

Taiwanese Support for Ukraine: Humanitarian Aid, Economic Sanctions, and Volunteer Soldiers

Russell Hsiao and Kristin Chang

The Adaptation Battle: the PLA and Lessons from the Russia-Ukraine War

Eric Chan

The Russo-Ukrainian War: Implications for Taiwan

Igor Khrestin

Three Scenarios for Ukraine's Future and the Implications for Taiwan

Michael Mazza

Taiwanese Perspectives on the Russian Invasion of Ukraine and its Implications

Alan H. Yang and Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao

Taiwanese Support for Ukraine: Humanitarian Aid, Economic Sanctions, and Volunteer Soldiers

By: Russell Hsiao and Kristin Chang

Russell Hsiao is the executive director of the Global Taiwan Institute (GTI) and editor-in-chief of the Global Taiwan Brief.

Kristin Chang is a summer intern at the Global Taiwan Institute. She is currently a rising sophomore at the Georgetown University Walsh School of Foreign Service studying Science, Technology, and International Affairs (STIA).

Taiwan is a frontline democracy facing the specter of war and mounting concerns about its authoritarian neighbor's growing military capabilities and intent. The island democracy stands at the heart of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) expansive and irredentist claims, and has been forced to contend with increasingly bellicose behavior from Beijing. Given these concerns, it is perhaps no surprise that the plight of Ukrainians suffering from Russia's February 2022 re-invasion of its territory has strongly resonated with the Taiwan public. The popular slogan "Ukraine today, Taiwan tomorrow" (今日烏克蘭, 明日台灣) was repeated in media reports on a near-daily basis during the early months after the war broke out, highlighting the heightened sense of urgency within the Taiwan psyche. In response, the Taiwan government has demonstrated sizeable—yet relatively underappreciated—support for Ukraine, both through direct and indirect financial and humanitarian means. As the international community reckons with Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery, this article aims to provide a survey of Taipei's efforts thus far in providing support to Ukraine since the war began, while also establishing a baseline for future discussions.

The Ukraine War: Bridging the Indo-Pacific and Europe

To be clear, Russia's re-invasion of Ukraine represents a significant escalation of military aggression that has fundamentally changed the global geopolitical landscape. Countries in the Indo-Pacific and Europe—two geographically distant theatres separated on one end by two massive authoritarian powers and the Americas on the other—are becoming more politically aligned, largely due to the outbreak of a brutal land war in the heartland of Europe, something that was previously viewed as inconceivable in the

The Global Taiwan Brief is a bi-weekly publication released every other Wednesday and provides insight into the latest news on Taiwan.

Editor-in-Chief
Russell Hsiao
Associate Editor
John Dotson
Staff Editor
Marshall Reid

The views and opinions expressed in these articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Global Taiwan Institute.

To view web sources cited in the published papers (underlined in printed text), visit <https://global-taiwan.org/issues/vol-8-issue-13/>.

Global Taiwan Institute
1836 Jefferson Place NW,
Washington DC 20036
contact@globaltaiwan.org

To subscribe, visit
<http://globaltaiwan.org/subscribe/>.

© 2023 · Global Taiwan Institute

post-World War II era. Indeed, Moscow’s act of aggression has forced countries and people across the Indo-Pacific to confront the harsh reality that they are also not immune to the menace of authoritarian military aggression.

As a result, several Indo-Pacific countries—which lie in the shadow of an even larger, more powerful, authoritarian neighbor with similar historical claims and territorial disputes—are increasingly becoming aligned in their threat perceptions. Asian democracies, particularly Japan, have taken seriously the implications of the war in Ukraine for regional security in the Indo-Pacific. Japanese Prime Minister [Kishida Fumio](#) has taken the lead by visiting Ukraine in March 2023—the first and only Asian head of state to do so thus far in the war—and has publicly vowed to push back against global authoritarian aggression. Notably, he explicitly linked the two regions, stating: “Ukraine might be East Asia tomorrow [...] We must show there are consequences to the attack.”

Humanitarian Aid

The most concrete demonstration of Taiwan’s support for Ukraine has come in the form of its commitments of humanitarian aid and refugee support. Since the war’s outset, the Taiwanese government and civil society organizations have committed more than USD \$113.6 million in financial support, along with providing more than 700 metric tons of humanitarian supplies to Ukraine relief efforts. These aid packages have included: humanitarian aid, in-kind humanitarian aid, refugee support, support for civil society groups, power stations, food assistance, and reconstruction aid, among others. [1]

However, despite Beijing’s “[no limits](#)” partnership with Moscow, Kyiv has been hesitant in receiving direct financial and humanitarian support from Taiwan, evidently due to the PRC’s claims over Taiwan and the lack of official relations between Taipei and Kyiv. Consequently, Taiwan has had to route its aid and support to Ukraine either through city governments, churches, or regional NGOs; or else neighboring countries such as Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Lithuania, Moldova, Latvia, and Estonia, among others. [2]

Despite these limitations, Taiwan is still in the [top five Indo-Pacific countries](#) in terms of bilateral aid sent to Ukraine, trailing only Japan, Australia, and South Korea, while leading New Zealand. In the East and Southeast Asia regions, Taiwan is among the leading countries, coming in as the third-largest donor of humanitarian aid to Ukraine. Very little aid to Ukraine has come from nations in the latter region, except for [Thailand, Singapore, and Timor-Leste](#). On an international scale, Taiwan is also

among the top 25 providers of humanitarian support to Ukraine in the world, with contributions similar to Central and Eastern European countries such as Hungary.

Economic Sanctions

In addition to providing humanitarian support to Ukraine, Taipei has also taken steps to join the international community in imposing sanctions on Russia. In February 2022, immediately after the onset of the invasion, President Tsai Ing-wen ([蔡英文](#)) [announced](#) that Taiwan would join the United States and its allies in their economic sanctions against Russia. According to an April 2022 [statement](#) from the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MoEA, 經濟部), Taiwan imposed an embargo on the sale of 57 strategic high-tech commodities to Russia. These included semiconductor chips, computer information, and aerospace products, all of which took a relatively significant toll on [Taiwan’s technology industry](#).

Before the ban, Taiwan was exporting [USD \\$1.3 billion](#) worth of products to Russia. Total [bilateral trade](#) between Russia and Taiwan dropped 8.796 percent from 2021 to 2022, in large part due to these stricter regulations on exports to Russia. However, bilateral trade between the countries only accounts for 0.76 percent of Taiwan’s total trade. In January 2023, MOEA [announced](#) an expansion of sanctions against Russia, adding 52 items to the new export restriction list, aligning Taiwan with European Union and US regulations on exports. These new items include nuclear energy substances and machine tools.

