukraine

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Governments across the globe are well aware that contemporary diplomacy cannot function effectively without a story plot that is told with consistency and clarity - in other words, it cannot function without strategic narratives. Strategic narratives are tools through which states attempt to shape the type of international system in which they wish to operate. Through strategic narratives, governments interpret a given global issue in a simple and compelling way to secure support from key stakeholders and strategic audiences.<sup>34</sup> In international politics, strategic narratives operate at three levels. At the first level, system narratives aim to answer fundamental questions about who the key players are and how the international system functions. The second level comprises identity narratives, which focus on national identities and nations' values and goals, and explain nations' desired roles within the international system. The third level consists of issue narratives, which explain the approaches intended to resolve international issues.<sup>35</sup>

Through its strategic narratives on the Russo-Ukrainian war, the Chinese government has communicated its vision of international order to both domestic and external audiences. According to Xu and Zhao, three dominant themes have emerged from the Chinese government's official statements: China's mediation efforts, multilateral cooperation, and Western responses.<sup>36</sup> While China's attempts to position itself as a mediator in the conflict and its efforts to foster multilateral cooperation through partnerships with the Global South are discussed below, the focus here is on China's critical stance towards the U.S., NATO, and the EU's involvement in the conflict. By conducting a content analysis of three series of commentaries published in the *PLA Daily* and the *People's Daily* during the initial months of the conflict, one can discover the thematic structure of China's criticism of the West (see Annex I for detailed information).

The *PLA Daily* [解放军报] is the official newspaper of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). It serves as the military's mouthpiece and aims to project the army's voice on public policies, security and diplomacy. Between March 17 and April 9, the *PLA Daily* published ten commentaries on the Ukraine conflict in a series titled 'Examining America's Despicable Role on the International Stage through the

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<sup>34</sup> Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle, *Strategic Narratives: Communication Power and the New World Order* (Routledge, 2013).

<sup>35</sup> Laura Roselle, Ben O'Loughlin, and Alister Miskimmon, "Strategic Narrative: A New Means to Understand Soft Power," *Media, War & Conflict* 7, no. 1 (2014).

<sup>36</sup> You Xu and Xiru Zhao, "China's Discursive Strategic Neutrality Position in the Russo-Ukrainian War: Insights from China's Strategic Narratives," *Journal of Contemporary China* 34, no. 156 (2025).

Ukraine Crisis.’ Several storylines emerge from this series of commentaries: first, China attempts to frame the conflict in the Ukraine as a consequence of actions by the U.S. and its allies, underscoring their ‘Cold War ideological biases’; second, Beijing accuses the U.S. of employing ‘double standards’ [双重标准], pointing to the fact that Russia’s special military operation in Ukraine is called ‘invasion’, while America’s military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have been referred to as ‘liberation’ and ‘counter-terrorism [operation]’ respectively; third, China asserts that the U.S. has a long history of violating human rights through the imposition of unilateral sanctions, while masquerading as a defender of human rights.

The *People’s Daily* [人民日报] is the official Communist Party mouthpiece and is widely regarded as China’s most influential newspaper. Between March 29 and April 11, the newspaper published ten commentaries on the Ukraine conflict in a series titled ‘Viewing American Hegemony from the Ukrainian Crisis.’ This series of commentaries asserts that the U.S. and NATO provocations caused the conflict and that the military-industrial complex in the U.S. is profiteering from the war in Ukraine. The U.S. is also accused of engaging in ‘financial terrorism’ [金融恐怖主义] by employing economic and financial sanctions against Russia. Another main storyline focuses on European security – China asserts that the U.S. is using Ukraine as a ‘geo-strategic pawn’ [地缘战略棋子] and it also suppresses European autonomy.

The third series of commentaries, titled ‘Seeing through the Hypocrisy and Dangers of U.S. Diplomacy,’ was published by the *PLA Daily* in ten instalments between April 14 and April 29. Each commentary focuses on a different aspect of U.S. diplomacy, framing American foreign policy as coercive, hegemonic and disruptive to global stability. The U.S. is accused of using sanctions to arbitrarily suppress other countries, supporting ‘colour revolutions’ around the world, bullying other countries to exert pressure on Russia (so-called ‘coercion diplomacy’ [胁迫外交]), and interpreting international rules according to the needs of U.S. hegemony.

Overall, China’s strategic narrative on the war in Ukraine attempts to shift the focus from the immediate cause of the war (that is, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine) to the so-called ‘underlying causes’ of the war – the U.S. ambition to preserve its global hegemony and NATO’s eastward expansion. A recurring idea is that ‘illegal unilateral sanctions’ imposed by the West on Russia contribute to the escalation of tensions and destabilize the global economy. Ukraine is portrayed as a ‘geo-strategic pawn’ in the U.S. long game of maintaining its hegemonic power. Europe, on the other hand, needs to escape the state of ‘total dependence’ on the U.S. and pursue a path of ‘strategic autonomy’. China’s ardent criticism of the U.S. and NATO’s roles in the conflict fits into a broader narrative that positions China as a counterbalance to U.S. influence, a responsible and constructive global actor that seeks to end conflicts through diplomacy and collective action.

Lastly, a brief analysis of the strategic autonomy discourse [战略自主] is merited. The topic of Europe’s ‘strategic autonomy’ has featured prominently in China’s narrative of the Ukraine war. For

instance, in his speech delivered at the Munich Security Conference in February 2023, China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, stated that 'we need to think calmly, especially our friends in Europe, about what efforts should be made to stop the warfare; what framework should there be to bring lasting peace to Europe; what role should Europe play to manifest its strategic autonomy.'<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, during President Macron's visit to Beijing in April 2023 and President Xi's visit to France the following year, Xi sought to encourage Macron's ambition for European strategic autonomy.<sup>38</sup> Although Macron's vision of strategic autonomy intends for Europe to build greater capacity and ability to act from a security and defence standpoint to reinforce the trans-Atlantic links, the goal of China's narrative is to drive a wedge between the United States and Europe and to show that there are limits to trans-Atlantic unity.

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## 4. China's Mediation Efforts in the Ukraine Conflict

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Sun and Zoubir define China's 'quasi-mediation' diplomacy in the MENA region as a pragmatic, low-risk diplomatic approach that aims to safeguard '[China's] commercial and diplomatic interest rather than core security and strategic interests.'<sup>39</sup> China's mediation style focuses on de-escalation rather than resolution and is limited in commitment. China also prefers to join ongoing diplomatic processes and act as a third-party facilitator. China's role in brokering an agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia in 2023 is a good case in point. Another aspect of China's mediation strategy is that Beijing often needs to preserve good relationships with both sides of the conflict while carefully navigating relations with a number of disparate actors. China's mediation efforts in the ongoing Thailand-Cambodia border conflict, which escalated in July 2025, illustrate this approach well.

The Russia-Ukraine war has offered another opportunity for China to beef up its credentials as a peace mediator. In September 2022, China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, outlined China's four priorities in resolving the Ukraine conflict: 1) providing support for negotiations, 2) urging the de-escalation of conflict, 3) alleviating the humanitarian crisis, and 4) curbing the spillover effects of the war, such as the global food crisis.<sup>40</sup> In February 2023, the Chinese government presented *China's Position on the Political*

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<sup>37</sup> Yi Wang, "Zhongguo Suozuode Yiqie Jiushi Quanhe Cutan [All China Has Done Is to Call for Peace and promote Dialogue]," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, February 18, 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Tara Varma, "Xi's Visit Exposes Fault Line in European Unity," *Brookings*, May 8, 2024. For China's view on Europe's strategic autonomy, see, Junbo Jian, "Zhanlue Zizhuxiade Oumeng Duihua Zhengce Tiaozheng: Ruhe cong Diyuang Zhengzhi Jingzheng Zouxiang Diyuang Zhengzhi Ronghe [Adjustments to the EU's China Policy under Strategic Autonomy: How to Move from Geopolitical Competition to Geopolitical Integration]," *Guoji Guanxi Yanjiu*, no. 5 (2025).

<sup>39</sup> Degang Sun and Yahia Zoubir, "China's Participation in Conflict Resolution in the Middle East and North Africa: A Case of Quasi-Mediation Diplomacy?" *Journal of Contemporary China* 27, no. 110 (2018).

<sup>40</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Wang Yi Attends UN Security Council Foreign Ministers' Meeting on Ukraine Issue."

*Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis* – a peace plan proposal which consisted of twelve points. The plan called for all parties to uphold the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of all countries, respect the principle of indivisible security, cease hostilities and resume peace talks, resolve the humanitarian crisis and protect civilians and POWs, reduce nuclear weapons-related strategic risks and ensure the safety and security of civilian nuclear facilities, refrain from imposing unilateral sanctions, facilitate grain exports via the Black Sea Grain Initiative, and keep industrial and supply chains stable. The plan also states that China stands ready to provide assistance for post-conflict reconstruction.<sup>41</sup> The plan, however, did not mention the withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukraine or the return of Ukrainian territory illegally annexed by Russia.

