

EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR FOR THE SURVIVAL OF TAIWAN AND THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION

BY

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1 INTRODUCTION

Russia began a full-scale military incursion into Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The Russian state framed its incursion as “Special Military Operations”. However, the United States; the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); the European Union (EU), and several Indo-Pacific states and allies across the world, characterized Russian action as unprovoked aggression against Ukraine in deliberate violation of Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter.

The war between the two neighboring countries is a major escalation of the broader Russo-Ukrainian conflict which began in 2014 following Russian annexation of Crimea in response to Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity that forced a pro-Russian government out of power. Russia and Ukraine have strategic relations with Indo-Pacific states. Hence, these states were caught in a dilemma of which side of the conflict to align with. Indo-Pacific states such as Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and self-governing Taiwan condemned the invasion of Ukraine and support punitive economic restrictions imposed on Russia by the United States and its western allies. On the contrary, China and India maintained strong military, political, and economic relations with Russia and have neither supported nor condemned its military incursion into Ukraine.

Evidently, Ukraine and Taiwan share common experience of geopolitical pressure from two great powers- Russia and China respectively. Therefore, Russia-Ukraine war has heightened tensions in Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific region as China intensifies claims of sovereignty over

Taiwan by means of frequent threats of military action and violations of Taiwan's territorial waters and air space in recent times. Besides Taiwan, China has also made sustained and unrelenting claims over intensely disputed territories around the South China Sea, for example, the archipelagos of Xishan (Paracel Islands); Spratly Islands, Pratas Islands and others with Indo-Pacific states including Japan, the Philippines; Indonesia, and Malaysia, as well as the self-governing Island of Taiwan.

Scholars continue to analyze evolving implications of Russo-Ukrainian war for Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific region in the form of researched papers, policy briefs and reports (Congressional Research Service). However, extant literature has largely focused on socio-economic conditions and global product supply chains (Sana & Kumar (2022)). This paper advances growing academic discourse on the implications of the Russo-Ukrainian War for Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific region in terms of broader security dynamics. It underscores the necessity of enhancing response mechanisms to ensure peace, stability and security as well as the countering and forestalling of possible military adventurism in Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific region. The paper's methodology leaned largely toward integrative documentary review, descriptive and analytical exegesis based on revisionist-statist conceptual framework formulated for this purpose.

The qualitative approach of the paper implies the use of "soft data" to determine real and potential implications of Russo-Ukrainian war for the Indo-Pacific region in general and Taiwan in particular. Collected data focused on expressed views, opinions and perspectives of scholars, public institutions and agencies and state officials directly relating to national and regional security matters. Methods of documentary review; interviews with strategic experts during conferences and seminar presentations; private discussions with leading security and strategic scholars and practitioners in Taiwan were greatly utilized. Reason being that multiple-sourced data are more reliable than single-sourced data. While references to statistical data were made, where necessary, in support of assumptions and conclusions reached, the exploratory nature of the study discounted the use of quantitative research methods.

2 CONCEPTUALIZING REVISIONIST-STATISM

This paper proposed revisionist-statism as a suitable conceptual framework for studying and understanding the implications of Russo-Ukrainian war for the survival of Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific region. When decoupled, revisionism views existing regional and international orders from a purely realist perspective and is characterized by a dissatisfaction with existing regional and international status quo and inordinate craving for change of perceived unfavorable norms, rules, institutions and power relations inherent in existing regional and international structures (Allison, 2017; Kai He. *et al*, 2021; Banner, 2021; Charalambides, 2022; Balachandran, 2022). Revisionism does not stop at calling for change but proposes replacement of existing regional and international orders with presumed equitable and beneficial set of norms, institutions and value systems.

Expressed discontent with the status quo and calls for replacement are often made within the context of state-centric understanding of politics; economics, society, and use of military force for influence and control in state interactions. State centrism, which is the consideration of the state as the sole critical, rational actor in international politics, exercising overriding, limitless power in governance, economy and society forms the bedrock of revisionism (Djankov, 2015; Kurlantzick, 2016). Statist perspectives further entail, among other things, extensive control and intervention in national economies marked by centrality of economic planning and regulation; state ownership of strategic enterprises and resources, especially military industrial complex, system of taxation and production. Equally, inherent in state centric thinking is the preeminence of state security over human security.

The formulated framework- revisionist-statism, provides explanations for motives, actions, goals, motivations and strategies of states questioning the rationale of institutions, structures, rules, norms, power distribution and gains of existing regional and international orders. By ‘revisionist-statism’ reference is made to expressed dissatisfaction with existing regional and global orders, and the strong desire to change and replace them with a new order whose rules, norms, institutions and power distribution are projected as favorable to all within the context of state centric views, actions and policies. The strong desire to reorder regional and global status quo is linked to a sense of historical importance and necessity to regain such and reassert influence, importance and recognition at both regional and global stages. Regaining and reasserting of historical importance are critical to the realization of implicit and explicit hegemonic interests or goals .

Attempts by revisionist-statists to change and replace existing regional or global order always encounter opposition from status quoists, perceived as largely profiting from existing regional and international orders. Status quoists, see no reason in changing or replacing existing order (Chan, et al. 2018; Banner, 2021). Strong inclination towards change and reordering of regional or global order and strong opposition against such moves raise regional and global tensions and the potential for armed confrontation. Aware of these consequences, revisionist-statism involves political, economic, diplomatic and military posturing in opposition to the status quo. However, military force employment is only considered necessary when costs-benefits analysis or the odds of success of military adventurism heavily weighs in favor of revisionist-statists.

Economic competition and cooperation strategy form integral part of revisionist-statist grand strategy for restoring and reasserting lost influence and greatness and the reclaiming and acquiring of new spheres of geopolitical influence, regionally and globally. Thus, economic influence takes various forms including trade agreements, infrastructure development and investment; unconditional soft loans marked by favorable long terms repayment time and lower interest rates (Chan, et al. 2018).

