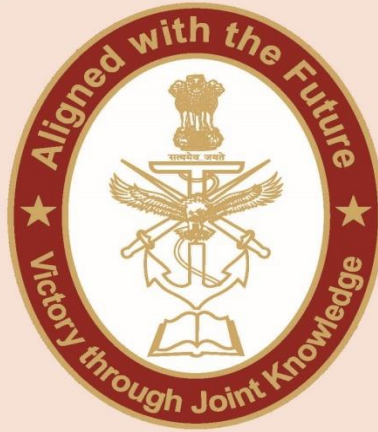


CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



CENJOWS

**THE UKRAINE WAR AND
TAIWAN CRISIS ARE
MANIFESTATIONS OF A
CHANGING GLOBAL ORDER:
INDIA MUST REMAIN NIMBLE**



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Part I – Changing Geo-Political Order and the Ukraine War

Part II – Taiwan Crisis and India in Changing Times (Follows)

The International Order in Flux

The world is facing a unique geo-political reality; it is neither an established unipolar, bipolar or multi-polar world. It is dynamic, turbulent, chaotic, unstable and unpredictable. The liberal, rules based, free market, globally institutionalised (UN, IMF, World Bank, WTO etc), democratic order established by the USA has been disowned by its own creator, and those who followed and enforced it. Ironically, during the unipolar phase of US dominance, it was actually neither liberal or democratic, but rested on the dominance and economic, political, geo-strategic compulsions of the West (USA and its allies), where national sovereignty was ignored, and illiberal autocratic/dictatorial regimes were supported whenever required. Most of the world even if not agreeable including China and Russia generally followed the Order. However, of recent, the global response to climate change, COVID pandemic and economic debt crisis, Ukraine war has been disparate, incoherent and disturbingly individualistic.

All Nations have started following President Trump's call to Americans for 'Nation First'; or rather feel compelled by circumstances to do so. There is growing apathy and distrust in the concept of free trade, in old alliances bilateral or multi-lateral, strategic, economic or military, making nations to breakout and pursue policies suiting their national interests. The unipolar world is undoubtedly changing; whether it will revert to a bipolar one (USA and China) or multi-polar, only time will tell. Regional powers like Russia (once a global power), Turkey, Iran, India, Nigeria, Brazil, Japan, France, Germany and UK in Europe, Australia would certainly like a piece of the global pie and are trying their best to expand their strategic influence and space; which naturally competes and confronts with other nations, sometimes leading to conflict over national interests. The manifestations of this turbulence can be seen in increasing belligerence and hegemonic actions of China in Asia (specially against India, South and East China Sea and Taiwan); Russian invasion of Ukraine; growing move to challenge the dollar as the global currency; thereby upending the current Order. The worry is, that the security environment will get worse before it gets better. There is a real danger of multiple shooting wars spreading due to unchecked brinkmanship and nationalism (many times the nations own creation of riding a nationalistic tiger) involving nuclear powers with unimaginable consequences.

Every Nation is unhappy and wants a larger share: Revisionist tendencies. The most powerful and influential disruptor is China, with Russia following closely by exploiting the fallout to regain its pre-eminence. While China undoubtedly benefitted the most within the erstwhile order, it now wants to take "centre stage", led by the autocratic, all powerful ambitious President Xi, initially in Asia and thereafter the world. China is willing to take multi-domain measures including the use of force to attain her 'China Dream'. Large scale turbulence specially in Asia can be easily forecast in the years ahead, as the West led by USA is unlikely to allow this transition easily. The situation is made more complex by majority nations finding Chinese ideology and modus operandi inimical to their national interest, even within its immediate and extended neighbourhood (Vietnam, ASEAN countries, Japan, South Korea).

The Russian Resurgence. End of the Cold War also ended Russian pre-eminence as the bi-pole in the international order. Russia led by President

Putin have never reconciled to the collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent reduction in global influence. This feeling of isolation and deprivation was further aggravated by the unilateral Eastwards expansion of NATO till it reached the stated 'red line of Ukraine'. With ally China (no limit strategic partnership which is debatable)in support, and upward revision of its economic clout thanks to oil and gas, Putin feels confident of challenging NATO and upending the current international order specially in Europe permanently in its favour.