The response to China's peace plan was mixed. Countries in the Global South praised China's efforts to seek a diplomatic solution to the conflict.<sup>42</sup> President Putin was less enthusiastic, stating at the Russia-China Summit held in Moscow at the end of March 2023 that many of China's proposals could be used as a basis for a peace settlement.<sup>43</sup> The EU was even less impressed, but the EU High Representative Josep Borrell's tone was non-committal: 'It is not really a peace plan and mostly reiterates well-known Chinese positions, some of which we share while important ones are missing. Of course, we will analyse it, but it is already clear that the key problem is that it does not really distinguish aggressor from the victim, putting the parties at an equal level.'<sup>44</sup> The U.S. government criticized the Chinese proposal for not acknowledging Russia's aggression, arguing correctly that the plan would effectively freeze Russia's territorial gains in Ukraine and allow Russia to 'rest, rearm and re-attack.'<sup>45</sup>

The main problem with China's peace plan, however, was that it did not align with Ukraine's strategic goals in peace negotiations. In a speech at the G20 in November 2022, President Zelensky laid out a ten-point plan for peace, which included the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity (including the return of Crimea) and the withdrawal of Russian forces from the entire territory of Ukraine. Based on this plan, it was unlikely that Ukraine would accept any settlement that did not guarantee Ukraine's territorial integrity.<sup>46</sup> Thus, it was not surprising that Zelensky did not endorse the Chinese peace proposal, reiterating that true peace could only be achieved through the complete withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory.<sup>47</sup>

Even though European responses to China's peace talk proposal were not as enthusiastic as Beijing had expected, it must be remembered that its primary target audience was the Global South. China's

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<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Guanyu Zhengzhi Jiejue Wukelan Weijide Zhongguo Lichang [China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis]."

<sup>42</sup> Reuters, "South Africa's President Briefs Xi on African Russia-Ukraine Peace Plan," June 10, 2023.

<sup>43</sup> President of Russia, "Press Statements by President of Russia and President of China."

<sup>44</sup> Josep Borrell, "The World Is Demanding a Just Peace for Ukraine," *EU External Action Service*, February 26, 2023.

<sup>45</sup> Essi Lehto, "Blinken Warns Against Peace Efforts That Would Reward Russian Aggression," *Reuters*, June 2, 2023.

<sup>46</sup> Embassy of Ukraine to the Republic of Senegal, "Peace Formula of the President of Ukraine."

<sup>47</sup> Luke Harding, "Zelensky Open to China's Peace Plan but Rejects Compromise with 'Sick' Putin," *The Guardian*, February 25, 2023.

desire to bolster its image as a responsible global power in the eyes of developing countries resulted in another peace initiative, the so-called 'Six-point Consensus' [六点共识]. In May 2024, China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, met with Celso Amorim, chief adviser to the Brazilian President, in Beijing to discuss the conflict in Ukraine. The parties released a Six-point Consensus, calling for non-escalation, no attacks on civilians, no use of weapons of mass destruction, no attacks on nuclear power stations, and protection of the stability of global supply chains; the consensus also calls for an international peace conference 'recognized by both Russia and Ukraine, with equal participation of all parties and fair discussion of all peace plans.'<sup>48</sup>

The next stage in Beijing's efforts to promote the Six-point Consensus involved building a loose coalition of countries supportive of the Sino-Brazilian proposal. In September 2024, China and Brazil's top diplomats, Wang Yi and Mauro Vieira, co-chaired a meeting at UN headquarters in New York to launch the 'Friends for Peace Group' [和平之友小组] on the Ukrainian crisis, attended by representatives of 17 countries from the Global South.<sup>49</sup> At the follow-up meeting in December, the participants reaffirmed 'the key principles outlined in the joint communique, including respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, respecting the legitimate concerns of states, recognizing the need to uphold the principles of peace, security and prosperity, and the importance of peaceful solutions for all international conflicts, as emphasized by the Bandung principles, inter alia.'<sup>50</sup>

By joining forces with Brazil, China has successfully built a loose coalition of countries that support Beijing's narrative of the war, while bolstering its 'peacemaker' status among nations in the Global South. The creation of the Friends for Peace Group, however, has exposed a widening rift over how to approach the issue of peace settlement. In his speech before the UNGA on September 5, 2024, President Zelensky rejected China and Brazil's peace plan, stating that 'proposing alternatives, half-hearted settlement plans, so-called sets of principles' would give President Putin the political space to continue the war.<sup>51</sup> Ukraine has consistently refused to trade land for peace and is unlikely to accept any settlement that compromises its full independence and territorial integrity.

At the time of writing, the U.S.-brokered peace talks between Russia and Ukraine have stalled due to disagreement over territory. The U.S. has scaled back its military support for Ukraine and is pushing for a quick deal that involves ceding the entire Donbas region to Russia. In contrast, Europe has stepped up its support for Ukraine, believing that surrendering to Russia's territorial demands would only

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<sup>48</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Zhongguo, Baxi Guanyu Zhengzhi Jiejue Wukelan Weijide Gongshi [China-Brazil Joint Statement on a Political Solution to the Ukraine Crisis]."

<sup>49</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Wukelan Weiji 'Hepingzhiyou' Xiaozu zai Lianheguo Chengli ['Friends for Peace Group' on the Ukraine Crisis Has Been Launched at the United Nations ]."

<sup>50</sup> Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, "Press Release on the Meeting of the Group of Friends for Peace on the Ukraine Crisis." Representatives from the following countries participated in the December meeting: Brazil, China, Algeria, Bolivia, Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mexico, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and Zambia. Observers from France, Hungary, and Slovakia were also present.

<sup>51</sup> Alex Willemyns, "At UN, Zelensky Rejects China-Brazil Peace Plan," *Radio Free Asia*, September 25, 2024.

embolden the Kremlin. Meanwhile, countries in the Global South have primarily been focused on the economic fallout of the war, especially food and energy insecurity. This explains why voices in the Global South are advocating for an early end to the war, even if it means compromising on Ukraine's territorial integrity.

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## 5. China's Strategic Calculations in Relation to the Russia-Ukraine War

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The war in Ukraine has had a destabilizing impact on an already embattled LIO, accelerating the trend towards a multipolar world order. Governments around the world have been recalibrating their defence and economic security strategies in light of a grinding war of attrition that is likely to continue for several more years. The CCP views the Russia-Ukraine war as indicating the end of China's period of 'strategic opportunity', during which the country enjoyed a relatively stable environment to build its competitive capabilities. Yet, the Party also believes that China is well positioned to take advantage of 'new strategic opportunities' [新的战略机遇] and play a more proactive role on the global stage. As the report delivered by Xi at the 20<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the CCP indicates, China believes that it needs to shift its focus from capability-building to environment-shaping; it must methodically respond to challenges while proactively shaping strategic opportunities.<sup>52</sup> One year later, at the 2023 Central Foreign Affairs Work Conference, Xi asserted that although the world had entered a new period of turbulence and change, China had become better positioned to 'form a new pattern of relations between China and the world, rising China's international influence, appeal, and power to new heights.'<sup>53</sup>

As discussed in Section 4, the Russia-Ukraine war has presented China with an opportunity to portray itself as a peace mediator. The war has also accelerated China's shift to the Global South, highlighting China's dependence on these countries to achieve its vision of a multilateral, non-West-centred order. Furthermore, the war has changed the dynamics of the Sino-Russian partnership. The Chinese government, however, must also take steps to address strategic risks it faces in relation to the war. These include the potential defeat of Russia in Ukraine, the looming threat of a financial war with the U.S., the need to safeguard its economy from sanctions, and the challenge of redefining China's military strategy in light of Russia's military failures in Ukraine. This section delves into China's short-term (1-2 years), medium-term (5-10 years), and long-term (> 10 years) strategic adjustments in

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<sup>52</sup> Jinping Xi, "Gaoju Zhongguo Tese Shehuizhui Weida Qizhi wei Quanmian Jianshe Shehuizhuyi Xiandaihu Guojia er Tuanjie Beidou [Hold High the Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive in Unity to Build a Modern Socialist State in All Respects]."

<sup>53</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Zhongyang Waishi Gongzuo Huiyi zai Beijing Juxing Xi Jinping Fabiao Zhongyao Jianghua [Central Foreign Affairs Work Conference Held in Beijing; Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech]."

response to the aforementioned war-induced opportunities and risks. In the short term, it discusses the rationale behind China's assistance for Russia's war effort. The medium-term analysis addresses the internationalization of the RMB to build financial market resilience, the sanction-proofing of the economy, and the revision of military strategy and tactics in light of a possible Taiwan contingency. In the long term, the section examines limitations of the Sino-Russian strategic partnership and China's pivot towards the Global South in the context of an emerging multilateral international order.