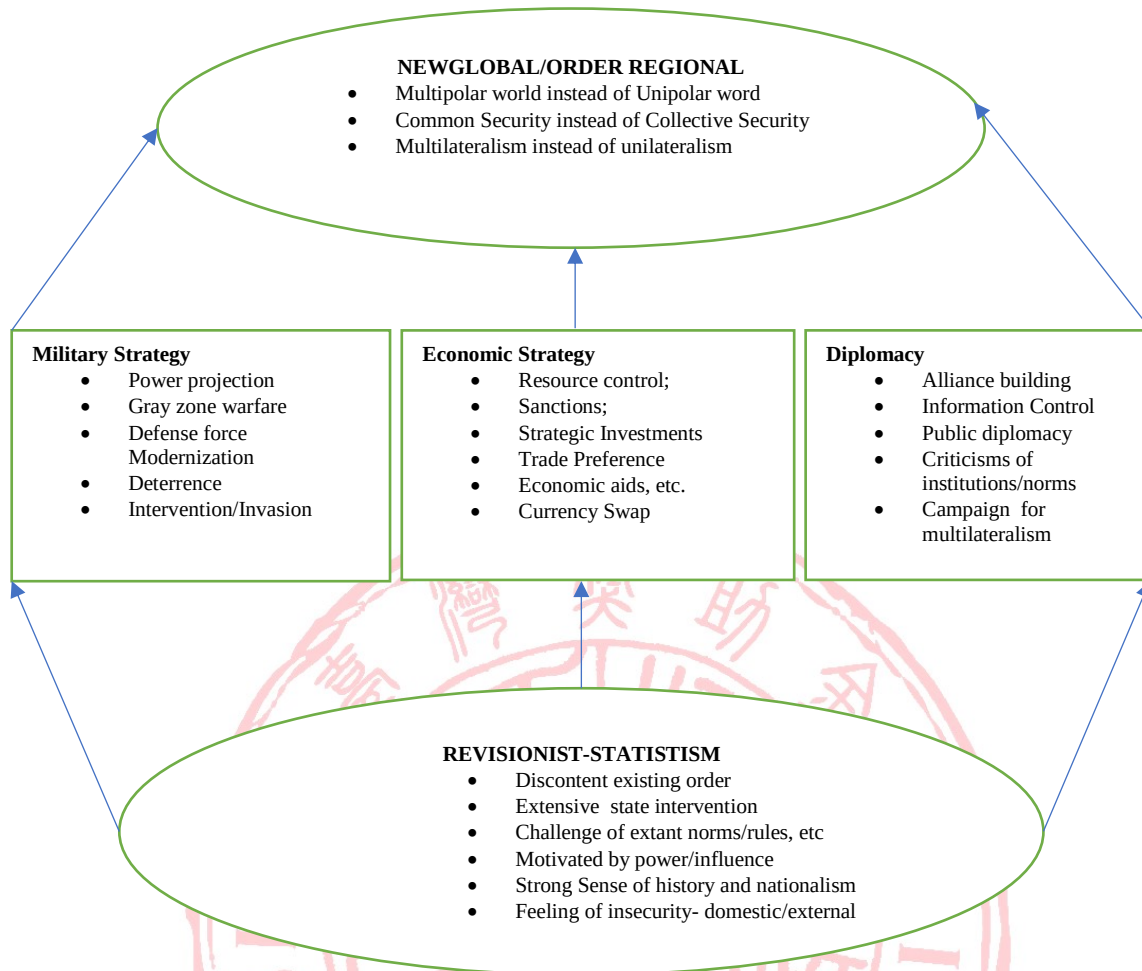
The strategies of military posturing and economic influence combine with acts of diplomacy to search for support of the like-minded which feel disadvantaged as well as in existing regional or global order but lack requisite capacity politically, economically, diplomatically and militarily to challenge it. Revisionist-statists see the employment of diplomacy from two lens. Through combative diplomacy actions and positions on issues of regional and international significance such as the status of Taiwan and Ukraine are vigorously advocated and defended. Through cooperative and alliance building diplomacy, peace-seeking image is projected in foreign policy articulations. Part of this, is the stressing of the importance of peaceful co-existence among states; common economic prosperity; cooperation and technical partnerships; cultural exchanges, developmental aids, educational and health support and cooperation in scientific research.

Considering, the importance of domestic stability and support for foreign policy articulation, legitimization, and successful implementation, revisionist-statists employ several methods such as strict control over individual rights; access to information and the framing of actions and narratives on regional and international issues concerning them in ways that portray them as victims. Thus, actions undertaken against regional and international norms and rules are defended as responses to threats against national security (Putin, 2022).

From revisionist-statist perspective, multilateral institutions such as the United Nations, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization, which came into existence in response to historical exigencies do not work in favor of all states. These institutions, rules, norms and practices governing them were developed by great powers at a time in history, when most states had little or no significant influence over global politics. For this reason, revisionist-statist seek a revising of existing rules and norms in ways and manner that align with their own interests and aspirations. However, in attacking the status quo and advocating for change and replacement, revisionist-statists chose when to support existing rules; norms, legislation, institutions, principles and practices regulating relations among states and when to call for rejection. All of these being dependent on geostrategic calculations.

Mutual friendship of revisionist-statists is based on shared geostrategic vision of containing hegemonic powers and domination in perceived spheres of influence such as Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific regions and shared interests in international trade, for example, energy trade, arms sales and technology development; as well as the maintenance of state directed economic system (Mediros, 2022).

The discussion on revisionist-statism as applied in this paper is further reflected in Figure 1.



Source: author's Conceptualization

3 RUSSIA AND CHINA AS REVISIONIST-STATIST STATES

Russia's justification of its invasion in violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity in 2014 (Crimea annexation) and 2022 (invasion) and China's sustained claim of sovereignty over Taiwan and threats of reclaiming the island by force, if necessary, has all the trappings of revisionist-statism. China and Russia possess key features which qualify them as revisionist-statist states. China in particular falls within the intersection of revisionist-statist in its regional and global thinking. By Western standards, China is regarded as a dictatorial, one-party, communist state. As such the state exercises significant control over China's national economy (Liu, 2024). Through state-owned enterprises, the state controls key strategic sectors and natural resources such as rare earth elements used in different technologies. The state also controls domestic market, allocates and distributes resources throughout the state. The joint

declaration of China and Russia in 1997 calling for a multi-polar world order exemplifies the consideration of these states as revisionist-statists.

Implicit in China and Russia's call for a multipolar world, or multiple spheres of influence, is the strengthening of Russia's control, influence and power over former Soviet territories in Eastern Europe as well as the promotion of China's territorial claims over Taiwan in the Indo-Pacific region and other islands in the South China Sea (Krickovic, 2022; Parfinenko, 2023). China's opposition to broadened meaning of sovereignty, which now include 'responsibility' and not only a 'right' accorded to states (Etzioni, 2006), further places, China on the path of revisionist-statist state. The understanding of sovereign as both a 'right' and 'responsibility', anchors the introduction of global measures such as 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) on the basis of which several peace keeping missions have been carried out. China's additional attempt to equate economic well-being/growth with the normative principle of human rights (Shu, 2022) equally runs contrary to the global understanding of human rights as relating specifically to civil liberties. Attempts at re-defining generally accepted normative principles further suggests China as a revisionist-statist state. Other actions portraying China's revisionist-statism, involve signing of bilateral agreements with over 40 countries on currency swap. This attempt provides alternative means of carrying out international trade by avoiding the use of the US dollar as dominant international currency in world trade and financial transactions (Lin, et al, 2016; Hao, et al, 2022; Meibo & Qiang, 2025). Taiwan's desire for independence, or maintaining of the status quo and closer security association with the US runs contrary to China's hegemonic ambitions in the Asian region in general and the Indo-pacific, particularly.

Russian-revisionist-statism rests on significant state involvement in its economy. Despite, undergoing significant restructuring in the 1990s, the Russian economy never shifted completely away from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. Rather the emergent economic system following the collapse of the Soviet Union have been described as either crony capitalism (based on favoritism and connections to state leadership than market competition) or state capitalism (Sakwa, 2019; Tsygankov, 2020; Parfinenko, 2023). State capitalism implies that the Russian state still plays significant role in the economy through state-owned companies (Djankov, 2015).

Russian revisionism is well-established in the literature and can be summed up in President Vladimir Putin's statement characterizing the fall of Soviet Union as an unparalleled geopolitical

upheaval of the 20th Century, that effectively brought historical Russia to an end (Kanet, 2023; Bukhari, et al, 2024). Russia regrets Soviet empire's collapse and the resultant loss of superpower status in the world, hence, the craving for restoration of Soviet Union in Russia. Russia blames the eastward expansion of NATO on Soviet Union's fall. As a result, Russia has been demanding since 2021 for security guarantee agreement with the US and NATO, which will include preventing Ukraine from joining NATO as well as requiring NATO to move its military deployments from Eastern Europe to pre-1997 borders, and for prior information before military drills are carried out in former Soviet Union territories (Parfinenko, 2023).

