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THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR'S IMPACT ON CHINA'S WORLDVIEW

The article examines how Russia's invasion of Ukraine influenced Chinese public opinion and government actions. While China initially stayed neutral, evidence suggests economic and diplomatic support for Russia, complicating Ukraine's global standing. Public sentiment is shaped by historical ties, propaganda, and state narratives, with parallels drawn to Taiwan. Though public opinion doesn't dictate policy, it impacts China's economic stability, foreign relations, and geopolitical strategy.

Keywords: China, Russia-Ukraine war, Taiwan, economic support, public sentiment.

The beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war made the world feel military instability. Most modern states express concern about this and also provide tremendous support to Ukraine, both in the form of weapons and shelter for refugees. However, the position of some countries differs; for example, the People's Republic of China, was kept neutral in the beginning, but now there is enough reason to believe that China somehow supports Russian actions, at least financially.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The majority of scholars emphasise that the relationship between Ukraine and the People's Republic of China (PRC) has to be changed and reformed.

It is evident that the People's Republic of China is ruled by the Communist Party of China alone, and the majority of its citizens favour the CPC, particularly those in the older generation, as it is typically linked to stability. Of doubt, the CPC has its share of detractors, but they are not as extreme. Indeed, it is challenging to determine the precise number of supporters of Putin's government. But because of the conflict in Ukraine, it was found that "... more than 10% of Chinese people are willing to stop the usage of Russian goods due to the war in Ukraine." [2, p. 14]

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main question at present is whether China will be able to sustain its valued strategic cooperation with Russia as the Ukraine situation worsens because of this common understanding and dissatisfaction with the West. Every day, the cost of tacitly

supporting Moscow increases due to Russia's growing isolation and severe international sanctions.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main goal of the study is to analyze whether there is any difference between the Chinese government narrative and real public sentiment.

RESEARCH METHODS

The main methods applied by the authors: the universal philosophical method; general methods (inductive and deductive); methods of synthesis and analysis.

MAIN TEXT

In “The Guardian,” a British daily newspaper, it was mentioned that since initiating a full-scale invasion of Ukraine over three years ago, Moscow has grown increasingly reliant on China as an economic partner and a critical diplomatic ally in its expanding war with the West. In exchange, Beijing has used Russia's isolation from the West to get privileged access to its resources and markets. Moreover, it was: “The two countries declared a ‘no-limits’ partnership in February 2022 when Putin visited Beijing just days before he sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine.” [7] Since then, the two presidents have visited each other's capitals, becoming vital allies in their common objective of changing the world order in opposition to the West.

If it is about Chinese residents, studies showing clear support for Russia among the Chinese public testify. “Our survey found that only 25% of respondents opposed Russia's actions in Ukraine, while 40% supported them. 35% are undecided, which may indicate a lack of information and completely developed ideas in the early stages of the war.” Few people, including Russian supporters, want China to invest money or blood on the Russian side [6].

Before proceeding to the subject of the discussion, the question is bound to arise: why do the Chinese support Russia? Foremost, it is the modern attitude of the Chinese to the USA and its policy. How is it connected? I have a short explanation of it, which was published in The Diplomat: “Chinese supporters of Russia ridicule those partial to Ukraine as “pro-Americanists” and dismissive of U.S. military actions against Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. In the eyes of Russia’s Chinese supporters, all major countries should enjoy greater security borders. Just as the United States did not tolerate the Soviet Union’s deployment of missiles in Cuba, they assert Russia certainly has the right to “teach Ukraine a lesson.” [8]