## 5.1. China's Assistance for Russia's War Effort

From Beijing's perspective, Russia's total defeat and the subsequent installation of a pro-Western regime in Moscow or the country's territorial disintegration are the two worst-case scenarios. Either outcome would create a geostrategic environment that would negatively affect China's strategic competition with the U.S. In July 2025, in a rare moment of honesty, China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, admitted that Beijing could not afford a Russian loss in Ukraine because the U.S. might then shift its entire focus towards the Indo-Pacific.<sup>54</sup> In other words, the situation when a prolonged war in Ukraine drains Western resources while Russia keeps absorbing sanctions is advantageous to China.

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Beijing has invested substantial political, economic, and technological resources to sustain the resilience of the Putin regime. In the early phase of the conflict, the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), Li Zhanshu, travelled to Vladivostok to attend Russia's Eastern Economic Forum. During his conversation with the leaders of the State Duma, Li stated that China fully understands and supports [策应] Russia's need to secure its core interests, including Russia's actions in Ukraine.<sup>55</sup> As noted by Wu, the word 'ceying' [策应] is usually rendered as 'support' in English, but it implies providing support in a subtle, strategic, and well-coordinated manner behind the scenes.<sup>56</sup> Over the last four years, Beijing has diligently worked to implement a 'ceying' strategy to sustain Russia's war effort. This has included providing Russia with an economic lifeline, helping Moscow circumvent Western sanctions, expanding its exports of critical dual-use goods, and reducing Russia's diplomatic isolation. China, however, has been cautious not to cross the West's 'red lines'—it has refrained from direct military assistance to Moscow and has largely complied with EU/U.S. sanctions on Russia.

China-Russia bilateral trade has surged since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, peaking at USD 245 billion in 2024 before contracting slightly to USD 228 billion in 2025. Meanwhile, Russia's dependence on Chinese products in its total imports jumped from 23% in 2021 to 57% in 2024.<sup>57</sup> An analysis of

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<sup>54</sup> Finbarr Bermingham, "China Tells EU It Does Not Want to See Russia Lose Its War in Ukraine," *South China Morning Post*, July 4, 2025.

<sup>55</sup> Jack Lau, "China's Top Lawmaker Praises 'Resilience' of Russia's Sanctions-hit Economy," *South China Morning Post*, September 7, 2022.

<sup>56</sup> Guoguang Wu, "Interpreting Xi Jinping's Shifting Strategy on the Russia-Ukraine War," *Asia Society Policy Institute*, October 11, 2023.

<sup>57</sup> MERICS, "China-Russia Dashboard: A Special Relationship in Facts and Figures," last modified January 21, 2026.

Russian imports across key product categories reveals significant dependencies on China, particularly in strategic sectors such as machinery and electronic equipment.<sup>58</sup> China is also the largest buyer of Russia's fossil fuels - as of 2026, Beijing accounted for 48% of Russia's crude oil exports and 43% of its coal exports.<sup>59</sup> Regarding settlement currency, it appears that around 90% of trade settlements between China and Russia are conducted in RMB.<sup>60</sup>

Dual-use goods have become a central channel in sustaining Russia's war machine. Since the start of the full-scale war in 2022, Chinese exports of civilian items with potential military applications have surged, exceeding USD 5 billion in 2023.<sup>61</sup> China's exports of semiconductors and drone components to Russia provide instructive examples. Compared with the pre-war period, the exports of microchips rose significantly, with China accounting for 89% of Russia's semiconductor imports in 2023. In addition, 47% of the chip-making equipment and 58% of spare parts used in Russia were of Chinese origin.<sup>62</sup> Regarding drone component exports, China's dominance of global drone supply chains has become strategically indispensable to Russia. Chinese companies provide Russia with drone engines, lithium-ion batteries, optical systems, microchips, and communications equipment. Without these supplies, Russia would not be able to sustain its current drone warfare in Ukraine.<sup>63</sup>

Overall, four years into the war, Beijing continues to provide Russia with an economic lifeline while withholding overt military support. From a strategic standpoint, the situation when a prolonged war in Ukraine drains Western resources while Russia keeps absorbing sanctions is advantageous to China. While China's manufacturers have positioned themselves as a dual-use technology innovation hub, especially in the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) sector, Chinese strategists have closely monitored Russia's drone warfare in Ukraine in preparation for a Taiwan contingency.

## 5.2. The Ukraine Conflict and the Logic of RMB Internationalization

Since 2010, the internationalization of the RMB has witnessed a considerable increase across all three dimensions: as a unit of account for trade invoicing, a medium of exchange for trade settlement and broader financial transactions, and as a store of value such as foreign exchange reserves. The RMB ascent is exemplified by its rise to the 4<sup>th</sup> most used global payment currency, a significant leap from its

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<sup>58</sup> Alessia Caruso and Tim Ruhlig, "The Dependence Gap in Russia-China Relations," *EU Institute for Security Studies*, October 2, 2025.

<sup>59</sup> Vaibhav Raghunadan, Petras Katinas, and Luke Wickenede, "January 2026: Monthly Analysis of Russian Fossil Fuel Exports and Sanctions," *Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air*, February 18, 2026.

<sup>60</sup> Alessia Amighini and Alicia Garcia-Herrero, "Third Time Lucky? China's Push to Internationalize the Renminbi," *Bruegel*, November 2, 2023.

<sup>61</sup> Alessia Caruso and Tim Ruhlig, "The Dependence Gap in Russia-China Relations," *EU Institute for Security Studies*, October 2, 2025.

<sup>62</sup> Chris Miller, "The Impact of Semiconductor Sanctions on Russia," *American Enterprise Institute*, April 2, 2024.

<sup>63</sup> Vita Golod and Dmytro Burtsev, "China's Drone War in Ukraine," *The Diplomat*, January 24, 2026. It must be noted that Ukraine is equally dependent on Chinese supplies. According to available data, in 2024 alone, Ukraine imported more than USD 1 billion worth of Chinese drones and related components.

35<sup>th</sup> position in 2010.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the RMB has become the world's second-largest trade finance currency, accounting for 8.3% of global trade finance.<sup>65</sup> The RMB, however, has played a limited role in official reserves. As of the third quarter of 2025, the US dollar accounted for about 57% of global reserves, the euro stood at roughly 20%, while the share of RMB holdings hovered around 2%.<sup>66</sup> But confidence in the US dollar as the world's reserve currency has been eroding since President Trump's return to office. As Snower notes, Trump's second term has brought fiscal recklessness, politicised monetary policy, and weaponised finance.<sup>67</sup> As a result, governments across the world are no longer treating the US dollar as a fully stable reserve currency; instead they are hedging their risk against it. That has given China an opening to promote its own currency as a viable alternative.

When the Trump administration launched the trade war in 2018, the overriding concern among Chinese commentators was not that it might derail China's long-term development, but that it would escalate into a financial war.<sup>68</sup> Chinese financial experts agree that a U.S. financial attack on China is likely as bilateral relations deteriorate in the long run. This attack could take the form of a traditional financial war through dollar sanctions or a speculative attack on the offshore RMB market carried out by private market actors in coordination with the U.S. government.<sup>69</sup> Aware of its vulnerabilities to dollar sanctions, the Chinese government has intensified efforts to sign up as many countries as possible to RMB payment platforms and to expand RMB swap lines. Through instruments such as the Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS) for clearing and settling cross-border RMB transactions, bilateral currency swaps, the BRICS digital currency platform, and the petroyuan, China has sought to reduce its reliance on the US dollar and increase its resilience against external shocks.

Over the last decade, China has gradually developed the institutional and operational infrastructure to support the RMB's growth as an international currency. As of November 2025, ten years after its establishment, CIPS has a total of 190 direct participants and 1567 indirect participants, including 1150 from Asia, 261 from Europe, 65 from Africa, 34 from North America, 33 from South America, and 24 from Oceania.<sup>70</sup> The People's Bank of China (PBC) has also granted additional licenses to banks abroad to operate as RMB settlement centres and concluded a string of currency swaps with central banks around

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<sup>64</sup> Over the last two years, the RMB's share of global SWIFT payments has experienced fluctuations, peaking at around 4.7% in July 2024 and maintaining its position as the 4<sup>th</sup> most active currency for global payments throughout 2024 (SWIFT, *RMB Tracker: January 2026*).

<sup>65</sup> SWIFT, *RMB Tracker: January 2026*.

<sup>66</sup> IMF, "IMF Data Brief: Currency Composition of Official Foreign Exchange Reserves," December 19, 2025.

<sup>67</sup> Dennis J. Snower, "Expert Comment: Is the Dollar Dominance Crumbling?" *University of Oxford*, November 3, 2025.

<sup>68</sup> Yiping Huang, "Fangfan Jingmao Chongtu Chongji Jinrong Wending [Preventing Economic and Trade Conflicts from Impacting Financial Stability]," *Qinghua Jinrong Pinglun*, no. 7 (2018).

<sup>69</sup> For a detailed analysis, see Zhiling Huang, "Guanyu Jinrongzhande Lijie [Understanding Financial Warfare]," *Quanqiuhua*, no. 3 (2020).