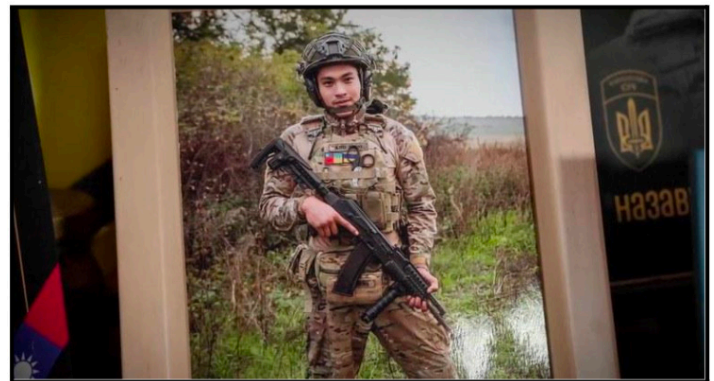


Image: A photograph of Tseng Sheng-kuang, a volunteer soldier from Taiwan killed in fighting in the war in Ukraine. (Image source: [Radio Free Asia](#))

Volunteer Soldiers

While humanitarian aid and economic sanctions stand as the most visible demonstration of the island’s overall support for Ukraine, the clearest manifestation of the Taiwanese people’s support for Ukraine may be the group of volunteer soldiers that

has traveled over 6,200 miles away to fight on the battlefield in an Eastern European country.

Since Ukrainian President Zelenskyy [put out a call](#) for international volunteer soldiers in February 2022, more than 20,000 volunteers from 52 countries have reportedly responded. An overwhelming majority were reported to have returned home before the summer of 2022, with an estimated [1,000 to 3,000](#) such foreign fighters believed to be currently active in Ukraine, most of whom serve in three battalions of the International Legion.

While direct military aid from Taiwan is off the table, public re-

porting suggests that there have been around 10 confirmed volunteer soldiers from the country that responded to Ukraine's call for help. The age of the [volunteer soldiers from Taiwan](#) span from 26 to 51 years old, and the group includes several with [prior military training](#), ranging from one year of basic training to service in Taiwan's special forces and as part of the Amphibious Reconnaissance and Patrol Unit (ARP, 海軍陸戰隊兩棲偵搜大隊). According to [estimates](#) from one of the Taiwanese volunteer soldiers, Li Chen-ling (李成零) and other media sources, there may be between 20 to 30 total volunteers from Taiwan who either have served or are serving as soldiers in the frontline efforts of the Russo-Ukraine War.

Taiwanese Volunteer Soldiers in Russo-Ukraine War

Name	Age	Involvement	Military Experience
Jonathan Tseng/Tseng Sheng-kuang (曾聖光)	26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Legion of Territorial Defense of Ukraine/Carpathian Sich Voluntary Battalion Duration: five months Status: Killed in the eastern city of Lyman in November 2022 	Former soldier in Taiwan's Republic of China Armed Forces (ROCAF)
Jack Yao/Yao Kuan-chun (姚冠均)	28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Georgian Foreign Legion, placed into close combat reconnaissance missions Joined three days after President Zelenskyy requested international soldier volunteers Status: Returned to his coffee business 	Finished one-year mandatory Taiwanese military training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previously involved in the 2014 Sunflower Youth Movement
Li Cheng-ling (李成零)	36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Legion of Territorial Defense of Ukraine Former Uber Eats delivery driver Duration: April 2022 	Former Taiwan Marine and previously joined the French Foreign Legion (Légion Étrangère) 10 years ago
Tony Lu/Lu Tzu-hao (呂子豪)	35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Originally went to distribute aid, but stayed and became a foreign fighter; Served on defense and supply logistics Former butcher Duration: nine months (March to June 2022) 	Former Taiwan Marine
Chuang Yu-wei (莊育璋)	51	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Legion of Territorial Defense of Ukraine Former Taiwanese tour guide Duration: eight months (Mar 2022 to Oct 2022) 	Received Taiwan military training in 1990
Chen Ting-wei (陳廷偉)	27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Legion of Territorial Defense of Ukraine In April 2022, was assigned to defend a village near Kharkiv 	Trained in an elite amphibious "frogmen" reconnaissance and patrol unit in Taiwan
Pan (潘立偉)	26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Legion of Territorial Defense of Ukraine Duration: April 2022 Status: Discharged for scheming to harm his comrades and military commander 	Taiwan's Special Forces and French Foreign Legion (Légion Étrangère)
Chen Xi (陳晞)	32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Legion of Territorial Defense of Ukraine Duration: September 2022 to May 2023 	In 2017, served for the French Foreign Legion (Légion Étrangère) for five years
Cai (Pseudonym)	27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Legion of Territorial Defense of Ukraine Duration: September 2022 to May 2023 Status: Sustained injury to his foot and lost two toes; underwent skin grafting procedures 	N/A
"I don't know Mount Lushan" (不識廬山)	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Legion of Territorial Defense of Ukraine 	N/A

* This list is based on public reporting conducted by various media outlets in Taiwan. Whether the individuals have in fact volunteered, and/or whether the accounts of their service are accurate, has not been independently verified.

This level of support from Taiwan would actually place it on the higher end among Asian countries. Other [Indo-Pacific countries](#) with reported volunteer soldiers in Ukraine include [Japan](#), [South Korea](#), Malaysia, and India, among other countries. [3]

While most volunteer soldiers from Taiwan have returned to the island, one Taiwanese soldier, [Tseng Sheng-Kuang](#) (曾聖光), died in battle in the eastern city of Lyman in November 2022. He is the first known [East Asian soldier](#) to die fighting in Ukraine. Tseng joined after Ukraine broadcasted a request for volunteer soldiers at the outbreak of the war, and was in combat for five months. He is among the roughly [100 volunteer soldiers](#) who have died in battle since the fighting started. Tseng's family was given a [state award](#) by President Zelenskyy for his courage and sacrifice.

Interestingly, in contrast to other countries that have [explicitly discouraged their citizens](#) from volunteering in the war and avoided any appearance of sanctioning their activities, the Taiwan government officially recognized Tseng's death, and he was honored by Taiwanese officials. In reference to a ceremony held in honor of Tseng, Ambassador Hsiao Bi-khim (蕭美琴), Taiwan's representative to the United States, posted on her [social media account](#): "Honoring a brave soul who gave his life for the cause of freedom. May the hero 曾聖光 Diway rest in peace."

Conclusion

Taipei's rationale in supporting Ukraine was made explicitly clear in May 2023, when [Ambassador Hsiao](#) stated at a forum in Washington, DC: "Ukraine's survival is Taiwan's survival. Ukraine's success is Taiwan's success. Our futures are closely linked." Taiwan's top diplomat put a finer point on her earlier statement at [another event](#) explaining: "I think pushing back on aggression is the key message that will help to deter any consideration or miscalculation that an invasion can be conducted unpunished, without costs, in a rapid way. We must ensure that anyone contemplating the possibility of an invasion understands that, and that is why Ukraine's success in defending against aggression is so important also for Taiwan." The representative's clear statements help to explain why Taipei has not made too much public fuss about the fact that a large proportion of military supplies have been [directed to Ukraine](#), causing delays in shipments of military arms to Taiwan.

Despite Taiwan's efforts thus far, international observers argue that Taiwan should do more. [Daniel Runde](#), senior vice president at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), recommended that Taipei more than triple its current commitment every year by pledging an annual aid package to Ukraine

of USD \$500 million over the next four years, building to a total of USD \$2 billion. Echoing the statement of Representative Hsiao, Runde argued that "Taiwan's survival is directly connected to that of Ukraine." Further, he [contended](#) that "If Russia is perceived as 'winning' in Ukraine, meaning that it annexes and holds significant parts of Ukraine with consequences Russia can accept, then China's temptation to invade Taiwan might grow ever greater."