Russian strong opposition to Ukraine joining NATO, constitutes a violation of Ukraine's right to self-determination, and sovereign right to choose allies and partners, as a rational state-actor without external interference. Ukraine's pro-western tendencies amplified by a rejection of economic ties with Russia and the seeking of closer cooperation with the European Union through Association Agreement were Ukraine's rights to make. The strong inclination to move away from Russian influence run contrary to Russia's Eurasia geopolitical hegemonic goals. Revisionist-statist inclination of both China and Russia constitutes a rejection of geostrategic realities in the Indo-Pacific region and Eastern Europe as well as undermining of a rule-based international order.

Russian claims of Ukraine's sovereignty as 'false' because Ukraine has always been part of historic Russia (Putin, 2022); and Ukraine's statehood as a creation of the Soviet Union (Putin, 2022), support the argument regarding revisionist-statism. These tendencies as demonstrated in the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and eventual invasion of the country in 2022 further portray Russia as seemingly a non-institutional and non-systemic actor in international relations (Parfinenko, 2023).

The perception of other states regarding the identity of a state as revisionist-statist is also as important as actions of the state at regional and global levels. Thus, in the US National Military Strategy of 2015 as well as in the National Security Strategy of 2017, Russia, Iran, and North Korea and China are identified as revisionist-statist states which pose significant threats to regional and global security. Russia and China were specifically mentioned as great-power rivals with the US intent on creating a multipolar world order to defend and project their interests, influence and power in Eurasia, the Indo-Pacific and other parts of the Asian region (National Security Strategy, 2017). The PRC considers itself the legitimate representative of Chinese people and territories with a historic mandate to unite all Chinese territories. Its "One

China” policy projects common historical identity and cultural ties throughout the Taiwan Strait and forms the basis of China’s drive for unification with Taiwan (Zhengyi, 2024).

President Xi Jinping has made rejuvenation or restoration of the dignity of the Chinese nation, following, “the Century of Humiliation”, a cornerstone of China’s foreign policy. According to the Chinese leader, “the historical wheels of national reunification and national rejuvenation are rolling forward and the complete reunification of the motherland must be achieved” (Reuters, October 2022). China sees some policies enunciated by Taiwan as “desinicization” policies or policies that aim at making Taiwanese not to consider themselves as part of China. Thus, “re-educated” of Taiwanese to see themselves as an integral part of mainland China constitute an integral part of China’s rejuvenation campaign.

Russia sees itself as the successor of Kyvian Rus; the Russian Empire, and the defunct Soviet Union. Thus, Russia utilizes a deep sense of history to claim right to unite and protect all Slavic people and territories of which Ukrainian form an integral part (Putin, 2022; Savelyev, 2023). In their joint declaration in 1997, China and Russia called for a multi-polar world order. By this declaration both countries actively seek to end unipolarity which emerged following the demise of the Soviet Union and to replace it with multipolarity. They also seek to stop NATO expansion in Eastern Europe and former Soviet territories and an end to the formation of security blocs and naval bases in the Indo-Pacific region and to prevent Taiwan declaring Independence from China.

3 CONTEXTUALIZATION

This study is guided by the proven fact that the world has become a “global village” (McLuhan, 1964). In an increasingly globalizing world, peace in one region begets peace in another region and crisis in one state, precipitates crisis in other states; reinforcing the necessity of international cooperation as panacea to conflicts and fierce competition between and among states. Based on this, the study of likely implications of Russo-Ukrainian war for Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific region is contextualized, firstly, by reference to relations between Taiwan and China, and the United States and secondly, by reference to the intensity of recent developments in the Indo-Pacific region as well as historical exigences, proximity, similarity of situations and the resolve of political leaderships in China, Taiwan and other state actors.

Relations between China and Taiwan are intertwined and frosty since the end of the Chinese civil war in 1949 between the Chinese Nationalist Party or the Kuomintang (KMT) and the forces of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The end of the war saw the Communist Party of China gaining control of and exercising authority over mainland China, proclaimed, People's Republic of China (PRC); forcing the Kuomintang-led government of the Republic of China to subsequently relocate to Taiwan Island (MOFA, 2023/2024), from where it exercises authority over Taiwan Island; Kinmen, Penghu; and Matsu Islands; and a number of other much smaller islands which together make up a territorial area of about 36,197 Km² (MOFA, 2023/2024).

Historical evidence shows that the Qing Dynasty of China annexed Taiwan in 1683, but ceded it to the Japanese in 1895 (MOFA, 2023/2024). Japanese rule, lasted until the end of World War II, when Japan, was forced by the victorious allied forces to surrender the island to the Republic of China. Besides, this historical connection which applies equally to both sides, the People's Republic of China, which came into existence in 1949 has never exercised authority over Taiwan (MOFA, 2023/2024). However, the government of the PRC argues that on the basis of the UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 in 1971, recognizing the PRC as legitimate representative of China to the United Nation; and subsequent expulsion of ROC, Taiwan from the UN system, Taiwan remains a breakaway province of China in the thinking of China's leaders, that must be reunited with the mainland peacefully or by force if necessary (Chiang, 2017; Hsieh, 2020).

Thus, disagreement over the status of Taiwan as a *de facto*, and not *de jure*, independent state as well as the desire of majority of Taiwanese people to maintain the *status quo* heightens tensions between the PRC and the ROC, Taiwan. The objective of the PRC to reunite Taiwan with mainland China is not only expressed in words, but in actions as well. The PRC, for example, has set conditions for cross-strait exchange; suspended official interactions with Taiwan, consistently, applied political and military pressure on Taiwan and proposed in January 2019, for the exploration of the "one country, two systems" model for Taiwan- a preposition that threatens, Taiwan's existence as well as the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

Political Resolve of Chinese and Taiwanese Leadership

Consequent upon China's actions in recent times Taiwan has placed strong emphasis on reinforcement of national security strategies as its top priority, evidenced by the passing and coming into effect of anti-Infiltration law in January, 2020. This legislation targets, among things, the activities of local groups collaborating with external adversaries to engage in illegal activities in Taiwan. Individuals and advocates who engage in "illegal political donations, illegal canvassing, illegal lobbying; disrupting of rallies and assemblies, undermining of social order; spreading of disinformation and interference with election. For this reason, groups such as the United Front in Taiwan are largely considered as an extension of the CCP in Taiwan and their activities seen as integral part of the China's reunification strategy. Activities of infiltration groups aim mainly at pressuring the ROC, by highlighting the possibility of war with China if Taiwan's *status quo* is maintained or independence declared and the widening of economic opportunities for Taiwanese people if reunification is pursued (Mainland Affairs Council, 2020).

In addition, Taiwan has severally amended national legislation governing its relations with China, such as the *Act Governing Relations Between The Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area* as a way of regulating movements of Chinese people into and out of Taiwan. Such amendments include, but not necessarily limited to, imposition of fines for unauthorized Chinese investment in Taiwan or conducting of unauthorized businesses by Chinese national through third party investments in the country (MOFA, 2023/2024).

While history does not necessarily dictate the future, knowledge and understanding of the past are critical in grasping the present and possibly predicting the future. In this regard, historical antecedents of China support fears of possible Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Since the end of the Chinese civil war (1927-1949), relations between Taiwan and China remains highly tensed. China has also made attempts in the past to invade Taiwan in what is generally referred to as the Taiwan Strait crises. In the first attempt, between 1954 and 1955, Chinese military (PLA), made serious incursions into territories under the control of Taiwan, resulting in Taiwan losing control of, Yijiangshan and Dachen Islands, off the Eastern shore of China (Tucker, 2008, p. 190; Elleman, 2014, p. 70; Yau, 2022). China's strong resolve to take Taiwan by force would result in the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis between August and December, 1958. The second attempt was triphibious in nature- involving Chinese land, naval and air forces, and

characterized by heavy bombardment and a failed attempt at blockading the Islands of Kinmen (Quemoy) and Matsu (Carll, 2024). The US military and diplomatic support were instrumental to the repelling of China's attacks and ending of the conflict (Cole, 2006, p. 22, 25; Elleman, 2014; p. 92).