<sup>70</sup> CIPS, "CIPS Participants Announcement No. 115," November 2025. Direct participants include offshore clearing banks, the Chinese subsidiaries of Western banks (e.g., Deutsche Bank, Citi, BNP Paribas, ANZ, MUFG, JP Morgan) and two foreign-owned banks – Hong Kong-based Standard Chartered and HSBC (Bert Hofman and Johannes Petry, "Internationalization of the RMB: Status, Options and Risks," *China Knowledge Network*, February 13, 2026).

the world. Early data suggests that China’s de-dollarization push is paying off – in March 2025, over half of China’s cross-border trade (54.3%) was settled in RMB.<sup>71</sup>

The BRICS nations have discussed for some time the creation of an alternative payment system to the US dollar-based system. In 2018, the BRICS Cross-Border Payment Initiative (B-CBPI) was launched as a research program to promote the use of local currencies for international payments. In its joint declaration at the end of the 2024 Kazan Summit, BRICS members encouraged the “strengthening of correspondent banking networks within BRICS and enabling settlements in local currencies in line with the B-CBPI.”<sup>72</sup> The initiative, known as BRICS Pay, is an emerging independent payment messaging mechanism system for BRICS nations to trade with each other through their own currencies. The plan for BRICS Pay is to use India’s Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and China’s Weixin Pay technology, including digital wallets and QR code payments, and a framework that would directly link to local banks.<sup>73</sup> If BRICS Pay becomes feasible, it could weaken US dollar’s dominance in the global economy.

The dollar has long been among America’s most powerful strategic assets. Washington’s ability to restrict access to SWIFT, demonstrated in sanctions against Iran in 2012 and Russia in 2022, remains one of its most effective economic statecraft tools. Western sanctions on Russia, however, have contributed to an increased usage of RMB in international transactions. In the short term, sanctions made the RMB an attractive currency for trade with Russia. In the long term, countries in the Global South may increase RMB usage to reduce their vulnerability to potential future Western sanctions.

To begin with, Russia’s use of RMB to settle international transactions has skyrocketed since its invasion of Ukraine. As the situation stands now, a large share of Russia’s trade and international reserves are already denominated in RMB. Furthermore, as early as 2022, Russian companies (e.g., RUSAL, a Russian aluminium producer) started issuing RMB-denominated bonds in their domestic market. In October 2025, Russia’s finance ministry announced it had issued 20 billion RMB of government bonds.<sup>74</sup> In June 2022, Reuters reported that Indian companies were increasingly using RMB to pay for coal imports from Russia. In October 2025, it was reported that India’s top state-run refinery completed several RMB-denominated transactions for shipments of Russian crude oil.<sup>75</sup> In 2023, the PBC and Brazil’s Banco Central established a local currency settlement arrangement. Payments for major Brazilian exports to China, such as soybeans, iron ore, and crude oil, are increasingly handled in yuan and real.<sup>76</sup> Looking ahead, the internationalization of the RMB is expected to progress on multiple fronts

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<sup>71</sup> Convergence Capital Group, “China’s Quiet Currency Shift: How the Yuan Is Changing Trade Finance in Asia,” July 21, 2025.

<sup>72</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, “XVI BRICS Summit Kazan Declaration.”

<sup>73</sup> Evan Freidin, “BRICS Pay as a Challenge to SWIFT Network,” *The Interpreter*, December 31, 2024.

<sup>74</sup> Joseph Cotterill, “Russia Strengthens Financial Ties to China with First RMB Bond,” *Financial Times*, December 4, 2025.

<sup>75</sup> Nidhi Verma and Florence Tan, “Traders Seek Yuan Payment from Indian State Buyers of Russian Oil, Sources Say,” *Reuters*, October 8, 2025.

<sup>76</sup> Zennon Kapron, “How Renminbi Internationalization is Changing,” *Forbes*, February 22, 2026.

in small but persistent steps, while avoiding a direct challenge to dollar hegemony.

### 5.3. China's Sanction-proofing Strategy

Western economic sanctions on Russia have provided valuable information to China on the U.S. and EU response mechanisms and on their willingness to use economic statecraft tools as a means of exercising pressure. This information is particularly vital for China in determining how it might respond in the event of Western sanctions over Taiwan. China has been closely studying Western sanctions against Russia and has ramped up efforts to enhance its own resilience to sanctions. Chinese officials reportedly established an inter-agency group to study the impact of Western sanctions on Russia and analyze how to mitigate the effect of potential sanctions in the event of a Taiwan contingency. As part of this effort, Chinese officials visit Moscow periodically to meet with the Russian Central Bank, Russia's Finance Ministry, and other Russian agencies involved in countering sanctions.<sup>77</sup>

Broadly speaking, China has sought to sanction-proof its economy through the following measures: 1) reducing China's vulnerability to financial sanctions, 2) adapting legal frameworks which enable effective countermeasures, 3) pursuing economic self-reliance, and 4) weaponizing dominance in global supply chains for geopolitical leverage.<sup>78</sup> As discussed in the previous section, to reduce China's vulnerability to financial sanctions, Beijing has accelerated the internationalization of the RMB (including the RMB- denominated trade settlement), expanded digital currency platforms, and diversified its financial reserves.

Another priority for China is to develop a comprehensive anti-sanctions legal framework, mirroring steps taken by Russia after the annexation of Crimea.<sup>79</sup> In June 2021, the NPC adopted the *Anti-Foreign Sanction Law*, which establishes a legal framework for responding to foreign sanctions with counter-sanctions. According to the law, individuals or organizations involved in the making or implementation of a foreign country's discriminatory measures against Chinese entities are eligible to be placed on a 'counter-list'.<sup>80</sup> The law has been used repeatedly since its inception to impose counter-measures against EU and American entities following secondary sanctions on Chinese companies accused of assisting the Russian military-industrial complex. For instance, in August 2025, in response to EU sanctions on two Chinese banks for providing 'crypto assets services' to Russia, China's Ministry of Commerce announced retaliatory sanctions on two Lithuanian banks, UAB Urbo Bankas and AB Mano

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<sup>77</sup> Georgi Kantchev and Lingling Wei, "China is Studying Russia's Sanctions Evasion to Prepare for Taiwan Conflict," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 1, 2024.

<sup>78</sup> Kaspar Pucek, Floor Stoelinga, and Rem Korteweg, "What China Is Learning from the West's Sanctions against Russia," *Clingendael*, February 3, 2026.

<sup>79</sup> In response to Crimea-related sanctions imposed on Russia by the West, the *Counter-Sanctions Law* was fast-tracked by the State Duma, signed by President Putin, and entered into force in June 2018.

<sup>80</sup> Ministry of Justice of the People's Republic of China, "Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Fanwaiguo Zhicaifa [The Anti-foreign Sanction Law]."

Bankas.<sup>81</sup>

China has also turned to weaponizing its dominance in global supply chains for geopolitical leverage. Beijing's export control on rare earth elements is a case in point. Over the last decade, China has developed a near-monopoly over every aspect of the mining and processing of critical minerals essential for the clean energy transition – the country is the dominant refiner for 19 of the 20 critical minerals, holding an average market share of around 70%.<sup>82</sup> In 2020, the Chinese government adopted the *Export Control Law*, which established rules and an enforcement mechanism for controlling the export of certain items and technologies.<sup>83</sup> In December 2024, the U.S. launched its third round of sanctions on China's semiconductor industry, adding 140 Chinese companies to its 'entity list' of firms banned from trade with the U.S.<sup>84</sup> In response, China banned the export of gallium, germanium, and antimony to the U.S., citing their military applications.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, in response to President Trump's 'tariff war', in October 2025, the Chinese government expanded its export control regime by introducing licensing requirements for rare earth mining and processing technologies. The new controls require foreign companies to obtain a license from China to export 'parts, components and assemblies' containing Chinese-sourced rare earth materials or produced using Chinese rare earth technologies.<sup>86</sup> To get the full picture, it is worth noting that several Chinese companies with ties to the government have reportedly continued to supply Russia with gallium, germanium, and antimony, which are crucial for the production of drones and missiles.<sup>87</sup>

Overall, since 2022, China has been closely studying Western sanctions against Russia and drawing lessons to improve its own resilience to sanctions. Building resilience to economic sanctions is part of Beijing's broader efforts to counter the U.S. attempts to contain China, as well as a crucial component of Beijing's preparation for potential conflict over Taiwan.

## 5.4. Learning From Russian Military Failures in Ukraine

Russia's failure to achieve a swift victory in Ukraine, its logistical shortcomings, and lack of coordination among services have prompted China to draw tactical lessons from the war and recalibrate its own military strategy. To begin with, the failure of Russian 'blitzkrieg' tactics at the beginning of the war has prompted PLA theorists to redefine the concept of 'hybrid war' and reassert the role of combat operations.

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<sup>81</sup> Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, "Guanyu dui Oumeng Liangjia Jinrong Jigou Caiqu Fanzhi Cuoshide Jueding [The Decision on Retaliatory Sanctions against Two Financial Institutions in the European Union]."