Indeed, Taiwan has the means to do more. According to [one forecast](#), Taiwan's nominal GDP per capita could surpass Japan's in 2028. Yet, [Japan has contributed](#) more than USD \$7 billion to Ukraine. It has also accepted more than 2,000 displaced Ukrainians and helped them with housing and support for jobs and education, and also announced the commitment to deliver 100 military vehicles to Ukraine.

As the war drags on past 16 months, Taiwan should think longer-term about what it can do to contribute to Ukraine. At the same time, it is incumbent on like-minded nations to include Taiwan in ongoing multilateral efforts to ensure that resources are pooled and allocated efficiently and effectively, and that they are tailored to where they are most needed for the Ukrainians. While Taiwan's inclusion in the [European Bank for Reconstruction and Development initiative](#) to support Ukraine's economic resilience is a move in the right direction, more can and should be done to include Taiwan in other multilateral relief efforts. For instance, Taiwan should be a part of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) recently launched [Four-Year Country Program for Ukraine](#) to support Ukraine's agenda for reform, recovery, and reconstruction. It is worth noting that [Taiwan](#) has been invited to "observe" and even serve as a "participant" at OECD committee meetings in the past.

The Taiwan government has played an outsized role relative to the majority of other Indo-Pacific countries in its support for Ukraine, both through direct and indirect channels, and it stands poised to do more. Through its [contributions to Ukraine](#), Taiwan has certainly earned the right to be at the table. The United States and its like-minded partners should think of ways to integrate Taiwan into broader reconstruction and recovery efforts for Ukraine.

The main point: Despite its small size and challenging geopolitical position, Taiwan has played an outsized role in supporting Ukraine's defense against the Russian invasion. Given Taipei's strong contributions to international peace and stability, the United States and other partners should seek to more effective-

ly include Taiwan on the global stage.

[1] Author's dataset, current as of April 2023.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Japan has an [estimated](#) 70 persons who applied to join the international legion, South Korea [reported](#) nine volunteer soldiers who have joined Ukrainian frontline war efforts, and India [reported](#) that more than 500 of its citizens have applied to join the international legion.

The Adaptation Battle: the PLA and Lessons from the Russia-Ukraine War

By: Eric Chan

Eric Chan is a non-resident fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute and a senior airpower strategist for the US Air Force. The views in this article are the author's own, and are not intended to represent those of his affiliate organizations.

Since the beginning of the Russia-Ukraine War, militaries around the world have been closely observing each stage of the conflict, learning operational lessons and beginning the process of adaptation. The People's Liberation Army (PLA), of course, is not an outlier in this process. However, as a party army—the PLA is the armed branch of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP, 中國共產黨), rather than the national army of China—the PLA will also seek to adapt lessons to ensure the political demands of the CCP leadership are met. CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping (習近平) is well known to be a micromanager, [subsuming many state roles into newly established party commissions](#) that he directly leads.

In this case, though, Xi does not need to create new authorities to exercise military power: as chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC, 中央軍委委員會主席), he has long-established, immense powers to direct the PLA, all the way down to the operational and tactical levels. For instance, during the PLA response to then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, Xi reportedly [directed the firing of ballistic missiles](#) into Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Thus, PLA analysis will likely be filtered through the lens of Xi's existing biases and priorities. Higher-level adaptive responses have a high possibility of being contorted, either by Xi himself or by leaders seeking to ingratiate themselves with Xi (i.e., the ["working towards the Fuhrer"](#) phenomenon). In this article, I

will review some of the published analysis on potential PLA lessons learned from the war. I will then consider how this will likely be interpreted and prioritized given party direction. Finally, I will look at the implications of all of this for the future defense of Taiwan.

Lessons Do Not Equal Adaptation

In September 2022, Dr. Joel Wuthnow of the US National Defense University looked at some of the existing literature on potential PLA lessons in his article, ["Rightsizing Chinese Military Lessons From Ukraine."](#) His analysis split the lessons into two categories: first, "Reinforcing Lessons," which "confirm the value of previous PLA decisions;" and second, "Pivotal Lessons," which "force the PLA to reconsider its assumptions or move into a new direction."

Wuthnow was careful to mention that whether or not the PLA would actually learn from these lessons rested on three assumptions: (1) that PLA decision-makers are teachable; (2) that there is a rational strategic planning process; and (3) that adaptation will influence China's decision-making calculus.

He also noted that, as of the time of publication, "the PLA has made it frustratingly difficult to answer these questions using direct evidence: several months into the conflict, PLA officers have produced almost nothing detailing their views on the implications of the conflict for future Chinese operations and modernization. It is also doubtful that internal assessments, if they exist, will be available in a way that can substantiate foreign speculation."

Thus, with these caveats in mind, Dr. Wuthnow summed up a number of lessons he had gathered from Western analysts, as summarized in the table below:

	Corbett, Ma, and Singer	YY. Lin	Finkelstein	Dibb	Lin and Culver	Sacks
PLA will focus more on joint and combined arms operations and study Russia's failures	X	X	X	X		X
PLA will study utility of nuclear signaling in deterring U.S. allied intervention			X		X	X
PLA will redouble commitment to information dominance, including information blockade	X				X	
PLA will focus on early achievement of air and sea superiority		X				
PLA will prioritize decapitation strikes to prevent organized resistance					X	X
PLA will emphasize political work and put greater attention on self and enemy morale			X	X	X	
PLA will put more emphasis on enlisted and officer recruitment, development	X			X		
PLA will increase its scrutiny of logistics and equipment maintenance preparations	X			X		

Sources: Thomas Corbett, Ma Xia, and Peter W. Singer, "What Lessons Is China Taking from the Ukraine War?" *Defense One*, April 3, 2022, available at <https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2022/04/what-lessons-china-taking-ukraine-war/363915/>; Ying-Yu Lin, "What the PLA Is Learning from Russia's Ukraine Invasion," *The Diplomat*, April 20, 2022, available at <https://thediplomat.com/2022/04/what-the-pla-is-learning-from-russias-ukraine-invasion/>; David Finkelstein, "Beijing's Ukrainian Battle Lab," *War on the Rocks*, May 2, 2022, available at <https://warontherocks.com/2022/05/beijings-ukrainian-battle-lab/>; Paul Dibb, "China Will Be Watching and Learning from Russia's Poor Performance in Ukraine," *ASPI Strategist*, May 3, 2022, available at <https://www.aspi.org.au/china-will-be-watching-and-learning-from-russias-poor-performance-in-ukraine/>; Bonny Lin and John Culver, "China's Taiwan Invasion Plans May Get Faster and Deadlier," *Foreign Policy*, April 19, 2022, available at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/04/19/china-invasion-ukraine-taiwan/>; David Sacks, "What Is China Learning from Russia's War in Ukraine?" *Foreign Affairs*, May 16, 2022, available at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2022-05-16/what-china-learning-russias-war-ukraine>.

Image: Joel Wuthnow's September 2022 summarization of Western open-source analysis of PLA lessons learned. His conclusion was that most of these lessons aligned with PLA assessments formed prior to the Russia-Ukraine War. (Source: [US National Defense University](#))

Most of these lessons derive from well-documented Russian operational failures, with the notable exceptions of perceived advantageous use of Russian nuclear signaling and Ukrainian information warfare. However, it is important to note that lessons do not necessarily equate to adaptation. Even in the ideal scenario of an intellectually honest and creative military free from political influence, the military reform process requires prioritization. PLA resources are significant but not infinite, and there are lessons that will compete for resources.