Although there has not been any direct military confrontation between China and Taiwan since the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis, some scholars regard, the series of missile tests conducted by China between 1995 and 1996 as the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis (Porch, 1999; Grinter, 2002). The missile tests around the Taiwan Strait were a direct response to what China perceived as the shifting away from Taiwan's "One China policy" to independence declaration under President Lee Teng-hui, who described relations between Taiwan and China as "Special state-to-state relations". China's ballistic missiles tests and amphibious drills around the Taiwan Strait were meant to warn against declaration of independence and to intimidate the Taiwanese electorate. Continuous use of gray zone strategy or actions between the threshold of peace and conflict, intended to exert pressure on Taiwan to capitulate and agree to unification with mainland China without resorting to the use of violence. Besides the use of force against Taiwan, historical evidence also show that China sent volunteer troops into South Korea between 1950 and 1953, during the Korean war in support of North Korean forces against South Korea (Millett, 2021). China equally deployed troops to northern Vietnam in 1979 due to the role of the Vietnamese in the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia. Thus, while China uses the mantra of "peaceful rise" in its foreign policy, it has a history of using force to resolve political problems.

Differential Interpretation of One China Principle

China and Taiwan have different interpretations of what "One China" principle means. For Taiwan, under the Kuomintang party government and based on the Constitution of the ROC passed in 1947, "One China" principle means that the ROC is the legitimate government of China- including Taiwan and mainland China (Maizland & Fong C, 2024). This interpretation radically differs from the PRC's interpretation. To the PRC, "One China" principle means recognition of the PRC as the only legitimate government of China and Taiwan as a breakaway province of China that must be reunited with the mainland (Yu-Shan, 2012; Fantová, 2022; Chen, 2022; Joy, 2023). Both sides have also maintained different interpretations of 'One China' in the so-called 1992 Consensus which formed the basis of semi-official cross-strait exchanges.

Taiwan, particularly under the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), pursue policies that are largely seen as independence-oriented or promotion of Taiwanese nationalism and identity. This is evidenced in Taiwan's commitment to a free and democratic constitutional system as well as commitment to ensure that neither Taiwan nor the PRC is subordinated to each other. Other policy commitments include resistance to annexation or encroachment upon Taiwan's sovereignty; and a commitment to ensure that Taiwan's future is determined by Taiwanese people and not by outside forces. These policy commitments directly oppose the "One China" principle as understood by the PRC as well as its claim of sovereignty over Taiwan.

Fear of China attempting a Russian-like invasion of Taiwan stems from its obvious articulation and messaging of the conflict, which mirrors those of Russia. China's leadership agrees with Russian claim that NATO's presence and expansion in eastern Europe, particularly to Ukraine, pose existential threat to Russia, hence its reason to invade Ukraine. In agreeing with Russian's position and messaging, China draws parallels between Russia's alleged security challenges in Europe and those of China in the Indo-Pacific region due to US' military presence, and the building and strengthening of military cooperation with partner/treaty states in the region. While the PRC is not militarily involved in the Russian-Ukraine war, and no evidence of supply of weapons to Russia exists, evidence of indirect support to Russia's military efforts exist.

Geostrategic Location of Taiwan

Geostrategically, the distance between Taiwan and mainland China is approximately 130km. Taiwan is bordered by the Pacific Ocean, making it of paramount importance to China's geostrategic thinkers, who fear that a possible occupation of Taiwan by external forces, would threaten Chinese coastline and also most probably deny China direct access to the Pacific Ocean (Alan, 2007; Chiang, 2017; Hsieh, 2020). Thus, China's claim of sovereignty over Taiwan is partly informed by Taiwan's geostrategic location in the Indo-Pacific region. Geostrategic importance of Taiwan to China can be seen from the importance that China attaches to the three choke points around the island, namely, the Taiwan Strait in the West; Miyako Strait in the North and Bashi Strait in the South. The Miyako Strait, lies between Taiwan and Japanese islands of Ryukyu, Miyako and Yaeyam as well as Okinawa, while Bashi Strait runs between Taiwan and the Philippines. These three choke points are critical to China's

export-oriented economy. The Miyako and Bashi straits in particular are China's main gateways to the Pacific Ocean (Alan, 2007; James and Toshi, 2008; Toshi, 2023)

Relations between the US and China have significantly deteriorated since 2017, during President Trump's first term in office when the US shifted its foreign position of constructive engagement with China to competitive engagement and subsequent description of China as a "revisionist power". Biden's administration did not only retain Trump's policy of competitive engagement and trade war with China, it added a new dimension to it - supply chain security and semiconductor competition (Mishra, 2022; Arun, 2023).

China's implicit fear of possible US occupation of Taiwan and consequent denial of access to the Pacific Ocean may be exaggerated as the US does not presently have any military bases in Taiwan, despite the island being a longtime ally and of strategic importance to the US. Taiwan's importance is primarily, its location at a critical intersection within the first island chain. Geostrategic location makes Taiwan critical to regional security as well as the defense of US interests in the region (Chan, 2025). Besides geostrategic location alongside major choke points facilitating trade and access to the Pacific Ocean and sea lines of communication, Taiwan has a well-developed logistics and transportation system which can be maximally utilized for economic benefits.

China has been aggressively developing and increasing its own naval bases along its coastlines and predominantly in the South China Sea to deter and forestall any incursions by external forces in the region. These actions are seen as a direct response to US operated military bases in the Indo-Pacific region, especially in South Korea; Japan and the Philippines. These military bases form what is commonly referred to as the 'First Island Chain', and Taiwan is located at the center of the chain. Active mutual defense agreements are a major source of China's concern in the region. The Philippines, South Korea and Japan have mutual defense agreements with the US signed in 1951; 1958; and 1960 respectively. While no formal military agreement exists between the US and Taiwan, it is common knowledge that the US supplies Taiwan with weapons for defensive purposes as well as engages in bilateral military exchanges and training with the self-governing island based on the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 (Goldstein, & Schriver, 2001). These defense agreements, in more ways than one, obligate the US to defend these countries, including Taiwan in the event of attack by regional powers such as China.

With its military bases strategically located in countries regarded as allies in the Indo-Pacific region, the US exerts military, economic and political influence in the region in its geopolitical rivalry with China. Most importantly, US military bases serve primarily to also deter China, by limiting its navigational choices and preventing it from projecting power beyond the First Island Chain or to pose serious threat to the US and its allies in the region (Chan, 2025). These military bases would be critical in denying China access to the Pacific Ocean should war breaks out in the region. This would not only impact China's global commerce and trade, but would also hurt its war efforts.

Ideological Differences

Diametrically opposed ideological differences remains a key source of mutual distrust between China and Taiwan, and the US and China. The US believes that its interests in the region would be better served in a democratic political setting than in authoritarian setting. For this reason, the US claims its presence in the region is to protect democracy in Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific region. Thus, strong US-Taiwan relations are anchored on Taiwan's adoption and practice of western belief systems in multiparty democracy and neo-liberal economics which favors the US. Whereas China's one-party authoritarian political system as well as its socialist market economy are considered dictatorial and anti-western values, which the US opposes. Accordingly, Taiwan is considered as central to the US' regional and global economic interests. Taiwan's neo-liberal economic system is credited with encouraging innovation, entrepreneurship, and private-sector led growth and development in the country and region. These attributes are seen as why Taiwan remains a valuable US economic and trade partner. Most significantly the US relies on Taiwan for the supply semi-conductors required for advanced technologies (Mishra, 2022).