<sup>82</sup> IEA, *World Energy Investment 2025*. Rare earth elements are a subset of critical minerals that includes 17 elements (such as neodymium, promethium and cerium) used extensively in clean energy systems and other advanced technologies.

<sup>83</sup> Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, "Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo Chukou Guanzhifa [The Export Control Law]."

<sup>84</sup> Al Jazeera, "US Unleashes Another Crackdown on China's Chip Industry," December 2, 2024.

<sup>85</sup> Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, "Guanyu Jiaqiang Xiangguan Liangyong Wuxiang dui Meiguo Chukou Guanzhide Gonggao [The Notice on Strengthening Export Controls on Certain Dual-Use Goods to the U.S.]."

<sup>86</sup> IEA, "With New Export Controls on Critical Minerals, Supply Concentration Risks Become Reality," October 23, 2025.

<sup>87</sup> Kyrlo Ovsyaniy, "China Supplying Key Chemicals for Russian Missiles, RFE/RL Investigation Finds," *Radio Free Europe*, January 30, 2025.

Prior to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the PLA had embraced the Russian definition of hybrid warfare, whereby the aggressor seeks to achieve rapid victory through leveraging a diverse set of non-military tools alongside minimal participation of regular military units.<sup>88</sup> Russia's 'blitzkrieg' in Crimea in 2014 was seen as a successful hybrid warfare tactic.<sup>89</sup> Following the poor Russian battlefield performance in 2022, PLA scholars assessed that Russian strategists overstated the potential for non-military components of hybrid war; they also concluded that the hybrid warfare tactics did not deter military escalation.<sup>90</sup> As a result, PLA strategists began to redefine the concept of hybrid war by reasserting the role of combat operations and repurposing non-military tools to prepare the battlespace ahead of a potential conflict.<sup>91</sup>

Turning to military logistics, Russia's plan to immediately dominate Ukraine failed in part due to long-standing issues in rear services: systematic resource inefficiency, inadequate investments in supplies, and corruption in procurement.<sup>92</sup> As a result of poor preparations prior to the conflict, Russia was forced to improvise and cobble together the necessary motor transport support it needed for a longer war than initially planned.<sup>93</sup> Despite these initial failures, Russia recovered and switched to a war-of-attrition mode of operation. Chinese experts have identified six military logistics-related challenges that Russia faces in a war of attrition: 1) replenishment of fuel and ammunition stockpiles, 2) maintenance of transportation routes, 3) equipment maintenance, 4) weakening of Ukraine's sustainment capabilities, 5) blockade of military aid to Ukraine, and 6) the logistics of mobilizing and supplying the army in a prolonged war.<sup>94</sup> Overall, Chinese analysts agree that the Ukraine case highlights the enduring centrality of logistics. They continue to pay close attention to the developments on the ground with an eye on a cross-Strait contingency.

In the drone industry, China accounts for 70-80% of the world's commercial drones and dominates production of critical components such as speed controllers, sensors, cameras, and propellers.<sup>95</sup> Chinese companies' global dominance as commercial drone suppliers made them indispensable to both Russia and Ukraine. As a result, their militaries have found themselves dependent on the same Chinese

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<sup>88</sup> Jiwei Liu and Chang Zhang, "Hunhe Zhanzheng Lilun Shiyuxia Eluosi Junshi Zahnluo Tiaozheng Tanxi [An Analysis of Russia's Military Strategy Adjustment from the Perspective of Hybrid Warfare Theory]," *Jiangnan Shehuixueyuan Xuebao*, no. 2 (2019).

<sup>89</sup> Junze Duan, "Eshi Hunhe Zhanzheng Shijian ji Qiyixiang [The Practice of Russian Hybrid War and Its Impact]," *Xiandai Guojia Guanxi*, no. 3 (2017).

<sup>90</sup> Haijiang Wang, "Koulao Zhongxin Renwu Juli Beizhan Dazhang Nuli Kaichuang Yitihua Guojia Zhanluo Tixi he Nengli Jianshe Xinjumian [Stay Focused on the Main Task, Gather Strength to Prepare for War, and Work Hard to Open New Prospects for the Integrated National Strategy System and Capability Building]," *Xuexi Shibao*, May 13, 2023.

<sup>91</sup> Howard Wang and Brett Zakheim, *China's Lessons from the Russia-Ukraine War* (Rand Corporation, 2025).

<sup>92</sup> Marta Kepe, *Logistics and Sustainment in the Russian Armed Forces* (Rand Corporation, 2023).

<sup>93</sup> Dahui Wu, "Wukelan Weiji yu Xinjunshi Geming: Eluosi Junshi Yunshupian [The Ukraine Crisis and the New Military Revolution: The Case of Russian Military Transport]," *Shijie Zhishi*, no. 24 (2023).

<sup>94</sup> Techscope, "EWu Zhanzhengzhong Houqinzhuan Zuozhan Yangshi Yanjiu [A Study on Military Logistics in the Russia-Ukraine War]," September 22, 2023.

<sup>95</sup> Special Competitive Studies Project, *Welcome to the Arena: Who's Ahead, Who's Behind, and Where We Are Headed Next in the U.S.-China Technological Competition*, January 2025.

suppliers.<sup>96</sup> There are several reasons behind this dual drone flow. First, Chinese companies have greatly profited from a massive spike in demand for drones and associated electronics. Second, a prolonged war in Ukraine is strategically advantageous to China, so the Chinese government sees no problem with allowing transfers of dual-use UAV technologies to both sides. Third, Chinese strategists are closely watching the transformation of autonomous warfare in Ukraine, constantly updating China's drone warfare tactics and developing new technologies (e.g., drone swarm air defence). In an article titled 'Combat Application and Implications of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Operations in the Ukrainian Crisis', scholars from the National University of Defence Technology conclude that in the face of the vigorous development of UAV military applications worldwide, China must pay attention to the opportunities and challenges brought by UAV combat, fully absorb the practices and experiences of China's opponents, and strive to upgrade its own UAV systems.<sup>97</sup>

## 5.5. The Sino-Russian Partnership and the Limits of Alignment

Since the West imposed sanctions on Russia in response to its 2014 annexation of Crimea, the country has accelerated its 'turn to the East' in an attempt to offset its loss of access to Western financial markets and advanced technologies. As a result, Sino-Russian economic and security cooperation has progressed significantly, with the two countries collaborating on a range of global and regional governance issues. In 2019, the two countries upgraded their relations to the highest level of partnership within China's partnership framework - a 'comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era' [新时代全面战略协作伙伴关系]. This partnership is characterised by cooperation on all issues, including international affairs, defence, and military and technological development. Under this agreement, China and Russia institutionalized a comprehensive mechanism for military consultation, expanded military-technical cooperation, and increased joint military exercises.<sup>98</sup> In November 2021, the two sides signed a *Road Map for Military Co-operation for 2021-2025*, which outlined collaboration in areas such as joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and joint development of weapons systems.<sup>99</sup>

Three weeks before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, President Putin travelled to Beijing and signed a *Joint Statement on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development* with President Xi. In the realm of security cooperation, the *Joint Statement* 1) opposed the further enlargement of NATO and the formation of 'closed bloc structures and opposing camps in the

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<sup>96</sup> Charles Clover, William Langley, and Chris Cook, "Russia, Ukraine and the Race for China's Secret Drones," *Financial Review*, January 26, 2026.

<sup>97</sup> Jian Yang and Yijian Chen, "Wukelan Weiji Wurenji Zuozhan Yunyong ji Qishi [The Use of Drones in Combat during the Ukraine Crisis and Its Implications]," *Proceedings of the 13<sup>th</sup> China Conference on Command and Control*, May 15, 2025.

<sup>98</sup> Shantao Shi, "Xin Shidai ZhongE Quanmian Zhanlüe Xiezuo Huoban Guanxide Xin Mubiao yu Xin Zuowei [New Goals and New Activities of the Sino-Russian Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination for a New Era]," *Dangdai Shidai*, no. 10 (2019).

<sup>99</sup> Ricardo Barrios and Andrew S. Bowen, "China-Russia Relations," *Congressional Research Service*, September 13, 2023.