An example of this is the “utility of nuclear signaling in deterring US [and] allied intervention,” something also considered by [PRC analysts](#). Prior to the war, the PLA was already in the middle of an [expansion of its nuclear stockpile](#): from 400 warheads in 2021 to an estimated 1000 warheads by 2030. This already represents a rapid increase in nuclear capability, with correspondingly higher supporting costs (such as hardened facilities/silos, security forces, and increasingly sophisticated delivery mechanisms).

Yet even this increase is grossly insufficient to credibly use nuclear weapons as a form of deterrence against conventional intervention. Both the United States and Russia [have approximately 1700 deployed nuclear warheads, with thousands more in reserve](#). Moreover, the United States has had a [complex nuclear deterrent approach](#) since the 1960s, including the development of [adaptive conventional-nuclear integration](#) against the threat of exactly this sort of escalation-signaling, limited nuclear attack. In contrast, public PLA strategic doctrine has remained the same since the beginning of the PRC nuclear program, with a “[no first use](#)” policy. Thus, if the PLA were to directly adapt Russian nuclear signaling methods, the PLA would need to further exponentially increase their stockpile while diversifying into capabilities like [low-yield nuclear weapons](#). Even more importantly, the PLA would need to completely redesign their nuclear doctrine, training, and concepts of risk management: threatening the use of nuclear weapons early in a crisis would be highly and unpredictably escalatory, going against the PLA concept of “[war control](#)” (戰爭控制) as a method of protecting the CCP. Finally, every yuan spent on this would mean one less yuan spent on improvements in conventional capability.

This is just one lesson that would be difficult for the PLA to di-

rectly adapt in a cost-effective way. PLA planners will instead likely selectively and indirectly adapt lessons, particularly in areas which have applications outside of pure warfighting and in areas that Xi Jinping has clearly prioritized. The increase in nuclear capability, for instance, is one of [Xi's priorities](#) simply as a marker of the PRC's status as a great power – even if it is unlikely to be credible as a nuclear deterrent against intervention. Instead, the PLA may seek to adapt these capabilities as part of a [broader gray zone campaign](#) to persuade its neighbors that accepting a PRC-led order would be less expensive and risky than a nuclear arms race or US regional nuclear deployment.

Xi as the Ultimate Teacher

As the nuclear example indicates, Xi has a longstanding vision of what the PLA should be as a “world class military” (世界一流軍隊), and the PLA will work to fit reforms within that vision. His exhortations to the PLA have remained [remarkably consistent](#) over his last decade of power: “[ensure absolute loyalty of the troops](#)” (確保部隊絕對忠誠), “[dare to struggle](#)” (敢於鬥爭, likely referencing internal resistance to reform), and “[be able to fight and win](#)” (能打榜, 打勝榜).

Xi's public remarks since the start of the Russia-Ukraine War, particularly during the [October 2022 20th Party Congress](#) and the March 2023 “Two Sessions,” have repeated those themes. To the extent that the Russia-Ukraine War may have influenced his public thinking and guidance, what hints we do have tend to indicate that the war has reinforced his existing concerns with the PLA. First, Xi mentioned in November 2022 the necessity of “[consolidation and enhancement of integrated national strategic systems and capabilities](#)” (鞏固提高一體化國家戰略體系和能力). This is likely a reference to information dominance and still greater military-civil fusion (軍民融合), to ensure that domestic PRC tech and the PLA can offset [perceived US technological containment](#). The [United States and EU attempt to choke Russia off from microchips](#), which has led to Russian inability to scale up high-tech weapons and munitions production, has likely reinforced this.

Second, the 20th Party Congress Work Report once again mentions the need to “[win local wars](#)” (打贏局部戰爭). This is something of a climb down from the [more expansive 2019 vision](#) of the roles and missions of the PLA, which highlight global power projection to “protect China's overseas interests.” This re-prioritization speaks to [continued and long-term party distrust](#) in the ability of the PLA to be able to succeed in even a regional war, let alone a global struggle. Russian inability to rapidly win a war against a smaller nation on their own border, even while the Russians



Image: A Ukrainian soldier moving a Starlink satellite dish, January 2023. The Starlink constellation has been critical for Ukrainian military communication. This has provided Ukraine with strategic and operational benefits to situational awareness, targeting, morale, and communication to a global audience. Conversely, Russian inability to counter or replicate the thousands of highly distributed terminals has hampered their military operations. This feeds into existing PLA concerns on information dominance and capacity. (Image source: [Reuters](#))

played up their ability to defeat NATO in a much larger war, has likely reinforced these fears.

These expectations provide an outline for the expected new military strategic guidance (軍事戰略方針), which was [last updated in 2019](#). This hints at a “back to basics” doctrinal re-write: reviving the 2015-era doctrine of “[winning informatized local wars](#),” while emphasizing capacity (both in personnel and logistics). Rather than adaptation influencing China’s decision-making calculus, it seems that the party center—that is, Xi—will influence adaptation.

Implications

Xi seems to have taken a low-imagination approach to lessons from the Russia-Ukraine war: “what we were already doing, but more.” A PRC focus on informational dominance and capacity will mean that Taiwan must consider similar countermeasures. Unlike Ukraine, Taiwan cannot depend on SpaceX’s Starlink: it is [not available in Taiwan](#) yet, and SpaceX’s CEO Elon Musk is vulnerable to PRC coercion given the [scale of his other enterprises](#) within the PRC. Moreover, Taiwan would not have access to all of Western Europe and American industry to build capacity while fighting a war.

Asymmetric concepts can offset some, but not all, of the imbal-

ance. If the PRC is now preparing for the potential of a protracted conflict, Taiwan must take steps against this contingency as well.

The main point: The Russia-Ukraine war offers a number of lessons for the PLA. However, adaptation requires prioritization. Under Xi’s ever-tightening control, the PLA will prioritize Xi’s ideas—most of which seem to focus on re-doubling the PLA ability to fight a protracted war over Taiwan.

The Russo-Ukrainian War: Implications for Taiwan

By: Igor Khrestin

Igor Khrestin serves as the Bradford M. Freeman Managing Director of Global Policy at the George W. Bush Institute.

Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 marked a pivotal moment in the collapse of the post-Cold War global security environment. The ongoing war in Ukraine is now easily the deadliest conflict on the European continent since the Second World War, and has [shattered assumptions](#) about the looming possibility of future great power conflicts, whether they might occur in Europe or in Asia. [1]

Taiwan is now [front and center](#) of the policy debate on whether a revanchist China will follow Russia’s lead in invading a smaller democratic neighbor, whether Beijing can still be deterred, and what the West—led by the United States—will do in response.

Lessons for Deterrence

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has so far been an undeniable failure for President Vladimir Putin. Dimitri Simes, former president of the Center for the National Interest and a Kremlin insider, [wrote](#) that the Russian invasion failed in the early stages because “it was a last-minute decision based on the perception of a threat to Russian security and dignity.” This assertion runs counter to the conclusions of US intelligence, who [warned for months](#) that Putin had made up his mind to invade Ukraine, with the intention of violently overthrowing the democratically elected Ukrainian government led by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The determined and organized Ukrainian resistance—unexpected by both the Russian and even Western governments—put an end to any assumption of a quick Russian victory and even [turned the tide](#) back toward Ukraine’s favor.