Economic Considerations

While China does not accept that its claim of sovereign over Taiwan is based on the island's economic importance, it is evident economics does play significant role in the geopolitical rivalry between China and the US over Taiwan. This is deducible from substantial trade relations existing between Taiwan and China on one hand, and Taiwan and the US on the other. Both China and the US rely heavily on Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company

(TSMC), a global leader in the manufacturing of advanced micro-chips for dual use purposes for its technological growth and development (Yongnian, 2018; Sadiq, 2023). Dual purpose semiconductors are used in making devices such as smart phones, cars, fridges as well as in electronic systems; advanced surveillance systems, communication, navigation, radar and weapon systems, especially precision-guided weapons and artificial intelligence. Thus, it is evident that both the US and China want to control Taiwan because micro-chips produced in Taiwan are critical for their economies and technological advancement. As Chan (2025) has argued, the contestation between China and the US over Taiwan is neither driven by values such as retention of Taiwan's status quo; respect for human rights, democratic governance culture and neo-liberal economic system nor by claims of historical identity and reunification but by differential strategic interests and security threats.

In this regard, whichever country, controls Taiwan would most likely dominate the world technologically and economically. The Russia-Ukraine war has shown that innovative technologies made possible by semi-conductors is redefining the battlefield, justifying the US and China's fears of losing Taiwan. Taking over Taiwan would hasten and strengthen China's hegemonic ambitions and diminish US influence in the Indo-Pacific region. For this reason, the TSMC has been encouraged to invest in the US in order to reduce US' vulnerability to semiconductor production and accessibility (NIST, 2024; Varas. et al. 2020). China's control over Taiwan would also most likely sway the competition for the development of new technologies, especially weapon systems in favor of China, making the US to lose its technological advantage over China (Yongnian, 2018). There is also fear that China's control of Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific region will not be favorable or open to US trade and investments in the region (The White House Indo-Pacific Strategy, 2022). China is already considered a global manufacturing hub or the so called "world factory"; taking control of Taiwan would enhance this status and seriously impact the US' manufacturing capability.

China-Russia Cooperation

China and Russia maintain military cooperation, which predates the Russo-Ukraine war, and is characterized by joint military exercises involving Chinese and Russian naval, air and land forces. China has also continued to provide political and diplomatic support to Russia in its war with Ukraine. Various forms of support provided to Russian counteract US, NATO, and EU efforts to strategically defeat Russia in the war. For example, China abstained from the United

Nations General Assembly (UNGA) vote condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 but voted in support of a Russian sponsored resolution on humanitarian issues in Ukraine in March 2022. China also abstained from the UN Human Rights Council vote to establish a commission of inquiry into Russian war crimes on 4 March 2023. Further strengthening the relations between Russia and China is President Xi Jinping and President Vladimir Putin's signing of a joint statement reiterating and outlining the different areas of high-level strategic partnership between China and Russia in February 2024. Since the outbreak of the war, China has become Russia's most important trading partner, with trade between the two countries estimated at over \$240 billion in 2023, an increase of 64% from trade before the war (Reuters, 2024; Amit Kumar, 2024). Considering the significant support China provides Russia in its war with Ukraine and the no-limit strategic partnership both signed in 2022, Russia would be obliged to reciprocate in the event of any conflict involving China, Taiwan, the US and its allies in the Indo-Pacific.

4 SURVIVAL OF TAIWAN AND THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION

Russia-Ukraine war has forced China to intensify its sovereign claim over Taiwan and threat to use military force, if necessary, to take it back in the near future. In doing this, China combines gray zone strategy - military threats with sustained international political pressure - to diplomatically isolate Taiwan globally. Sustained pressure on Taiwan in recent years is a demonstration of China's disapproval of the return to power in Taiwan of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and its policy of refusing to endorse the "One China" framework (Lai, 2024).

Escalation of Great Power Tensions Over Taiwan

China is speedily, transforming and modernizing its navy to counter US influence in the South China Sea, East China Sea, the Taiwan Strait and other critical areas in the Indo-Pacific region. China understands that a modernized navy would be critical, to breaking through the first island chain of the US in the event of military confrontation with the US and its allies in the region. Similarly, a well-developed naval force equipped with sophisticated, cutting edge weapons systems is required if China is to effectively employ deterrent strategy of anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) to prevent the US from entering into any war that might erupt in the region

involving China and US allies. The geostrategic location of Taiwan makes it critical to both China and the US in any future conflict in the region, and explains why both are seriously competing to exert influence in the self-governing island. A possible Russian success in the war against Ukraine, largely seen as a proxy war with NATO by Russian and Chinese leaderships may embolden China to attempt something similar in the near future. The pointer to this, is China's increasing military posturing which is likely to continue into the future.

Taiwan's strong pro-American foreign policy as evidenced in its condemnation of Russian invasion and violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, has brought it into direct confrontation with Russia as well as China which indirectly supports Russian invasion. This is not surprising because Taiwan sees its situation as similar to that of Ukraine. Both countries live in the shadow of more powerful nations intent on absorbing and keeping them under their orbits. In addition to condemning Russian invasion, Taiwan also joined the US-led economic sanctions against Russia. Russia's response to Taiwan's actions involving the strengthening of relations with China and openly reiterating its unequivocal support of China's sovereignty claim over Taiwan.

5 INDO-PACIFIC REGION

The Indo-Pacific region has been a volatile region since the end of the World War II. Some examples will suffice. The Chinese civil war ended in 1949 with the resultant consequence of the creation of the People's Republic of China (PRC- China) and the withdrawal of the Republic of China (ROC- Taiwan) to Taiwan Island. Similarly, despite the signing of armistice in 1953, the Korean War remains inconclusive, consolidating the division of the Korean Peninsula along the demilitarized zone (DMZ), and the creation of the Republic of South Korea (ROK- South Korea) and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK- North Korea). These unfinished wars and their attendant consequences, remain a major source of tension and instability in the region. Tensions brought about by these wars have become compounded in recent times by the rise of China as an economic and military power, pushing to reclaim lost historical territories and reunify Taiwan with mainland China. Furthermore, Russia invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has combined with factors of unfinished wars to increase tensions in the Indo-Pacific region.

The possibility of war in the Taiwan Strait is looking more real than ever. Amplified by the interlocking core interests of the US; EU and NATO, which revolves around geostrategic interests; protection of democratic political system, neo-liberal economics, characterized by free trade, among others, are essentially linked to Taiwan's existence and geostrategic location. With respect to security, for example, the 'Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreements' (EDCA) such as those between the US and the Philippines aim to strengthen military alliance between the US and the Philippines by allowing the US military to rotate troop deployment in the Philippines as well as build and operate military infrastructure in Philippine's military bases for the benefit of both countries (Dorsett, 2023). This agreement involves joint training, exercises, communication, coordination and interoperability. Like all military alliances and security cooperation between the US and states in the region, the EDCA, exists as a counterforce to China but presents serious implications for regional security and stability.