Asia-Pacific region’, 2) viewed the US Indo-Pacific strategy in a negative light, 3) expressed serious concern about AUKUS and potential submarine cooperation amongst its members, 4) argued that the US withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and potential transfer to allies intermediate or short-range missiles would have destabilizing effect, 5) claimed that US bioweapons activities pose threat to China and Russia, and 6) expressed concern about the politicization of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).<sup>100</sup> The *Joint Statement* showed a growing overlap between the PRC and Russian assessments of their security environment. Russia became more concerned about US activities in the Asia-Pacific, including the development of the QUAD, while China began openly voicing its opposition to ‘NATO expansion’. Still, as noted by Gorenburg et al., a joint approach to these perceived threats, either in terms of planning or preparations, was still lacking.<sup>101</sup>

Four years into the war, the basic tenets for maintaining the strategic partnership remain unchanged. China has been committed to supporting Russia as a strategic partner in countering U.S. hegemony and promoting a multipolar world order. Despite Russia’s poor military performance in Ukraine, the value of Sino-Russian defence and military-technical collaboration is still seen as beneficial to China.<sup>102</sup> However, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has provided a strategic space for China to rethink and recalibrate the partnership. Throughout the war, the asymmetry in the Russia - China economic relationship has deepened, with Russia becoming more reliant on China across a wider range of products. As of 2025, only 18% of China’s crude oil supply comes from Russia, while China now accounts for 47% of Russia’s crude oil exports.<sup>103</sup> On the military cooperation front, China’s arms imports from Russia have gradually declined, indicating Beijing’s drive for greater self-sufficiency in military technology. Overall, Beijing has retained strategic flexibility vis-à-vis Russia, meaning it can dial back cooperation if the costs become too high. In contrast, Russia’s growing dependence on Chinese goods and the Chinese market for its mineral fuels has left Moscow with limited room for manoeuvre.

President Xi’s visit to Moscow in May 2025 to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany resulted in the signing of three joint statements that laid out a shared strategic vision for strengthening defence and economic cooperation, as well as outlining a plan for global governance reforms. In the *Joint Statement on Global Strategic Stability*, Beijing and Moscow position themselves as defenders of the principle of indivisible security, while also reaffirming their commitment to the nuclear

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<sup>100</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo he Eluosi Lianbang Guanyu Xin Shidai Guoji Guanxi he Quanqiu Kechixu Fazhande Lianhe Shengming [Joint Statement of the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development].”

<sup>101</sup> Dmitry Gorenburg, Paul Schwartz, Brian Waidelich, and Elizabeth Wishnick, “Russian-Chinese Military Cooperation: An Increasingly Unequal Partnership,” *CNA Research Memorandum*, March 1, 2023.

<sup>102</sup> Yongquan Li, “ZhongE Guanxide Jichu: Zhanlue Liyi Gongshi [The Foundation of China-Russia Relations: Shared Strategic Interests],” *Eluosi Xuekan*, no. 5 (2025).

<sup>103</sup> Erica Downs, “Where China Gets Its Oil: Crude Imports in 2025 Reveal Stockpiling and Changing Fortunes of Certain Suppliers, Including Those Sanctioned,” *Center on Global Energy Policy*, January 29, 2026; and Vaibhav Raghunadan, Petras Katinas, and Luke Wickenede, “January 2026: Monthly Analysis of Russian Fossil Fuel Exports and Sanctions,” *Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air*, February 18, 2026.

non-proliferation regime and building a world free of chemical and biological weapons. The statement also accuses ‘some nuclear-weapon states’ (specifically the United States) of undermining global strategic stability and increasing conflict potential through practices such as ‘nuclear sharing’ [核共享] and ‘extended nuclear deterrence’ [延伸威慑] with their non-nuclear allies, as well as the use of outer space for armed confrontation.<sup>104</sup> In the *Joint Statement on Cooperation to Uphold the Authority of International Law*, both parties reaffirm their full commitment to the United Nations-centred international legal order, including principles such as sovereign equality and territorial integrity, non-intervention in the internal affairs of states, and peaceful settlement of disputes.<sup>105</sup> Predictably, the statement does not address the jarring gap between Russia’s stated commitment to the principle of sovereign equality and territorial integrity and its repeated violations of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The third joint statement, the *Joint Declaration on Further Deepening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination in the New Era*, provides more detailed information on sectoral cooperation and multilateral coordination. The statement calls for advancing cooperation in energy, finance, digital infrastructure, and Arctic logistics.<sup>106</sup> The two sides agree to deepen the ‘comprehensive energy cooperation partnership’ [全面能源合作伙伴关系] across hydrocarbons and renewables. The parties also agree to expand inter-bank transactions and local currency settlements, which are critical for areas critical for the internationalization of the RMB. On the digital front, Beijing and Moscow pledge to strengthen cooperation on AI and cybercrime, including through the recently adopted *United Nations Convention against Cybercrime*, as well as work together on promoting a ‘permanent mechanism for international information security’ [国际信息安全常设机制].<sup>107</sup> Regarding Arctic logistics, the two sides commit to ‘mutually beneficial cooperation on the Arctic route’ [北极航道互利合作]. However, the absence of further details on this matter suggests Russia’s reluctance to allow China further access to the Arctic region. As for military cooperation, the statement does not signal any new developments, but calls for expanding joint exercises, air and maritime patrols, and military technical cooperation. In parallel with these sectoral developments, China and Russia plan to deepen multilateral coordination within the SCO and BRICS, including the creation of two SCO security centres in Tashkent and Dushanbe and the promotion of local currency cross-border trade settlements within the BRICS.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo he Eluosi Lianbang Guanyu Quanqiu Zhanlue Wendingde Lianhe Shengming [Joint Statement by the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation on Global Strategic Stability].”

<sup>105</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo he Eluosi Lianbang Guanyu Jiaqiang Hezuo Weihu Guojifa Quanweide Lianhe Shengming [Joint Statement by the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation on Further Strengthening Cooperation to Uphold the Authority of International Law].”

<sup>106</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “Guanyu Jinyibu Shenhua ZhongE Xinshidai Quanmian zhanlue Xiezuo Huoban Guanxide Lianhe Shengming [Joint Statement by the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation on Further Deepening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination in the New Era].”

<sup>107</sup> *The UN Convention Against Cybercrime* was adopted in December 2024. It will enter into force 90 days after 40 states have ratified it.

<sup>108</sup> These are the SCO Universal Centre for Countering Security Challenges and Threats in Tashkent and the SCO Anti-drug Centre in Bishkek.

Overall, the latest joint statements have advanced the strategic partnership across sectors vital to long-term cooperation, including energy, finance, digital infrastructure, and Arctic logistics. The statements also outline directions for military cooperation, but do not significantly expand its scope and depth. Although the statements do not fundamentally alter the trajectory of the partnership, they do indicate a set of shared objectives for reshaping the global international order in the future.

## 5.6. China's Pivot towards the Global South

The term 'Global South' refers to the developing regions of Asia, Africa, and Latin America that share an economic, political, and social history marked by the experience of colonialism and imperialism.<sup>109</sup> This concept also encompasses the institutionalization of the movement into the Group of 77 (G77), a UN-based coalition of developing countries established in 1964. Although China did not participate in G77 activities during the Cold War, its presence at the Bandung Conference in 1955, its adherence to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and its support for revolutionary and national liberation movements have forged strong ties with countries in the Global South that continue to this day. In this section, I examine the geo-economic and diplomatic instruments China has used to engage with the Global South under the Xi administration, as well as China's communication strategy towards this group of countries.

Since 2023, in the wake of the 'new strategic opportunities' discourse, Beijing has intensified its narrative of 'China is and will always be an important member of the Global South' [中国始终是“全球南方”的重要成员]. President Xi has increasingly mentioned the Global South in his speeches, and there has been a surge in scholarly articles on China-Global South relations. In official Party publications, China's cooperation with the Global South is portrayed as a means of facilitating the latter's modernization, occurring against the backdrop of "the Western camp's divisive hegemonic manoeuvres targeting the Global South."<sup>110</sup> China's messaging often attributes ongoing conflicts in the Global South to Western interference, positioning China as a credible alternative and moral counterpoint to the West. For instance, at the Closing Ceremony of the BRICS Business Forum in 2023, President Xi stated that 'as a developing country and a member of the Global South, China stands shoulder to shoulder with other developing countries and pursues a shared future with them. China has resolutely upheld the common interests of developing countries and striven to enhance the representation and voice of emerging market economies and developing countries in global affairs.'<sup>111</sup>

Key components of China's messaging to the Global South include China's professed solidarity with

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<sup>109</sup> Ines Arco Escriche and Victor Burguete, "China's Presence in the Global South," *Barcelona Centre for International Affairs*, November 2023.

<sup>110</sup> Shiji Wang and Bohai Lin, "Xi Jinping Guanyu 'Quanqiu Nanfang' Zhongyao Lunshude Chuchang Jingyu, Hexin Neirong ji Jiazhi Yiyi [The Context, Content, and Significance of Xi Jinping's Discourse on the 'Global South']," *Bingtuan Dangxiao Xuebao*, no. 4 (2025).