The next reason for close relations between China and Russia is their past. China and Russia have a history of collaboration, increasing as far back as the Soviet Union. Despite past conflicts, the two countries have developed a relationship based on common interests, especially after the end of the Cold War. We cannot disregard the records of documents on how people were controlled in the Soviet Union. The government of the USSA used different types of propaganda as well as China, being a communist state. The Chinese community cannot access the Internet and fresh news freely. We may argue that Chinese social media tries to show only the positive side of Russia, transforming it into a victim of Western aggression. Additionally, a lot of details about Russian crimes committed in Ukraine daily are omitted. The Chinese government uses censorship in addition to propaganda, which can tightly regulate the

flow of information to the populace and prevent lawful access to complete information regarding, say, Russian war crimes, etc.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine was the beginning of drawing parallels between Ukraine and Taiwan. But are they appropriate? Taiwan, known as the Republic of China (ROC), is an island that is separated from mainland China by the Taiwan Strait. Mainland China is ruled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and claims Taiwan as part of its territory, even though it has never governed the island. In fact, following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, "Taiwanese citizens began taking survival training classes. There are students, who study first aid and where to seek refuge if China (China or the PRC) attacks." [5] However, this does not mean that Taiwanese people have begun to panic. "For years, China's preferred policy has been a combination of diplomatic isolation, deception, and grey-zone warfare." [5] Additionally, the Chinese government is aware that military operations are far from guaranteed to be successful, as the Russian invasion showed.

Yes, both include geographical disputes and issues of independence, with other powers playing an important role. Both have historical, linguistic, and ethnic ties to their large neighbour. They are closely intertwined economically with their autocratic neighbours but depend on the United States and its allies for security. However, Ukraine's experience has also shown that a smaller state can defend itself against the aggression of a much larger one. China may use Russia's activities in Ukraine as a template for handling Taiwan. In contrast to Russia, the PRC has refrained from large-scale war operations, notwithstanding China's recent bold and aggressive use of its military forces outside its borders. However, China has been involved in provocations, conflicts, and even bloody conflicts around its borders. These two situations can be contrasted, and while it is not a given, the Russian invasion might influence what China and Taiwan do. Although China keeps an eye on the developments along the Russian border, this is not justification for launching military operations in Taiwan.

According to the study "Russian Invasion of Ukraine and Chinese Public Support for War," "Chinese popular support for military action to unify Taiwan has become more complex in light of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Before the invasion, many Chinese citizens advocated reunification through force, demonstrating strong nationalist feelings." But fears have increased because of economic sanctions on Russia and Ukraine's opposition. Worries of a global protest, economic implications, and perhaps military challenges have impacted public opinion. [3, p. 349]

This leads to the statement that China's seeming neutrality in the war allows Russia to continue military activity in Ukraine. But are there any advantages for the PRC? A warning was said by G7 to China: "China's continued support of Russia's defense and industrial base allows Russia to continue its illegal war in Ukraine and has significant and far-reaching security implications." [4] The PRC simply rejects such charges and denounces the US for using the war as "an excuse to discredit China," even though there is ample evidence that China exports military hardware to Russia. Chinese media support has a positive effect on Russians' moral attitude and global standing, as well as the growth of Russian migration to China, which strengthens intercultural relations, even though it has no economic benefits for Russia.

In contrast, Ukraine may face numerous challenges if China continues to back Russia. Because a significant portion of the Chinese populace opposes this backing, it impedes Ukraine's attempts to secure international support. Sanctions on China might affect its business relationships and economic stability. Given that the majority of Chinese people favour Russia, it is obvious that this will not have a significant effect on Chinese society's mood since it will be regulated in the presence of the Chinese Communist Party, and certain Chinese attitudes towards Ukraine will continue to be passive. The impact of Russia's full-fledged invasion of Ukraine on Chinese public opinion is a complicated and changing issue. While China has officially declared neutrality, there is clear evidence of economic and diplomatic support for Russia. The Chinese public, formed by nationalism, historical ties, and state-controlled narratives, has shown various reactions—some strongly supporting Russia, while others remain indifferent or opposed.

CONCLUSION

Since the Communist Party still controls most significant political decisions, public opinion in China eventually has no direct impact on foreign policy. Nonetheless, it affects both long-term diplomatic relations and domestic stability. Given the ongoing confrontation, China must carefully balance its geopolitical goals, economic interests, and the risks of an unduly close partnership with Russia. Even though public opinion shapes discourse, pragmatic politics will probably shape China's future course of action.

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