The Russo-Ukrainian war is now a bloody war of attrition that

is not expected to end anytime soon. However, the Western military support for Ukraine and wide-ranging sanctions against Russia have fundamentally transformed the conflict into an unprecedented, long-term standoff between Russia and the West. In fact, some prominent scholars have [argued](#) that the conflict has closed Russia's "window to Europe" that has been open in one way or another since the time of Peter the Great. [2] Whatever the military outcome in Ukraine, Russia will bear a high price for a long time to come.

The West, however, clearly failed to deter Putin from launching a bloody invasion that has destabilized the European continent and cost thousands of lives. Despite Ukraine's determined resistance and the belated Western military aid program, the restoration of even the pre-February 2022 status quo is not assured. Some [worry](#) that the escalation ladder could lead all the way to nuclear conflict if Ukraine is successful in re-taking Crimea.

Scholars have [ascribed](#) the West's [failure](#) to adequately react to Russia's previous wars and invasions in Chechnya, Georgia, Syria, and Crimea and Donbas in 2014 as a key factor in emboldening Putin to launch his full-scale attack on Ukraine in 2022. [3] US military leaders have also [argued](#) that the disastrous US pullout in Afghanistan and the quick collapse of the US-trained Afghan armed forces may have been an immediate contributing factor to Putin's decision.

The Lessons for Taiwan

From the very first days of Russia's invasion, Taiwan's leaders [have firmly stood](#) with the Ukrainians, while carefully avoiding drawing the obvious parallels to their own situation vis-à-vis the People's Republic of China (PRC). As has been the case for generations, the lesson for Taiwan and its Western supporters is *Si vis pacem, para bellum* ("if you want peace, be prepared for war"), and the Ukraine conflict is no exception. In August 2022, Taiwan announced a [sharp increase](#) in military spending. In December 2022, President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) [reinstated](#) mandatory one-year military service for eligible males on the island.

The United States has likewise remained committed to providing Taiwan with the tools necessary to defend itself. The fiscal year 2023 *National Defense Authorization Act* (NDAA) [authorized](#) an additional USD \$10 billion for Taiwan. In March 2023, the State Department [approved](#) a USD \$619 million sale of new weapons to Taipei. Meanwhile, regular US military transits in the Taiwan Strait have continued apace, despite China's [provocations](#).

On the diplomatic front, President Tsai [met with](#) House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in April, continuing Taiwan's high-level engage-

ment with US legislative officials. This practice has infuriated the Chinese, but strengthened Congressional support for Taiwan and is fully consistent with the *Taiwan Relations Act* of 1979.

Despite these necessary, stabilizing efforts, the possibility of a "Taiwan contingency" modeled on the Ukraine war has split the US policy community. Some conservative commentators have [argued](#) that it is now a question of "tradeoffs" between supporting Ukraine and maximizing US support for Taiwan. Others, including this author, have [countered](#) that the United States can and must support both fights—should China decide to launch a full-scale invasion modeled on the Kremlin's—and that successful Western support for Ukraine could serve as a deterrent factor for Chinese leader Xi Jinping (習近平).

Taiwan's upcoming presidential election in January 2024 will also likely influence the course of action Beijing will choose to pursue, as well as how the United States will react. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民主進步黨) candidate and current Vice President Lai Ching-te (賴清德) is [seen by some](#) as even more hawkish on China than President Tsai. In contrast, the traditionally Beijing-friendly Kuomintang (KMT, 中國國民黨) and its candidate, the Mayor of New Taipei City Hou You-yi (侯友宜), have [portrayed](#) the election as a vote between war and peace.

The Lessons for China

Russia's invasion of Ukraine likely caught Beijing [off-guard](#), as evidenced by the thousands of Chinese citizens that were caught in the crossfire at the early stages of the war. Nevertheless, China has since not only failed to condemn Russia's actions, but has instead used the war as an opportunity to transform the Sino-Russian relationship into an anti-United States diplomatic alliance and deepen Russia's [economic dependence](#) on China, capped by Xi Jinping's high-profile [visit](#) to Moscow in March 2023. China's support for its junior partner will continue for the foreseeable future, though likely only in the economic and diplomatic spheres.

It remains unclear what China's actions toward Ukraine portend for Taiwan. In August 2022, the PRC's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO, 國務院台灣事務辦公室) released a [white paper](#) on the PRC's Taiwan policy, the first such paper in over 20 years. In a decisive shift in tone from previous years, the paper described in no uncertain terms that "anti-China forces" are intent on using Taiwan to prevent "the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." More ominously, the document stated that "we should not allow this problem to be passed down from one generation to the next."

[4] The paper does not reject the use of force as a means of

solving these goals. And yet, US Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) William Burns has [stated](#) that Xi Jinping has already ordered the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to be ready to do so by 2027.

Burns has also [contended](#) that Beijing has been “surprised and unsettled” by Russia's weakness in Ukraine, as well as the West's cohesion in forming—and holding together—an anti-Russia coalition to support Ukraine. Former United Kingdom Prime Minister Boris Johnson [also expressed his belief](#) that the Ukraine war “massively increased strategic ambiguity” for China in a Taiwan invasion scenario.

Experts agree that Beijing's calculus on Taiwan is going to be impacted by what it perceives would be the US military response, and whether Beijing would be able to withstand the withering Western sanctions that would undoubtedly follow. Unlike the hefty, but manageable, economic costs borne by Europe from its break with Russia, the cost of a Taiwan invasion would be [much higher](#) for all sides. Unlike in Ukraine, direct involvement by US forces in the early stages of any Taiwan fight would be [highly likely](#), as confirmed by President Joseph Biden himself. From there, the war-planning scenarios range in outcomes, but most experts agree that all sides would bear incredibly high costs, both military and economic. A January 2023 wargame [conducted](#) by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) concluded that the best course of action is for the United States to “strengthen deterrence immediately” in order to prevent these potentially disastrous outcomes.

The Lessons for the United States

Faced with a prospect of a two-front confrontation with Russia and China, the Biden Administration is attempting to [tamp down](#) any loose talk of a Taiwan contingency, or any change in the longstanding US policy of “strategic ambiguity” toward Taipei. Secretary of State Antony Blinken just completed a high-profile visit to Beijing, where he received an audience with Xi Jinping, and has [pledged](#) to “stabilize” the US-China relationship.

However, the broad bipartisan consensus in the United States is that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP, 中國共產黨) under Xi Jinping's leadership represents a clear and present danger to US interests. During the first hearing of the newly formed Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party in the House of Representatives, Chairman Rep. Mike Gallagher (R-WI) [said](#) that the United States and China are now in “an existential struggle over what life will look like in the 21st century – and the most fundamental freedoms are at stake.” [5] This stark formulation leaves little room for the administration to maneuver.

In the long-term, deterrence against Beijing will only work if the United States is able to maximize every economic, diplomatic, and military tool at its disposal. To start, Washington needs a comprehensive new policy aimed at strengthening the US [defense industrial base](#), so that the United States is able to help Ukraine and Taiwan at the same time, if need be. From the standpoint of the technologies of the future, the United States needs to urgently implement the recommendations of bodies such as the Congressionally mandated [National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence](#), which found that China “possesses the might, talent, and ambition to surpass the United States” as the global leader if current trends are not reversed.