Global Impact of Changing Order. The global South (poorer and developing nations specially from Africa and Asia) have long since lost faith in the international order. Woeful response to Covid and other pandemics, economic, energy and food security, never ending disasters, mineral extraction and exploitation, civil wars, interventions for regime change with selfish agendas have added to their grievances. Truthfully, many Western countries have been guilty of colonising/invading other countries, just like Russia has done. The support of these disadvantaged states for NATO in the Ukraine War and even Taiwan crisis can no longer be taken for granted; as some find the option of an alternative world order attractive and reliable. Hard military power has also got a boost. Entire Europe with special reference to Germany, Japan, South Korea and Australia, being economically strong and are now seeking to build up their military strength, and reassess their relationships with China and Russia. New partnerships like the AUKUS and I2U2 (India, Israel, USA, UAE)are springing up, while older ones like QUAD, BRICS, SCO have got a fillip. Many have a distinctive military alliance flavour. Credibility of all international institutions like the UN, IMF and WTO has been eroded, if not lost all together due to unilateral actions by the powerful. The Chinese and Russian example of State supremacy is proving to be beneficial to many nations. The globalized world economy is fragmenting into regional and bilateral trading blocks, with gradual decoupling of Hi-Tech, trade and disruptive armaments, and ever fiercer contention between the powers for economic and political primacy. In the process, a much more dangerous and militarised world is emerging¹. India must take note that hard power is even more important today than ever before, despite the rapid emergence of non-kinetic domains, as indicators of comprehensive national power (CNP).

All Nations are Adopting Modi's Mantra: Atmanirbharata. Most nations including the USA are turning inwards and choosing 'atmanirbharata', become economically and militarily self-reliant (not possible by all, thus adopting alliances). It will take some time maybe a decade before there is clarity in the form the international order will re-organise itself. Till then all nations especially India need to be nimble and look after their own interests.

Overview of the Ukraine War: Current Strategic Status



Source: UK MoD / Institute for the Study of War (21:00 GMT, 27 July)

BBC

As pointed out, the Ukraine War is a direct outcome of the turbulent international Order. I shall only provide a strategic overview of the war, and spell out India's options.

After its early military setbacks, Russia has regrouped in Ukraine and focused its offensive in the East and South, giving Moscow momentum as the War moves into an attrition mode. In this phase, Russia with its vast supply of artillery, armour and troops, now has an edge. Ukraine still holds potent advantages of its own due to a fierce will to fight, firm command and control of its forces and increasing supply of sophisticated, potent long-range weapon systems (HIMARS, long range guns and missiles, anti-

tank and anti-aircraft, and Electronic warfare systems, 24X7 surveillance capability (provided by NATO) and effective PSYOPS and Information Warfare operations). According to a report published by The Economistⁱⁱ, the effect of the war in Ukraine on the global economy could lead to a staggering drop of \$1 trillion in expected growth of the global GDP in 2022.

Russia's Special Operations, launched into Ukraine on 24 February along the 350 miles from Belarus to the Black Sea, has largely narrowed these weeks to a 45-mile-wide assault on cities in the Donbas region. Putin's initial war aims were "unconditional consideration for Russia's legitimate interests in the sphere of security, including recognition of Russia's sovereignty over Crimea, achieving the objectives of the Ukrainian state's demilitarization and denazification, and ensuring its neutral status." However, on 29 June 22 Putin stated that the "ultimate aim" of the Russian war in Ukraine is "the liberation of the Donbas, the defence of its people, and the creation of conditions which would guarantee the security of Russia itself." This is a step back from the goals he proclaimed in the beginning: some nations still feel that Putins final strategic aims are larger, but he is willing to phase them out. This implies **settling for control over four provinces in Southern and Eastern Ukraine, which accounts for 20% of Ukraine's land mass, and where most of its industrial and economic base lies.**

Currently it appears that Ukraine would have to relinquish Crimea permanently; its goal of NATO membership, but also its aim to become a European Union (EU) member; and remain in Russia's sphere of "privileged interest". The Russian and Ukraine Governments are prepared for a long campaign. Ukraine is preparing counter offensives mainly in the South to retake Kherson and subsequently other areas, mainly due to renewed potent weapons support by NATO, while Russia hopes to consolidate its gains and stabilise both its Eastern and Southern fronts.