<sup>111</sup> Jinping Xi, "Zai 2023 Nian Jinzhuang Guojia Gongshang Luntan Bimushishangde Zhici [Remarks at the Closing Ceremony of the 2023 BRICS Business Forum]," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, August 22, 2023.

developing countries, the promotion of the Chinese development experience, and the call for a ‘fairer and more equitable’ global governance system. The concept of ‘solidarity’ [团结] is rooted in the Party’s historical alignment with the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements. According to Zhuo and Diao, China’s cooperation with the Global South can best be described by the mechanism of ‘composite solidarity’ [复合团结].<sup>112</sup> It consists of summit diplomacy [元首外交], people-to-people diplomacy [民间外交], and mutual learning among civilizations [文明互鉴]; it also promotes social practices such as development cooperation [发展合作], connectivity [互联互通], and global governance reforms [国际制度改革] with the overarching aim of building a new global order more favourable to developing nations.<sup>113</sup>

It is within this context that President Xi launched the Global Development Initiative (GDI) at the 76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UNGA in September 2021, calling for ‘placing development high on the global macro-policy agenda’ and ‘fostering global development partnerships that are more equal and balanced.’<sup>114</sup> In January 2022, the Permanent Mission of China to the UN held an inaugural meeting of the ‘Group of Friends of the GDI’ attended by ambassadors from more than 80 countries. Furthermore, in September 2022, China published the first batch of GDI-related projects, covering areas such as poverty reduction, food security, pandemic and vaccines, climate resilience, industrialisation, digital economy, digital connectivity, and development finance.<sup>115</sup> Through the GDI, Beijing has sought to strengthen China’s standing as a major power that prioritises development and unselfishly shares its achievements and experiences.

Another strand of China’s messaging to the Global South revolves around the Chinese development experience and is encapsulated in the ‘China model’ [中国模式] discourse. The term ‘China model’ broadly refers to a strategic choice that China has made to achieve modernization in the context of globalization, as well as a set of developmental strategies and governance patterns that the country has gradually developed since the 1980s.<sup>116</sup> The argument here is that countries in the Global South can achieve the same levels of socio-economic transformation China has experienced since the 1980s if they follow China’s lead. Through the ‘China model’ discourse, Beijing positions itself as the provider of an alternative route to modernization. As noted by Feng, ‘the West’s path is not the only route to modernization. Every country is fully capable of charting its own course forward. [...] Chinese modernization has upended conventional thinking by opening up new modernization alternatives for latecomer countries.’<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Zhenwei Zhuo and Haoyuan Diao, “Yizhi yu Hubu: Zhongguo dui Quanguo Nanfang Guojia Tuanjie Shijiande Fuhe Luoji [Consistency and Complementarity: China’s Composite Logic of Solidarity with the Global South],” *Beijing Hangkong Hangtian Daxue Xuebao*, no. 6 (2025).

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “Quanguo Fazhan Changyi [Global Development Initiative].”

<sup>115</sup> Center for International Knowledge on Development, *Progress Report on the Global Development Initiative 2023*, June 21, 2023.

<sup>116</sup> Keping Yu, “Zhongguo Moshi: Jingyan yu Jianjie [The China Model: Lessons Learned],” in *Zhongguo Moshi yu Beijing Gongshi: Chaoyue Huashengdun Gongshi* [The China Model and the Beijing Consensus: Beyond the Washington Consensus], ed. by Keping Yu et al. (Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe, 2006), 9-21.

<sup>117</sup> Ziyi Feng, “Wenming Shiyuxiade Zhongguoshi Xiandaihua [Chinese Modernization from a Civilizational Perspective],” *Qiushi*, February 17,

Consider ongoing digital transformation. Developing countries are typically ‘digital latecomers’ who seek to leverage technological cooperation with ‘digital frontrunners’ to achieve their broader developmental goals. As seen by many digital latecomers, China, following a path from imitation through local transformation to independent innovation, has achieved the status of a digital frontrunner. It is thus not surprising that many developing countries see Chinese ICT and digital technologies (coupled with generous credit lines) as a desirable solution to their urban security, transportation, and energy infrastructure challenges. Those countries often look to China for lessons in digital transformation, seeking to leverage technological cooperation with Beijing to achieve their digital transformation objectives. As a result, Chinese tech companies, operating under the banner of the Digital Silk Road (DSR), supply ICT and digital infrastructure across the Global South, thus diffusing Chinese technology standards and spreading the Chinese model of digital economy abroad.<sup>118</sup>

A third priority for Beijing is to position itself as a key driver of global governance reform. China’s ambitions in this regard are outlined in the Global Governance Initiative (GGI), unveiled at the 2025 SCO Summit in Tianjin. The summit, attended by more than 20 heads of state, exemplified China’s growing capacity to bring together diverse states on a regular basis to produce sectoral agreements without imposing universal normative conditions.<sup>119</sup> In his speech, President Xi identified five principles central to the GGI. The first is China’s advocacy for the sovereign equality of states perceived as a means for democratization of international relations. Second, China calls for respect for international law and the UN Charter, stressing the importance of taking seriously the legitimate security concerns of all states. Third, China emphasizes multilateral cooperation as a cornerstone of global governance, underscoring shared responsibility among all participants. Fourth, China promotes a ‘people-centred’ approach [以人为本] to address global challenges, such as poverty eradication, connectivity, access to healthcare, and climate resilience. Fifth, China emphasizes its commitment to effective global governance that resolves real problems and addresses their root causes.<sup>120</sup> The GGI presents China’s vision of reforming global governance architecture, seeking to mobilize countries in the Global South to join China in reshaping global governance away from Western dominance towards a multipolar system.

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2025.

<sup>118</sup> For a detailed analysis, see, Maria Tanaka, “From the Digital Silk Road to the Governance of Cyberspace: China’s Norm Diffusion Strategy in Central Asia,” *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies* 25, no. 2 (2025).

<sup>119</sup> Nadine Godehardt and Maximilian Mayer, “China’s Claim to a New World Order,” *German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, September 26, 2025.

<sup>120</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “Quanqiu Zhili Changyi Gainian Wenjian [Concept Paper on the Global Governance Initiative].”

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## 6. Conclusion

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This study set out to elucidate China's strategic calculus in the Russia-Ukraine war within the wider context of a shifting global order. Throughout this paper, I have argued that China's position on the Ukraine conflict has little to do with the conflict itself but must be viewed through the lens of China's long-term strategic competition with the U.S. and its efforts to unite the Global South around Beijing's agenda for reshaping global governance. With European leaders at loggerheads with Washington over Ukraine's future and countries in the Global South struggling to contain the economic fallout of the war, China has emerged as one of the war's primary beneficiaries. Through its carefully calibrated strategic ambiguity, China has managed to substantially advance its strategic interests while others bear the costs of actual warfare and deplete their strategic resources due to internal divisions.

The Russia-Ukraine war has presented China with both strategic opportunities and risks. In the short term, the war has offered China an opportunity to bolster its credentials as a peace mediator. By launching, together with Brazil, a peace proposal for Ukraine and establishing the Friends for Peace Group, China has successfully built a loose coalition of countries that support China's narrative of the war, while bolstering its 'peacemaker' status among countries in the Global South. In the realm of strategic narratives, China has attempted to shift the focus from Russia's invasion of Ukraine to the so-called 'underlying causes' of the war – the U.S. ambition to preserve its hegemony and NATO's eastward expansion. China's ardent criticism of the U.S. and, by extension, NATO's roles in the conflict fit into a broader narrative that positions China as a counterbalance to U.S. influence, a responsible and constructive global power that seeks to end conflicts through diplomacy and collective action. Following President Trump's return to office, Beijing has also attempted to drive a wedge between the U.S. and Europe by encouraging the 'strategic autonomy' discourse. Regarding short-term risks, China's main focus has been on sustaining the resilience of the Putin regime by providing Russia with an economic lifeline, helping Moscow circumvent Western sanctions, expanding the exports of critical dual-use goods, and reducing Russia's diplomatic isolation.

Over the medium term, China's strategic calculations in the Russia-Ukraine war are intimately connected with planning for a potential Taiwan contingency. China has been closely studying Western sanctions against Russia and has ramped up its own resilience to sanctions. Beijing has sought to sanction-proof its economy by advancing the internationalization of the RMB, pursuing economic self-reliance, weaponizing dominance in global supply chains for geopolitical leverage, and adapting legal frameworks that enable imposing retaliatory sanctions. Simultaneously, Chinese strategists have been drawing lessons from Russia's military failures in Ukraine, focusing primarily on hybrid war tactics,

military logistics, and drone warfare.

In the long term, the Ukraine conflict has reshaped the dynamics of the Sino-Russian strategic partnership and accelerated China's pivot towards the Global South. Over the last four years, China and Russia have advanced their strategic partnership in sectors vital to their long-term cooperation, including energy, finance, digital infrastructure, and Arctic logistics, indicating a shared set of objectives to reshape the global order in the near future. Both sides have also deepened multilateral coordination within the SCO and BRICS. Regarding China's pivot towards the Global South, Beijing has attempted to position itself as a leader of the group, centring its messaging on solidarity (the Global Development Initiative), China's developmental experience (the promotion of the 'China model'), and global governance reform (the Global Governance Initiative).