Thus, prolonged Russia-Ukraine war would engender sustained tension between China and Taiwan; South Korea and North Korea. This will make it extremely difficult to maintain regional order in the Indo-Pacific. With the US foreign policy targeting China as a serious threat to US's global dominance and interest in the region, China-Taiwan conflict is more likely to escalate. As it is looking more likely that Russia would emerge victorious in the war with Ukraine, the division among countries in the Indo-Pacific region would widen. A Russian victory in the context of US' withdrawal or minimized support for Ukraine would have serious implications for collective security initiatives led by the US in the Indo-Pacific region. This is because trust on US' capability to defend treaty partners would likely decline, resulting in increased call by States in the region for multilateralism and common security rather than collective security. The increasing tension in the Indo-Pacific region as a result of Russia-Ukraine war; rapprochement between Russia and China; and China's military posturing would likely pressure countries in the region into modify their foreign policy positions in anticipation of the US not providing support more quickly during emergency due to China's effective anti-access/area denial strategy (Arun, 2023).

As Russia loses economic grounds in Europe consequent upon western sanctions, it would pay long term economic and geopolitical attention to Asia and the Indo-Pacific region in particular. This is because western-imposed sanctions on Russia are not likely to end even with the end of the war. Thus, Russia would remain increasingly orientated towards Asia by strengthening cooperation with China and India and other countries opposed to US dominance in the region.

Asia would provide Russia with veritable alternative markets to Europe, especially for its oil and weapons export as well as partnerships and access to critical dual use technologies for the sustenance of its military industrial complex (MIC).

Increased Militarization of the Region.

Russia justifies its invasion of Ukraine by referring to NATO expansion to eastern Europe and attendant deployment of NATO's troops, war ships and fighter aircrafts across its eastern flank in countries such as Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. China has also expressed similar fears as Russia regarding US military bases in the Philippines, Japan, and South Korea as well as the supply of weapons to Taiwan. In this regard, both the US and China are strengthening alliances and partnerships in the region.

While China continues to express concern over the militarization of the Indo-Pacific region as a result of US' military cooperation and collaborations with partner-states in the region, China itself, continues to invest heavily in its military to serve as a counterforce to US military advantage in the region. China's heavy military investment has resulted in the modernization and expansion of its armed forces. Thus, advanced conventional weapons systems and nuclear capabilities have been developed in recent years. This is evident in China's bold and incessant large-scale live-fire military drills demonstrating combat readiness of its forces. Enhanced military capability occasioned by China's increased naval presence in different parts of the Indo-Pacific regions, triggers fears among US regional allies and a threat to regional peace and security.

China's main concern has been US and NATO's strengthening of cooperation and dialogue with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly, Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and New Zealand (Hossain, 2024). In anticipation of possible conflict involving China and other countries in the Indo-Pacific region or even the US and China over Taiwan, the US anchors its Indo-Pacific policy on building and strengthening international support. Part of these efforts involves the reinforcement of defense cooperation and military bases in treaty countries such as Japan, South Korea and the Philippines. These countries are regarded by the US as likeminded countries which equally feel threatened by a perception of China's expansionist tendencies in the region. Most worrying to China is Philippine's recent granting of access to the US to its military bases in northern Philippines close to the Bashi Choke point which China considers as a major gateway to the Pacific Ocean (Dorsett, 2023).

NATO's reinforcement of partnerships is informed by "complex global security environment" which requires strengthening of relations "with like-minded partners to address cross-cutting security issues and global challenges" (NATO, 2022). The Indo-Pacific region is particularly referenced in US security policy documents as critical to Euro-Atlantic security (NATO, 2022).

Alliance and Partnership Building

Alliance building is critical to national, regional and global security. Thus, volatility of the Indo-Pacific region can be seen from the building and strengthening of alliances and partnerships for economic and military cooperation in the region (Matsuda, 2022; NATO, 2022). Currently, there are a number of formal and informal military agreements and partnerships between the US and countries such as Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), for example, is a military alliance in the region involving Australia, India, Japan, and the United States. The AUKUS too, is a trilateral military-security partnership in the region involving Australia, United Kingdom, and United States. Other key US partners in the region on security matters include, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Singapore, Taiwan, Vietnam and the Pacific Island countries. These security alliance and partnerships are aimed at curtailing "the rise of an increasingly belligerent and nationalist People's Republic of China" (The White House Indo-Pacific Strategy, 2022). The Russia-Ukraine war has accelerated the strengthening of political and economic blocs in the region as alliance and counter-alliances and partnerships are built to maximize opportunities for victory in the event of war in the region.

China is strongly responding to US military presence and advantage in the Indo-Pacific region by forming and strengthening alliances and partnerships of its own. China's military alliance with Pakistan, for example, dates back to the 1970s. Both countries have a common adversary in India, consider their alliance as "all-weather friendship" and share common interest in regional security and defense against perceived threats. Besides Pakistan, China has built significant strategic partnership with Russia, Iran, and North Korea; and has security collaborations with countries such as Thailand and Myanmar. Whereas the US strives to contain perceived China's expansionist tendencies in the Indo-Pacific by building and strengthening military alliances and partnerships. China, however, in addition to military strategy, adopts a more nuanced approach that balances cooperation with competition. For example, China's emphasis on infrastructure development such as the Belt and Road Initiative

(BRI) resonates more with Pacific Island countries and helps deepen China's economic relations with these countries as it competes with the US for geostrategic alliance and partnership building, influence and domination in the region. The fierce competition for military and economic influence and dominance in the region between the US and China would increase and could possibly lead to destabilization of the region as the Russian-Ukraine war rages on.

The Russia-Ukraine war has increased pressure on Indo-Pacific states to enter into both formal and informal alliances with major powers in order to safeguard their national security. Russia whose southeastern region directly borders the Pacific Ocean has also begun taking greater interest in the Indo-Pacific region by strengthening its relations with China, North Korea and Iran. Russia also continues to seek cooperation in the region in other areas such as weapons energy and agricultural exports. The fierce competitive activities of Russia and China and their partners and the US and its allies would likely increase, disrupting regional order as these countries aim to deter one another. The Russia-Ukraine war polarizes the Indo-Pacific region to a large extent. Indeed, the war is causing widespread changes as the general condition of interactions between states in the region is rapidly changing from cooperation to competition in the context of limited choices and rooms for maneuvers (Arun, 2023; Verma & Düben, 2024). States in the region are faced with the choice of either aligning with China or the US. Those who chose a third-way of neutrality may be isolated as a result of missed opportunities for alliance and regional cooperation (Arun, 2023).

Like the US, and its EU and NATO allies, China has also drawn parallel between Eastern European and Indo-Pacific region security. China considers NATO's continuous expansion to Eastern Europe, and former Soviet territories as insensitive to Russia's security concerns and a major cause of Russian invasion of Ukraine (Mediros, 2022). Thus, China sees similar pattern of insensitivity or ignoring of security concerns of other countries by the US and NATO as they build and strengthen military partnerships in the region. Therefore, China seems to believe, especially in its relations with Taiwan, that the action-reaction reflection which caused the war between Russia and Ukraine could also cause war in the Taiwan Strait, if the US and NATO continue to build security partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region. As a result, China's threat of encirclement and blockade of Taiwan has been increasing with military drills around the whole of Taiwan getting bigger, more intense and frequent in recent times.

Ambiguous US Involvement

The US has a deliberate ambiguous policy on Taiwan, which is intended to deter China from invading Taiwan and to prevent Taiwan from declaring independence and seeking permanent separation from the China. This policy appears to be a source of tensions in the region rather than deterrence. While the general assumption is that the US will defend Taiwan in the event of invasion by China, it is still unclear how President Donald Trump's second presidency will impact China-Taiwan relations. What is, however, clear is that the Russia-Ukraine war has led to increased US supply of weapons, especially advanced missile defense systems to Taiwan. Supply of weapons, will strengthen Taiwan defense on one hand, but will, on the other hand, result to intensified military pressure by China through frequent drills in the Taiwan Straits aimed at encircling and blockading Taiwan. In the likelihood of China going beyond military drills to attempt an invasion of the island, the region will witness quick escalation of the conflict and possible direct involvement of great powers such as US in the conflict. This will be accompanied by mobilization of international support and possibly military support from Russia to China on one hand, and from Japan, South Korea and Australia to Taiwan on the other hand.