Only a Realistic Negotiation Strategy has a chance to achieve sustainable Peace. Two major assumptions are that Russia will settle for what it has now, and the Ukrainians are ready to lose lost ground. Both assumptions specially the latter may be considered unrealistic. Thus, even if the Ukrainians were prepared to negotiate now (opinion pollsⁱⁱⁱand President Volodymyr Zelenskyy have negated it), it may not end

conclusively. A cease-fire that allows Ukraine to regain its strength may be useful; it would certainly save at least some lives in the near term. Long-term peace, however, will require more creative (and, perhaps, brutally pragmatic realism) thinking, not least because freezing Russian control of 20 percent of Ukraine will lead to renewed conflict. Negotiators need to think about not just how to stop the fighting, but how to prevent it from recurring in future. Some NATO nations feel that one way is to arm Ukraine so heavily that it deters Russia from attacking again, while concurrently applying relentless pressure on Russia including debilitating sanctions. A very costly proposition indeed: President Zelensky told the NATO Summit that Ukraine needed around \$5 billion per month for its fight against Russia, in addition to the \$100 billion that donors already have committed to Ukraine's overall support. The war and its colossal multi-domain impact especially economic, energy and food criticalities has already tested the EU, NATO and global support to Ukraine. Other imaginative ideas and out of the box ideas needs to be thought and talked out.

The Chinese and Indian Stance

China

The Ukraine war initially appeared to put China on the backfoot, given its stance on sovereignty of nations including its own on Taiwan, as also the likely fallout on its tenuously built friendly relations with the globe. Chinese messaging was stilted and confused as Chinese diplomats, propagandists, and foreign ministry spokespersons themselves tried to figure out strategic implications, and more importantly President Xi Jinping's line on the conflict. However, now that six months have passed with conflict on an attrition mode, China is stabilising. China would prefer a clear Russian victory, but NATO specially USA exhausting its military stocks coupled with enormous economic costs incurred is a good enough payoff^{iv}. In addition, longer the war progresses, the support to Ukraine and corresponding unity of nations will come under severe strain. The war has certainly cost China its reputation globally, but the South and few nations are still undecided. Interestingly, increasing global bellicosity against China specially from the West, may actually compel China to also get more aggressive geo-politically. China is aware that the Ukraine war has also brought Taiwan into the spotlight, with the USA getting increasingly confrontationalist; and trying to muster global support (strategic partnerships

like QUAD, I2U2, AUKUS); with adverse consequences on China's ultimate aim of amalgamating Taiwan into China as part of its stated 'One China' policy. President Xi has also announced the 'Global Security Initiative (GSI)' as a counter-measure to enhance its global influence (more in Part II).

Indian Options to Navigate the Ukraine War

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has come at an inopportune time for India. For a country still recovering from the debilitating onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the India-China LAC standoff, the Ukraine war has thrown up major economic, strategic and geopolitical challenges. While India may have responded in the optimum nuanced way possible, balancing its immediate and long-term interests, it has been under criticism by the US and the Western world. Of the four potential options of unequivocally condemning Russian aggression; supporting Russia; remain silent or express displeasure (short of condemning); or call for diplomatic manoeuvres for resolution, India chose what it perceived best in her national interest: a mix of the third and fourth option. Most Ukraine supporting nations while understanding India's stance still feel that it is a pro-Russia stance because India has not condemned an unjustifiable war.

India's stand has evolved over the Years. India's position on the Russia-Ukraine standoff has evolved over the years. When Russia invaded and subsequently annexed the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine in 2014, the then National Security Advisor, Shiv Shankar Menon, stated "We are watching what is happening in Ukraine with concern... The broader issues of reconciling various interests (are) involved and there are, after all, legitimate Russian and other interests involved and we hope those are discussed, negotiated and there is a satisfactory resolution to them." His remarks were further qualified by the then prime minister Manmohan Singh who subsequently highlighted India's position on the "unity and territorial integrity" of countries and hoped a diplomatic solution would be found to the issue. Singh also hoped that all sides would exercise restraint and work together "constructively to find political and diplomatic solutions that protect the legitimate interests of all countries in the region and ensure long-term peace and stability in Europe and beyond."