Finally, the United States needs to [build resiliency](#) in its own democracy, a task of vital and immediate importance if it is to remain a “shining city on the Hill” and project global power to withstand the long-term ideological challenge from Beijing.

The main point: The Russo-Ukrainian War has already provided a host of lessons for Taiwan, China, and the United States. In order to prevent a similar catastrophe from unfolding in the Taiwan Strait, the United States must do more to meet the challenge posed by the PRC.

[1] G. Douglas Davis and Michael O. Slobodchikoff [observe](#): “The Chinese are well placed to benefit from the Russian invasion of Ukraine by becoming more aggressive in East Asia. While the West is focused on Eastern Europe, China is gathering its strength to make strategic geopolitical gains.”

[2] Russian expert and former intelligence officer Dimitri Trenin [argues](#): “The challenge Russia is facing has no equivalents in our history. It's not just that we have neither allies nor even potential partners left in the West. Frequent comparisons with the Cold War of the mid and late 20th century are inaccurate and rather disorienting.”

[3] Professor Tracey German of King's College [argues](#): “Unlike Russia, the west did not learn from 2008. Putin clearly considered western sanctions to be a price worth paying, and calculated that western support for Ukraine would not extend to direct military intervention. Because of this, western warnings about the consequences of a military invasion have not been taken seriously and failed to deter Putin from sending his troops into Ukraine.”

[4] Cherry Hitkari of the Lowy Institute further [observes](#): “The paper is fashioned in the classic Xi Jinping [political style](#) of holding onto both the nostalgia of united popular struggles against past humiliation at foreign hands and possibilities for a bright

future accredited solely to the Chinese Communist Party. The rhetoric appeals to contemporary Chinese nationalism at home which heavily demands Beijing to talk straight to foreign powers, specifically Washington, to guard its interests.”

[5] At the same hearing, former Deputy National Security Advisor Matt Pottinger [testified](#): “There’s no longer any excuse for being fooled about Beijing’s intentions. The canon of Chairman Xi’s publicly available statements is too voluminous, and the accumulated actions of his regime too brazen, to be misunderstood at this late hour. The proverbial fig leaf has blown away, exposing the regime and its deep hostility toward the democratic West and the liberal international order.”

Three Scenarios for Ukraine’s Future and the Implications for Taiwan

By: Michael Mazza

Michael Mazza is a senior non-resident fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute and a non-resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

The much-anticipated Ukrainian [counteroffensive](#) is underway. Throughout much of the world, observers surely hope that upcoming developments on the battlefield will bring the war closer to a conclusion. But just as the war itself has had global implications, how it ends (or doesn’t) will have global implications as well—including for Taiwan. This article considers three broad potential scenarios, and their potential consequences for Taiwan: (1) some manner of Ukrainian victory; (2) some manner of Russian victory; and (3) a prolonged stalemate, or “frozen conflict.” These three scenarios are not exhaustive of all possible outcomes in the war, but they do illustrate why the conflict is relevant to Asia—and why Ukrainian victory is in Taiwan’s interests.

Scenario 1: Ukrainian Victory

When the Ukrainian counteroffensive culminates in the weeks to come, it may represent the beginning of the end for Russia’s war of aggression. Ukrainian President [Volodymyr Zelenskyy](#) has been clear that his government’s goal is to restore Ukraine’s pre-2014 borders, with Russian forces removed from Donetsk, Luhansk, and Crimea. It is conceivable that Kyiv may be willing to declare victory short of achieving those goals, with the retaking of Crimea largely seen as a [particularly difficult objective](#).

Whatever the precise borders of a victorious Ukraine, victory

is most likely to come about in the relative short-term—perhaps during the next two years—while foreign, and especially American, support for the Ukrainian war effort and for the government’s functioning remains robust. In this scenario, that support allows sustained Ukrainian battlefield successes, thus opening two potential paths to peace. On the one hand, those successes could lead the leadership in Moscow to change its political calculus: Russian President Vladimir Putin might conclude that the benefits of continuing to fight no longer outweigh the benefits of suing for peace.

Alternatively, Ukraine’s armed forces might “break” the Russian military in Ukraine. Due to some combination of the infliction of casualties, the destruction of materiel, the severing of supply lines, and the breaking of morale, Ukraine might destroy the Russian military as an effective fighting force. In other words, Russian forces might simply be incapable of keeping up the fight and Putin might find himself negotiating not over how much Ukrainian territory he can keep, but over how much of his military Ukraine permits to escape. This compounding of tactical, operational, and strategic routs would be the best outcome for Ukraine, Europe, and global stability.

Either of these paths to Ukrainian victory would have positive follow-on effects for Taiwan. Symbolically, victory would demonstrate that much of the developed, democratic world is willing to go toe-to-toe with a nuclear-armed state bent on annexing a smaller, weaker neighbor. Beijing will undoubtedly take notice. Similarly, Ukrainian victory will put lie to the notion—adhered to by elements on both the right and the left in American politics—that America can do little good in the world and should turn inward rather than involve itself in the affairs of distant peoples and places. If a positive outcome in Ukraine enhances American confidence that it can successfully grapple with China’s designs on Taiwan, that will be a win for Taipei.

More concretely, victory in the relative near-term will free up American resources and attention to address military imbalances in the Indo-Pacific region. In this scenario, the United States will likely commit to the long-term arming of Ukraine, but can carry that effort out at a deliberate pace after Russian defeat, while treating more urgently the arming of Taiwan and enhancements to American force structure and posture in Asia. This will be particularly true if the Russian military “breaks” en route to Ukrainian victory. With Russian conventional military power effectively neutered in Europe, Washington may be able to responsibly deprioritize the defense of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) over the decade to follow while it seeks to contain China in the east.

Scenario 2: Russian Victory

Russia is unlikely to achieve its initial objectives in its war on Ukraine. However this war ends, Ukraine will remain an independent state with Kyiv as its capital. But that does not mean Russian victory is impossible. If Ukraine does not achieve victory in the relative near-term, as described above, international support (both for its war effort and to enable its government to function) is likely to wither. Consider the United States, the biggest provider of aid to Ukraine in absolute terms. While [polling](#) indicates continued public support for assisting Kyiv, growing numbers of Americans say that the United States is providing too much support and partisan divides on Ukraine policy are widening. Those trends do not bode well for high levels of American aid over the longer term.

If American and other sources of assistance dry up in the coming years, Ukraine may opt to sue for peace rather than see battlefield tides turn against it. One possible outcome is that Russia ends up in firm control of Crimea and other occupied territories in the east, perhaps with formal Ukrainian cession of those lands. A peace treaty in these circumstances might also see Kyiv commit to some form of neutrality and to forego pursuing membership in the European Union and NATO.

This outcome would not be in Taiwan's interests. Some might think that, as with Ukrainian victory above, American disengagement from Ukraine in this scenario would enable Washington to turn its attention to Taiwan. Maybe, but that is far from a sure thing and arguably unlikely. An American public that tires of aiding one far-off country to defend itself is not going to enthusiastically pivot to aiding a different far-off country—especially one with which the United States has no official diplomatic relations.