North Korean question

The Indo-Pacific region has a lingering North Korean question which Russian-Ukraine war seems to have exacerbated. The question relates to Russia-North Korean relations, unfinished Korean war, and the aspiration of North Korea to join the nuclear club. The deployment of North Korean troops to the Kursk region of Russia to fight against Ukrainian forces provides North Korean army with modern warfare experience which will prove critical in the event of war in the region involving South Korea. More importantly, strengthened partnership between North Korean and Russia is helping accelerate North Korea's nuclear program as well as the development of its delivery systems- land-based ballistic missiles; submarine-based missiles; and cruise ballistic missiles. North Korea is also studying Russia's nuclear threat strategy which has effectively deterred the US and its allies from intervening in the conflict beyond supply of weapons to Ukraine.

Inaccurate Interpretation of Signals

Increased military activities, have also increased chances of miscalculation of intentions or signals by competing forces which can lead to serious accidental war in the region. For example, in November 2024, China announced the establishment of the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over territories of Diaoyu; Senkaku; Islands with Japan. China has also been constructing large scale artificial islands in the South China Sea. These artificial islands would serve significant purposes in future China's military engagements in the region. As Arun (2023) observes, increased tensions, miscommunication and misinterpretation of intents between China, Indo-Pacific countries, and the US might push them into war. In 2022, North Korea passed a law asserting its readiness to launch preemptive nuclear strikes, even if attacked with conventional weapons. These actions are making the region more and more unstable, and non-nuclear states in the region are worried by nuclear threats.

6 CRITICAL LESSONS FOR STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

As previously alluded to, Taiwan recognizes to a large extent that in the event of war with China, the US and its Western allies would likely come to its aid. The support would likely begin with the imposition of sanctions against China as a non-military step towards escalation of the conflict. However, sanctions against China may not work extensively because China plays a significant role in the global supply chain. It is both a leading global manufacturing hub and an important link in global trade. Judging from the war in Ukraine, Russia's strong economic influence over Europe and the international community especially in the area of energy security proved critical in cushioning the effects of over 27,000 sanctions imposed on it by the US and its allies (Rohan, 2023; Thomas, 2025). China's diplomatic, and economic support of Russia have also proven critical in preventing the Russian economy from collapse. Thus, economic sanctions have limited deterrence effect. Western economic sanctions against Russia, arguably, pushed it into closer trade and economic relations with China and India (Yau, 2022; Arun, 2023). These countries were motivated to maintain close economic relations with Russia by the opportunity to avoid extra costs in oil trade. European powers such as Germany were also initially hesitant to apply strict sanctions on Russia because of heavy dependence on Russian energy sources, especially natural gas. Hungary and Slovakia, for example, blocked the EU's 18th sanctions package against Russia because such moves would severely affect

energy security in the two land-locked countries. Thus, in the event of conflict in the Indo-Pacific region leading to calls for sanctions against China, countries heavily reliant on China economically would not have the political will to join the US and its allies in sanctioning China.

Weapons Systems

Russia-Ukraine war presents another lesson to Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific region. This lesson relates to supply and use of Western weapons systems. Taiwan is heavily dependent on the US and Western supplied weapons systems for its defense on the assumption of conventional weapons superiority of the US and its western allies over Russia and China. However, battle field outcomes of the Russia-Ukraine war have seriously challenged claims of conventional weapons superiority of the US and its NATO allies over Russia. This is because US and NATO weapons systems - long range missiles, fighter jets , and surface-to-air/anti-aircraft defense systems - taunted as game changers prior to the war have not done much to impact battlefield outcomes in favor of Ukraine. The war has demonstrated that Russian weapons systems are much more effective and accurate than previously thought. Arguably, in terms of strategic thinking, Russia's strategic thinkers appear to have judged the war more accurately than their western counterparts.

For example, Putin's clearly articulated message that supply of arms such as tanks, long-range missiles, and air defense systems by US and its NATO allies, would only prolong the war but will not change its outcome, has proven to be an accurate assessment of the war situation. In this regard, the use of Bayraktar TB2s drones from Turkey, High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS, US); Abrams tanks (US); Leopards tanks (Germany), and Bradley fighting vehicles (US), and Patriot air defense system (US), etc. used in the 2023 Ukrainian counteroffensive brought limited success. While the counteroffensive initially led to the recapturing of some territories from Russia, it did not significantly impact Russian forces. The counter-offensive may have cost Ukrainian forces more than it did the Russians (Gady & Kofman, 2023). Ukraine also demanded for the supply of F-16s fighter jets in the believe it could be a game-changer in the war. But with one downed by the Russians in August 2024, talks about F-16s fizzled out. Then came demand for permission to use long-range missiles, such as the UK's Storm Shadow; and Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) to strike deep-into Russia, heralded too as a possible game-changer; but had little or no effect on the course of the war. So far, Ukrainians no longer talk of counter-offensive and appear to admit that it is mostly likely to lose territories to Russia as part of the strategy to resolve the conflict.

Taiwan is aware of all this and must take its lessons into serious consideration as it strives to retain its self-governing status in the shadow of China's expansionist tendencies in the Indo-Pacific region. Should China hypothetically speaking, invades Taiwan and resorts to threat of nuclear weapon use or strategic maneuvering to prevent the US and its allies from directly interfering in the war, Taiwan may be subjected to similar conditions as Ukraine on how it would use western supplied weapons in the conflict. Like in Ukraine, these conditions would include seeking approval from the US and its allies to use weapons systems such as long-range missiles to target facilities inside China. Delay in granting such permissions would severely affect Taiwan's efforts especially if China successfully applies anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) strategy against the US and its allies in the region. But even if permissions were quickly granted, it should be noted that various arms such as long-range missiles may inflict severe damages, halt or slow forward movement of enemy troops as witnessed in Russia-Ukraine war, but may have limited impact on the outcome of the conflict.

Weapons may be necessary to winning wars but no current conventional weapons systems in the possession of any country is a game-changer in a technologically driven modern warfare. Besides the quality and advancement of weapons systems, quantity, adaptability, logistics, skills, numerical strength, patriotism and morale of soldiers still play critical part in using weapons to determine the outcome of conflicts as have been seen in the Russia-Ukraine conflict (Karalekas, 2022). The supply of new weapons to Taiwan in the event of conflict will lead to China adopting similar Russian strategy of falling backwards into defensive posture to study newly supplied weapons systems. In falling into defensive posture, China would rely on air-defense systems such as Russia's Su-400 in combination with locally developed, advanced HQ-9 surface-air missile system until it adapts to the operational capability of newly weapons; then counter with other weapons of their own such as glide bombs and Iskander missiles in the case of Russia.