India has been more specific now by way of putting out explanatory notes for its vote/stance. In diplomatic parlance, India's stance has been clear about Russia's assault on Ukraine's sovereignty. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs' stated in Apr 22 after both Indian and Russian FMs met, that the "MEA emphasised the importance of cessation of violence and ending hostilities. Differences and disputes should be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy and by respect for international law, UN Charter, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states." Mr Jaishankar went on to state in Parliament, " We are, first and foremost, strongly against the conflict. We believe that no solution can be arrived at by shedding blood and at the cost of innocent lives. In this day and age, dialogue and diplomacy are the right answers to any disputes. And this should bear in mind that the contemporary global order has been built on the UN Charter, on respect for international law, and for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states. If India has chosen a side, it is the side of peace and it is for an immediate end to violence. This is our principled stand and it has consistently guided our position in international forums and debates including in the United Nations"^v. However, the thinking within the Indian strategic community has been somewhat 'sympathetic', if not supportive, of Russia. In strategic matters, Indians generally tend to think that Russia is a steadfast supporter of Indian interests internationally. This general empathy appears to be somewhat widely shared across various segments of the society. This might undergo a change if the war drags on, but for the moment, the warmth of the historical India-Russia relations seems to outweigh the sympathy for the Ukrainian victims of the war.

Changing International Order impacts Decision Making. The weakening US-led Asian regional order in the wake of the American and NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan; the potential shrinking of their interests in the Middle East, indicates reduced US interest and capacity to shape or intervene in the regional geopolitical outcomes in some of Asia's key theatres such as South Asia, Central Asia, Middle East, among others, which are of great significance to India. This could lead to a rising China eager to fill the vacuum. Understandably, given the disparity in CNP between India and China, the strategic partnership between China and Russia, the current relations hitting a nadir with a volatile LAC situation, India needs to take a holistic measured view. India is intrinsically 'pro-West', but is caught in the complex web of geo-strategic realities, which includes a unstable security environment in its not so friendly immediate

neighbourhood. India is justified in being wary of the Western (specially USA) biases and increasing proclivity to acting selfishly for their own interests at even their allies cost. It is important to point out that many other nations globally are increasingly following the India lead.

Conclusion

The dynamic international environment is creating a complex web where every nation is compelled to safeguard their national interests. The world is in a flux and will take time to stabilise. The Ukraine war has settled into a war of attrition with no clear victors, but has accelerated the aggressive manoeuvres of powerful nations from both sides of the divide, amply highlighted by the Ukraine and Taiwan crisis. Both confrontations could lead to global conflict! India has managed to navigate the troubled waters very adroitly so far. As an emerging regional power, with her own complex vulnerabilities, India has to navigate nimbly and with confidence, in consonance with her national interests and continue with its present policy of ‘strategic autonomy’.

CERTIFICATE

The paper is author’s individual scholastic articulation. The author certifies that the article is original in content, unpublished and it has not been submitted for publication / web upload elsewhere and that the facts and figures quoted are duly referenced, as needed and are believed to be correct. The paper does not necessarily represent the views of the CENJOWS.

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ⁱNobody Wants the Current World Order: How All the Major Powers—Even the United States—Became Revisionists, by Shivshankar Menon, Foreign Affairs, August 3, 2022 available at https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/nobody-wants-current-world-order?utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=twofa&utm_campaign=China%20on%20the%20Offensive&utm_content=20220805&utm_term=FA%20This%20Week%20-%20112017. Accessed on 08 Aug 22

ⁱⁱ By how much will the war in Ukraine reduce global growth?, The Economist, 04 August 22, available at <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2022/08/04/by-how-much-will-the-war-in-ukraine-reduce-global-growth>. Accessed on 07 Aug 22.

ⁱⁱⁱ**Ukraine: most people refuse to compromise on territory, but willingness to make peace depends on their war experiences – new survey**, 15 June 22, The Conversation, available at <https://theconversation.com/ukraine-most-people-refuse-to-compromise-on-territory-but-willingness-to-make-peace-depends-on-their-war-experiences-new-survey-185147>. Accessed on 07 Aug 22.

^{iv}**China on the Offensive: How the Ukraine War Has Changed Beijing’s Strategy**, by Bonny Lin and Jude Blanchette, August 01, 2022, Foreign Affairs, available at https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/china-offensive?utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=twofa&utm_campaign=China%20on%20the%20Offensive&utm_content=20220805&utm_term=FA%20This%20Week%20-%20112017. Accessed on 08 Aug 2022

^v**India’s balancing act in the Ukraine war**, by Happymon Jacob, 13 May 22, The Green Political Foundation, available at https://www.boell.de/en/2022/05/13/indias-balancing-act-ukraine-war#_edn1. Accessed on 08 Aug 22.