Moreover, even if the United States reduces its support for Ukraine, Washington will have to redouble its commitment to NATO in the wake of a Russian victory. As Shay Khatiri, of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, and I have [pointed out](#) in the *Washington Examiner*, Russian victory portends “a future in which NATO's southeastern front is far more vulnerable, Russia can create new crises at will, and Russia will be in a far stronger position once it recovers and rearms.” We argue: “in prioritizing the avoidance of an unlikely war with Russia today, the Biden Administration and its European allies are making a future, wider war all the more likely.” In other words, the current European crisis does not end with Russian victory; instead, Russian victory ensures that that crisis will only intensify in the years to come.

In such a scenario, European countries—who in recent years have grown [increasingly concerned](#) about security challenges emanating from Asia, and who have invested in [closer relations with Taiwan](#)—will find they must focus more narrowly on the Russian menace. They may even seek warmer relations with China in the hope that Beijing can restrain Moscow.

What is more, a Europe that focuses more narrowly and with greater intensity on Russia will not enable an American pivot to Asia. As NATO's response to the Ukraine war has shown, American leadership and action are crucial when it comes to addressing security issues in Europe. To the extent that Germany and France are interested in exercising continental leadership on security matters, their neighbors are unwelcoming of that leadership. Divides between east and west require external mediation. More broadly, intra-European distrust will fester and weaken European security absent deep American engagement.

Under such circumstances, China will be comfortable acting more assertively in Asia—in part because it may assess that Washington has little appetite for meaningfully standing up to Beijing after failing to thwart the poorer and weaker Russia, but also because America will be tied down in Europe in a way it would not be after Ukrainian victory.

Scenario 3: Prolonged Conflict or Stalemate

It is also possible that, failing to achieve victory in the relative near-term, Ukraine will receive sufficient international support to keep up the fight, but not enough to enable decisive battlefield victories. The end result could be a prolonged, grinding, but less intense “frozen conflict,” in which the front lines become effectively locked in place, and in which neither side can declare victory or has an interest in pursuing peace talks.

This outcome is suboptimal for Taiwan, but preferable to Russian victory. Although a reduction in US aid for Ukraine may reflect growing skepticism of such efforts wherever they may be focused, Taipei can at least be assured that delivery of its orders of American defense equipment are less likely to be delayed due to exigencies in Europe. With Russia tied down in Ukraine, moreover, Moscow may have less wherewithal to make trouble elsewhere in Europe. That, in turn, may enable both the United States and European countries to focus relatively more attention on Asia than in the Russian victory scenario.

But even a frozen war or war of reduced intensity in Europe will have economic, demographic, and security consequences that extend beyond Ukraine's borders. As the Korean peninsula makes clear, frozen conflicts do not breed regional stability—

they are instead a constant, ever-present source of volatility. And as [history teaches](#), volatility in Europe has long had momentous effects on Asia.

A Word on Nuclear Weapons

During the last 18 months, Vladimir Putin has repeatedly rattled the nuclear saber in an effort to shape the international response to his war of aggression. That saber-rattling has undoubtedly instilled caution in Washington and in allied capitals across Europe. But Ukrainian victory could reinforce the [traditional Chinese view](#) that nuclear weapons are not useful for much, if anything, beyond deterring the threat or use of nuclear weapons against China.

On the other hand, if Russia ends up winning this war or even if the war settles into a brutal stalemate, Beijing may conclude that nuclear coercion is effective—that Moscow’s nuclear threats prevented the NATO allies from prioritizing Ukrainian victory, and that those threats were thus instrumental in denying Ukrainian victory. These scenarios, then, could spell the beginning of the end of the long-held and more or less restrained Chinese approach to nuclear weapons, and thus complicate how Washington would respond to Beijing’s use of force against Taiwan.

The main point: Just as the war in Ukraine has had global implications, how it ends (or doesn’t end) will have global implications as well. Ukrainian victory is in Taiwan’s interests.

Taiwanese Perspectives on the Russian Invasion of Ukraine and its Implications

By: Alan H. Yang and Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao

Dr. Alan Hao Yang is the executive director of the Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation (TAEF).

Dr. Hsin-huang Michael Hsiao is the chairman of the Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation (TAEF), as well as a member of the Global Taiwan Institute’s Advisory Board.

In the spring of 2022, Russia re-invaded Ukraine, commencing a war that has raged on for more than a year. This once-unthinkable war has had three key implications for global geopolitics from Taiwanese perspectives. First, the long-term peace and stability of Europe was effectively destroyed. Second, the international response to, and sanctions against, Russia’s military aggression have had limited effects. In turn, this has contributed to

declining patience and trust in the ability of international organizations and norms to mediate conflicts, potentially leading to the decline of liberalism and the rise of more cynical realpolitik, as exhibited by China’s approach to the war in Ukraine. Third, the European people—and particularly the Ukrainian people—have once more been forced to confront insecurity and humanitarian crises. Ukraine has recently [launched a counteroffensive](#), but the final result remains to be seen.

Taiwanese Public Opinion on the Russian Invasion since 2022

Taiwanese society has expressed serious concerns about the crisis in Ukraine. The Taiwan government and its people have provided [abundant assistance](#) and support to Ukraine, hoping to strengthen its economic and social resilience in navigating through the crisis and to facilitate its recovery accordingly. One month after the outbreak of the invasion, the Taiwan Public Opinion Foundation (TPOF, 台灣民意基金會) conducted an [opinion poll](#) relevant to some of these matters. TPOF is one of the few organizations that have continuously conducted opinion polls on the impact of the Ukraine crisis on public opinion in Taiwan. Although the relevant survey did not directly address many issues related to the war in Ukraine, they did show Taiwanese society’s concern for the Ukraine crisis, while also demonstrating the attitude of the general public in Taiwan toward China’s behavior.

According to the poll among Taiwanese adults aged 20 years and older, roughly 73 percent of the respondents believed that Russia sent troops to Ukraine is unjustified, with 38.9 percent strongly believing that Russian actions carried no legitimacy at all. However, 10.4 percent of respondents think that the Russian invasion is justified. Nevertheless, 87.2 percent of Taiwanese people expressed sympathy for Ukraine’s experience of fighting alone.

Ukraine’s solitary struggle in its fight against Russia without any direct foreign military intervention has reminded some Taiwanese people of the possible predicament facing Taiwan, which has long endured China’s unilateral campaign of international marginalization and oppression, as well as the ever-existing and increasingly intensified military threat. Taiwanese society is also paying attention to how Ukraine defends its sovereignty and how its people protect their own safety and national security—as they may have to do so themselves one day.

After the war broke out, Taiwan’s government [announced economic sanctions](#) against Russia, following in the footsteps of like-minded democratic countries such as the United States, Japan, and the United Kingdom. According to the [TPOF survey](#),

64.4 percent of Taiwanese people agreed with these sanctions, while only 23.6 percent disapproved. For many, the sanctions had showcased the courage to voice Taiwan's position on critical international issues.

Nevertheless, the phrase "Ukraine today, Taiwan tomorrow" has also been circulating within Taiwanese society and beyond. According to the [TPOF survey](#), 59.7 percent of Taiwanese people are worried that Taiwan may one day follow in Ukraine's footsteps, potentially being forced to face a Chinese military invasion alone. This also reflects two worries in Taiwanese society. The first of these is that China has never given up on [using force](#) to invade Taiwan, and that Beijing's military pressure and threats against the island have been increasing in recent years. The other is that Taiwan needs more explicit support from the international community to ensure its security.