Like Russia, China would remain in defensive posture until Taiwan falls short of weapons supplied by the US and allies then capitalize on the situation through massive offensive to overwhelm Taiwanese defenses. Although land invasion of Taiwan by China is impossible considering Taiwan's geostrategic location, still it would be necessary for Taiwan to study Russian weapons systems which proved difficult for Ukrainians to defend against because in the event of conflict between China and the US over Taiwan or between China and Taiwan, China's military are likely to fight with some or most of these Russian weapons systems or their more advanced newer versions due to the strategic relationship or partnership existing

between Russia and China. This is necessary against the background that while Russia effectively responded or found solutions to western weapons systems supplied to Ukraine, Ukraine could not deal effectively well with some Russian weapons systems. Russia displayed weapons like the hypersonic *Oreshnik* missile whose speed exceeds Mach 10 and seems unstoppable by current air defense systems. The speed and mid-air maneuverability of these weapons systems make them overcome deterrence capacity of countries and on a more general note, these advanced, precision guided, hypersonic missile systems such as the *Oreshnik* would likely trigger regional and global arms race.

Taiwan must also learn that while it is factual that US, EU and NATO support for Ukraine, has helped prolong the war, their support failed to achieve intended objective of strategic defeat of Russia. By strategic defeat reference is made to the objective of weakening Russian economy and military capability to the extent of preventing Russia from achieving its strategic goals in Ukraine. The grand strategic objective is considered a failure because despite massive supply of weapons, mobilization of international support, and considerable economic sanctions, Russia appears to be winning the war. While Russia has suffered both human and material losses in the war, the coordinated support of the US, NATO, and EU members has not weakened the Russian economy and military might to an obvious extent. The consequent war of attrition may have slowed Russia attacks on several fronts in the war, but it has so far failed to diminish its military capabilities as evidenced by Ukraine loss of territory, after territory as well as the incapacity to regain lost territories from Russia.

International Support Fatigue

Russia-Ukraine war has demonstrated the limit of over-reliance on external military support and weapons delivery system. International support can wane unexpectedly as conflict intensifies, leaving a party externally supported vulnerable to enemy attacks and defeat. The US under President Joe Biden, provided strong support for Ukraine and mobilized the collective support of NATO members. However, the coming to power of President Donald Trump drastically changed the US' Ukraine policy, resulting in drastically reduced military support which has left Ukraine seriously weakened and facing defeat against a more formidable Russian armed forces. Militaries all over the world is learning that no current conventional weapons systems deployed in the war has proven to be a game-changer even though Russia appears to have more advantage than Ukraine.

Democracy may be good. However, democratic ways of doing things have drawbacks which tend to provide advantage to autocracies in terms of decision making and foreign policy stability during the time of war. In this regard, apart from Russia's military preponderance in the war, Russia also has the advantage of being a dictatorship which quickens decision making and reduces opposition to the state. Unlike in the West where democracy reigns supreme and issues are extensively debated before decisions are made, as a dictatorship, decisions over critical issues are not debated and decided by a majority in the parliament but by a few individuals or on the spot by one man. Ukraine suffered this weakness of democracy with respect to the supply of western weapons systems. Decisions took long to be made and by the time they were made by a majority support, logistical challenges again delayed supplies, providing Russian troops the advantage to advance, adapt and entrench in their positions.

Under President Joe Biden, NATO appeared strong as member states presented a united front against Russian invasion of Ukraine; coordinated diplomatic efforts to condemn and isolate Russia; attracted new members such as Sweden and Finland; supplied weapons and training to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) in addition to imposing an assortment of economic sanctions against Russia. However, Donald Trump's second presidency in the US, has cracked NATO's wall of unity with its imperialist and expansionist foreign policy approach, resulting in among other things, the suspension of military aid to Ukraine. This approach may weaken NATO and threaten its continued existence with wider implications for countries which rely on US support. Similarly, EU member states are divided on how to continue supporting Ukraine in the war. As previously noted, Hungary and Slovakia blocked the EU's 18th sanctions package against Russia because such moves would severely affect energy security in the two land-linked countries.

7 CONCLUSION

This paper has analyzed the strategic implications of Russo-Ukrainian war for the survival of Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific region. Notwithstanding, differences in geopolitical locations, Russia and China are united by their revisionist-statism. Revisionist-statism of China and Russia does not only pose existential threat to Taiwan and Ukraine, it has wider implications for global and regional order in Indo-Pacific and beyond in terms of rules-based international system; global supply chain; global food and energy security, nuclear non-proliferation, and arms race.

Russia-Ukraine war has highlighted threats and vulnerabilities of states under the shadow of great powers and shown the need for a reconsideration of defense strategies in a technologically driven modern warfare. To survive, Taiwan would need to strengthen its defense through investment in emergent technologies such as drones, hypersonic and precision guided missiles as well as recruitment and military training.

While the support of a powerful ally such as the US and its allies are critical for a country at war, such support would not necessarily guarantee victory against formidable adversaries such as Russia and China as the Russian-Ukraine war has demonstrated. In this regard, massive international support provided Ukraine by the US, EU and NATO allies has not turned the tide of Russia-Ukraine war in Ukraine's favor. The Trump administration's anxiousness to end the war has seen the US reduced its support for Ukraine and appears to be forcing Ukraine into peace negotiations with Russia from a position of weakness and almost on Russian terms. This is a serious lesson that Taiwan has to learn. Foreign support has serious limitations. Its sustenance is subject to orientation, conviction, and worldview of individuals or parties in power in addition to domestic politics, and core interests of countries providing such support.

Similarly, China is learning that overwhelming military advantage by a powerful state over a less powerful state does not necessarily translate to quick, decisive victory for a powerful state as innovative technologies bring about new dimensions to modern warfare which can slow, delay and halt forward movements of more powerful armies. These dimensions of modern warfare have ensured that Russian expectation of a quick, short, decisive war through rapid overwhelming and defeat of Ukraine remain largely unachieved.

Consequently, while Taiwan has the right to defend itself against internal and external aggressions, as well as determine its political future, it would still be necessary to explore political and diplomatic channels to peacefully resolve its conflict with China. The first step in this direction would be to intensify efforts to resume semi-formal Cross-Strait talks through which further negotiations would take place. This is critical, because despite uneasy relations between Taiwan and China, the Taiwan government's relaxation of restrictions on people-to-people relations between Taiwan and China led to Taiwan becoming a major investor in China. Thus, Between 1991 and 2022, Taiwan had an estimated 45,195 investments worth over US\$205.11 Billion in China (MOFA, 2023/2024, p. 53).

More so, despite acrimonious relations between Taiwan and China, their semi-official institutions- Taiwan's Strait Exchange Foundation and China's Association for Relations

Across the Taiwan Straits have produced meaningful rounds of dialogue since 2008, resulting in over 20 agreements between them (MOFA, 2023/2024). Among these agreements is the Cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement, concluded in 2010, which forms the basis of institutionalized trade and economic interactions between China and Taiwan. Maintaining of current status as a self-governing area rather than declaration of independence remains Taiwan's most veritable option in the context of increased tensions and largely unpredictability of China's actions. The option may attract increased threats but not direct attacks by China in the foreseeable future. Declaration of independence would be seen by China as a provocation and a crossing of the redline, attracting a military response.

Russian invasion of Ukraine suggests that invasion of Taiwan by China may not be ruled out either now or in the near future due to the unpredictability of international politics. However, considering China's goal to remain on top of the global economy, and the lessons it is possibly learning from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, China may prefer to resolve the Taiwan debacle peacefully rather than militarily. An invasion of Taiwan by China, either now or in the near future, would affect regional and global economy and create geopolitical uncertainties. Investor confidence in China and the region would diminish and China's global infrastructure investment or its BRI project in partner countries would stall. For Chinese companies, war would lead to tremendous increase in operational costs and certainly result in sanctions imposition, especially by the US and its western and Asian allies. Over a long period of time sanctions' effect would be seen in slow economic growth, drastic drop in production capacity, disruption in and rerouting of global supply chain and rise in unemployment across China.

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