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the United States emerged as an unrivalled global power – a unipolar uber-state. However, thirty-six years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the picture is very different. While the U.S. has maintained its position as the most powerful state in the international system, the rise of China, India, and other developing countries has seen power diffused beyond the West. President Trump's subsequent move to reduce the U.S. commitment to multilateral institutions and his reliance on coercive bilateral bargaining have led the U.S. to abandon its international leadership role. This changing global distribution of power has, in turn, resulted in the marginalization of formal multilateral organizations, a shift towards informal and flexible modes of governance such as the G20 and the BRICS, and a growing disregard for international law by major powers. The war in Ukraine has further accelerated the transition towards a multipolar world. Growing systemic heterogeneity has produced an international order that is less cohesive, more transactional, and organised around overlapping spheres of influence. In response to the Ukraine war, China has first and foremost sought to insulate itself from the conflict's fallouts while ensuring the survival of the Putin regime. Beijing has consistently looked beyond Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, focusing on containing the U.S. and deepening economic and diplomatic cooperation with the Global South. Thus, from Beijing's perspective, the Ukraine war has mainly been about taking advantage of 'new strategic opportunities', that is, about reducing its vulnerability to the U.S. power and increasing its own freedom of manoeuvre.

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# ANNEX I

## China's Strategic Narratives on the War in Ukraine: Criticism of Western Response

### 1. *The PLA Daily*: March 17- April 9, 2022

Examining America's Despicable Role on the International Stage through the Ukraine Crisis 从乌克兰危机看美国在国际舞台上扮演的卑劣角色	
March 17	Fanning the Flames: The Initiator of Tension in Ukraine 煽风点火，乌克兰局势紧张的始作俑者
	The commentary accuses the U.S. of causing the Ukraine crisis.
March 20	The Gangs Disrupting Regional Peace and Stability 拉帮结伙，搅乱地区和平稳定的祸水
	The commentary asserts that the U.S. is fostering global divisions along Cold War ideological lines.
March 21	Obsessed with Hegemony: The Tragedy of Undermining World Peace and Stability 执迷霸权，破坏世界和平稳定的祸源
	The commentary maintains that the U.S. has acted selfishly and caused wars and slaughter throughout its history.
March 23	A Habitual Liar Who Blames Others and Has Sinister Intentions 嫁祸于人，用心险恶的撒谎惯犯
	The commentary accuses the U.S. of misrepresenting other nations to blame them for the consequences of U.S. actions.
March 25	The Hypocritical Double Standards and the Maker of Humanitarian Crises 虚伪“双标”，人道主义危机的制造者
	The commentary accuses the U.S. of causing humanitarian disasters without facing accountability while pressuring other nations to promote peace.
March 28	The Destroyer of Global Biosecurity and the Wanton Cover-up 肆意掩盖，全球生物安全的破坏者
	The commentary accuses the U.S. of concealing biological military activities in Ukraine and other locations, thereby evading oversight by the Biological Weapons Convention.
March 31	Arrogant and Selfish, [The United States Is] Trampling on the International Human Rights 傲慢自私，国际人权事业的践踏者
	The commentary accuses the U.S. of violating human rights through the imposition of international sanctions, while masquerading as a defender of these rights.
April 6	[The United States –] A Bully Who Resorts to Coercive Diplomacy 威逼利诱，挑动胁迫外交的霸凌者
	The commentary accuses the U.S. of using economic sanctions to further inflame international tensions.
April 7	[The United States –] A Wilful and Arrogant Destroyer of International Order 任性狂妄，国际规则秩序的拆台者
	The commentary contends that the U.S. disregards established international norms to wage wars against sovereign states.
April 9	Profiteers Reap Huge War Profits through Exploitation of the Conflict 从中渔利，大发战争横财的投机者
	The commentary accuses the U.S. military-industrial complex of profiteering from the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

2. *The People's Daily*: March 29 – April 11, 2022

Viewing American Hegemony from the Ukraine Crisis 从乌克兰危机看美式霸权	
March 29	The United States has an Unshrinkable Responsibility for the Crisis 美国对危机负有不可推卸的责任
	The commentary states that U.S. and NATO provocations caused the conflict in Ukraine.
March 30	Adding Fuel to the Fire Creates Obstacles for the Political Solution [of the Crisis] 拱火浇油是在为政治解决制造障碍
	The commentary asserts that the U.S. is using Ukraine as a 'geo-strategic pawn' to contain Russia and China while also suppressing European autonomy.
March 31	A Cold War Mentality Leads to Destructive Consequences 冷战思维导致破坏性恶果
	The commentary describes the 'destructive consequences' of a Cold War mentality and draws a parallel between the present Ukraine crisis and the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia during the 1999 Kosovo War.
April 1	'A Biological Military Empire' Cannot Prove Its Innocence “生物军事帝国”不可能自证清白
	The commentary criticizes the U.S. for opposing the establishment of a 'verification mechanism' under the Biological Weapons Convention to investigate Russian allegations that the U.S. is conducting chemical or biological weapons activities in Ukraine.
April 2	Who is Deliberately Perpetuating the Conflict? 谁在有意将冲突长期化?
	The commentary claims that the military-industrial complex in the U.S. is profiteering from the Ukraine conflict.
April 6	Weaponizing the Economy Will Ultimately Harm Those Who Initiated It 将经济武器化必将反噬其身
	The commentary accuses the U.S. of engaging in 'financial terrorism' by employing economic and financial sanctions.
April 7	Sticking to the Cold War Mentality Undermines International Security Cooperation 固守冷战思维破坏国际安全合作
	The commentary asserts that the U.S. views the crisis as an opportunity to intensify ideological rivalries and deepen Europe's strategic dependence on the U.S.
April 8	Human Rights 'Champion' Is Actually a 'False Priest' 人权“卫道士”其实是“伪道士”
	The commentary argues that the U.S. leverages human rights issues to maintain its hegemony and claims that it has left European nations to manage the refugee crisis alone.
April 10	Pursuing Absolute Security Will Only Worsen the Security Dilemma 追求绝对安全只会强化安全困境
	The commentary contends that NATO's response to the war in Ukraine exposes its nature as a tool of the U.S. to maintain American hegemony.
April 11	Confrontation between Blocs Is Trampling on International Order 搞集团对抗是在践踏国际秩序
	The commentary asserts that the U.S. undermines the international order by promoting a binary narrative of 'friend or enemy.'

Seeing through the Hypocrisy and Dangers of U.S. Diplomacy 透视美式外交的虚伪与危害	
April 14	Sanctions Diplomacy: Wielding a Big Stick and Being Unreasonable 挥舞大棒，蛮横无理的“制裁外交”
	The commentary asserts that the U.S. uses sanctions to ‘arbitrarily suppress other countries.’
April 15	Confusing Right and Wrong: The Bad Record of ‘Human Rights Diplomacy’ 混淆是非，劣迹斑斑的“人权外交”
	The commentary asserts that the U.S. is playing the ‘human rights diplomacy card’ to intensify the Ukraine conflict.
April 19	The Unrehearsed, Discredited ‘Diplomacy of Lies’ 信口雌黄，信誉扫地的“谎言外交”
	The commentary asserts that the U.S. uses its ‘media hegemony’ to smear China, fabricating lies such as the ‘China knew in advance [about Russia’s invasion of Ukraine]’ theory.
April 21	Fomenting Division through Self-serving ‘Clique Diplomacy’ 煽动对立，私心作祟的“圈子外交”
	The commentary contends that U.S. politicians remain influenced by Cold War-era zero-sum game thinking and fail to recognize the end of the unipolar world.
April 23	‘Colour Diplomacy’ that Wreaks Endless Harm and Exports Turmoil 输出动乱，贻害无穷的“颜色外交”
	The commentary argues that the ‘colour revolutions’ promoted by U.S. diplomacy have not resulted in democracy and freedom, but have instead led to increased misery, conflict, and poverty.
April 25	Unscrupulous, Hypocritical, and Absurd ‘Double-standard Diplomacy’ 毫无底线，虚伪荒唐的“双标外交”
	The commentary asserts that the U.S. has engaged in ‘double standard diplomacy’ regarding human rights, applying different set of standards domestically and another internationally, as well as for allies versus adversaries.
April 26	‘Fanning the Flames’ Diplomacy that Harbours Evil Intentions and Manufactures Unrest 包藏祸心，制造动荡的“拱火外交”
	The commentary accuses the U.S. of having evil intentions of world domination.
April 27	‘Coercion Diplomacy’ of Kidnapping and Threats 绑架站队，威逼利诱的“胁迫外交”
	The commentary asserts that the U.S. bullies other countries to exert pressure on Russia.
April 28	Militaristic, Peace-destroying ‘Arms Diplomacy’ 穷兵黩武，破坏和平的“军火外交”
	The commentary asserts that U.S. military-industrial enterprises are profiteering from the Ukraine war, once again becoming the beneficiaries of a regional conflict.
April 29	Narrow and Selfish ‘Hegemonic Diplomacy’ that Tramples on the [International] Rules 狭隘自私，践踏规则的“霸权外交”
	The commentary asserts that the ‘international rules’ advocated by U.S. politicians are, in reality, the ‘U.S. rules,’ which are interpreted in ways that advance U.S. hegemonic interests.

## Maria TANAKA



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