After half a year, another [TPOF poll](#) conducted in September 2022 showed that 47.4 percent of Taiwanese people believed that Ukraine would win the Russia-Ukraine war, while 25.1 percent of the respondents believed that the winner would be Russia. However, when queried about the results of a potential Chinese invasion of Taiwan, 51.2 percent of the respondents believed that the PRC would win, while only 29.6 percent believed that Taiwan could win. Meanwhile, 43.6 percent of the respondents expressed the belief that Taiwan's military response to the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) military intimidation has been too weak, while another 42.4 percent disagreed. Moreover, a meager 41.2 percent of the respondents expressed confidence in the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民主進步黨) government to defend Taiwan, while 51.5 percent were not confident.

Yet, it is important to point out that concerns within Taiwan about fighting alone like Ukraine do not mean that Taiwanese people are pessimistic or defeatist about defending Taiwan's sovereignty. In fact, according to the results of [various polls](#) conducted by [different survey agencies](#) in recent years, 60-70 percent of Taiwanese people are willing to fight to defend Taiwan's sovereignty and national security. Taiwanese people, like the Ukrainian people, are not afraid of fighting against an invasion and defending their country and families. Drawing lessons from Ukraine, however, the international community and like-minded countries need to demonstrate more substantial military and political support for Taiwan. Such concrete actions and commitments will directly strengthen the confidence and will of the Taiwanese people.

Today Ukraine, Tomorrow Taiwan?

We do not believe that the situation that Ukraine faces today

is guaranteed to happen to Taiwan tomorrow. As Taiwan is not Ukraine, it is difficult to make an analogy. However, Ukraine can still provide invaluable lessons for Taiwan. The challenges facing Taiwan and Ukraine are similar, particularly in three key aspects:

First, both countries are subject to asymmetrical power structures, with both facing the aggression of neighboring major powers led by political strongmen. The nature of the regimes and the power held by these leaders mean that there are less constraints on their actions.

Second, both Russia and China have strongly expressed their intentions to seize Ukrainian and Taiwanese territory, respectively, and both wield the coercive means to do so. Russia is very close to Ukraine, which allowed its troops to quickly enter Ukrainian territory by land. However, the situation in the Taiwan Strait is quite different. Although Taiwan and China are close to each other, the Taiwan Strait will likely make it very difficult for the PLA to invade easily.

However, Taiwan is still under severe military pressure. For example, when former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in August 2022, the PLA launched more than 10 missiles and conducted military exercises simulating a blockade around Taiwan. [1] Recently, China conducted [military exercises around Taiwan](#) in response to President Tsai Ing-wen's visit to the United States. While the expressed intention of these exercises was to improve law enforcement capabilities and protect maritime jurisdictions, they were primarily designed to normalize such behavior, and to intimidate and coerce Taiwan.

Third, international attention and support are extremely important. NATO and the United States are deeply influential on the Ukraine issue, while on the Taiwan issue, Japan also plays a critical role. Moreover, while [NATO](#) and the [European Union](#) have developed their own Indo-Pacific strategies, the stability and peace of the Taiwan Strait are also in their interests. China often uses the term "new normal" to describe its coercive and aggressive behavior in the strait. If international actors accede to the "[new normal](#)" pushed by Beijing, it will only bolster China's efforts to rewrite the rules of international conduct in its favor. The international community—especially democratic countries—should have the courage to defend the rules-based international order and to directly reject [China's unjust "new normal."](#)

Compared with Ukraine, the situation in the Taiwan Strait is also dangerous. Taiwan faces an even more authoritarian and dictatorial China, which also wields significant influence throughout the international economy and global supply chain. Countries

around the world are overly reliant on China's economy, and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) uses its market strength to coerce and constrain its partners. Although Taiwan has never been ruled by the CCP, the two sides are economically linked to a high degree. Cross-Strait [economic and trade exchanges](#) are frequent, including over a million Taiwanese residents living and working in China. China is keen to actively and deliberately weaponize this economic interdependence to pressure Taiwan, disrupt Taiwan's social stability, and even infiltrate the island with "sharp power." In addition, Beijing is good at using nationalism to win over its supporters in Taiwan, using disinformation to promote a common vision and a united front to promote "unification."

For example, former Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) [visited China](#) in April. His nationalist remarks and failure to condemn China's military aggression against Taiwan may have [contributed to misconceptions](#) that China and Taiwan have entered into a period of reconciliation, but this is not the case. Ma's visit demonstrated that Taiwan's democratic society is both diverse and divided. While this is a strength in many regards, it also makes it easier for cynical authoritarian influence to divide and conquer Taiwanese society.

Furthermore, Beijing also continues to use "gray zone" [tactics](#) to place pressure on Taiwan. In 2020, Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ) was breached a total of 380 times by PLA fighter jets, rising to 960 in 2021 and exceeding 1,700 in 2022. [2] The purpose of these incursions is to exhaust Taiwan's air force and wear out Taiwan's defense capability, while simultaneously making these operations normalized. If Taiwan's military does not respond effectively and does not drive them away immediately, Beijing will ultimately push further into Taiwan's ADIZ and continue to squeeze Taiwan's airspace. This poses a threat not only to Taiwan, but to the peace and stability of the broader Indo-Pacific region.

Conclusion: The Imperatives for Defending Taiwan

Amid the ongoing war in Ukraine, defending Taiwan should become even more critical for the international community. Three important lessons stand out:

First, Taiwan currently produces more than [90 percent](#) of the world's high-end semiconductor chips. As such, if Taiwan were to be annexed by China, China would be able to dominate chip production, with attendant control over global supply chains. Therefore, more like-minded countries—including the United States, India, Australia, and European countries—must jointly defend free access to the semiconductor supply chain by lend-

ing their support to Taiwan.

Second, Taiwan stands at the forefront of the confrontation between democracy and autocracy. In 2021, TAEF organized an [Open Congress Forum](#) and invited parliamentarians from democratic countries in Central and Eastern Europe to discuss democratic unity and collective action against the export of authoritarianism. Like-minded democracies must stand firm to help each other. Taiwan, India, and the United States should be strong and resilient democratic partners. To quote [President Tsai's remarks](#) during her meeting with House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, "[If justice is brave enough, then evil will lose strength!](#)" (若正義足夠勇敢 邪惡就會失去力量).

Third, regardless of whether or not the situation facing Ukraine today will unfold in Taiwan tomorrow, Taiwanese people and their democratic supporters must prepare well to confront the continuous, purposeful threats posed by powerful authoritarian states. Preparedness is not just about preparing for going to war at all times, but also building resilience through unity—thereby making authoritarians and dictators think twice about the possibility of using force, increasing the cost of unilateral action, and demonstrating the will and commitment of democratic partners to safeguard global peace and prosperity together.

The main point: While the situations facing Ukraine and Taiwan are very different, Taiwan can nevertheless glean invaluable lessons from Ukraine's experiences. In order to prevent a similar invasion from China, Taiwan and its partners must do more to strengthen their deterrence and project unity.

[1] For a more detailed discussion of these exercises, see previous analysis in the *Global Taiwan Brief* [here](#) and [here](#).

[2] For further discussion of rising trends in PLA flight activity around Taiwan, see [here](#).