

The Ukraine Crisis & Global Security



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The Russian invasion of Ukraine by President Vladimir Putin has been not only expanding towards cyberspace or outer space beyond the physical combat territory but also diffusing the crisis beyond European borders. It has also exceeded the border between military and private business and started affecting the economic as well as technological domain.

Hybrid War

Russia is now engaged in a hybrid warfare. The aim of this is to lower the enemy's capacity to continue warfare, including other nations' support, and facilitate the execution of its own military initiative by physical means. However, the distinction between military means and non-military means is blurred, and thus non-military means do not necessarily mean non-violence, as they are not humanistic and can drive a nation into psychological panic by eliminating its social resilience. Even after military invasion, these means to drive a nation into panic are continuously used. If the enemy nation maintains its resilience, more violent means to terrorize it would be used. This is what has been happening in Ukraine, including the indiscriminate slaughter of private citizens.

In hybrid warfare, for example, the aggressor aims to isolate the enemy in terms of information by destroying its network infrastructure through guerrilla tactics and cyberattacks on telecommunication companies. It can then engage in a disinformation campaign and spread fake information to divide the society and bring it into conflict with itself. Cyberattacks are carried out on traffic and financial infrastructures, creating confusion and economic stagnation, and thereby provoking social unrest. Destruction of electricity, water and gas facilities by guerrillas and the interruption of food transportation by sea and air blockades and damage to railways can render the nation's daily life all but impossible. This is how hybrid warfare can destroy an individual's life and business activity.

Dissolving Border Between Military Forces & Private Business

However, Putin's attempts in this regard have ended in failure. At the beginning of Russia's invasion, Ukraine's state-owned telecommunications company Ukrtelecom malfunctioned following a Russian cyberattack,¹ but the Ukraine government asked Elon Musk

to provide some of his terminals from Starlink, a private satellite network,² and thus Ukraine could maintain information sharing. The Ukraine people posted information on the Russian army's movements on SNS and helped the Ukraine army's campaign, and also the Ukraine army used it for attacks on tanks.³ In this way, private information and communication networks can be used to spread information on military activities and people, and business people can also make use of such information. This is how there is less and less distinction between the military and business realms.

The use of the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) or the Unmanned Surface Vehicle (USV) in the war in Ukraine is also noteworthy. These are generally known as drones. In May 2023, Russia attacked the Ukraine capital Kyiv and other cities in Ukraine with missiles and drones; meanwhile, Ukraine attacked Russian tanks effectively by using drones like the Switchblade given by the United States. Furthermore, the US provided Ukraine with a drone called the ALTIUS-600, enabling multiple machines to conduct integrated attacks.⁴ When the Ukraine army sank the flagship of the Russian Black Sea Fleet *Moskva*, it was said that it used a drone called the Bayraktar introduced from Turkey in the operation. Ukraine also attacked a Russian warship in the Port of Sevastopol in the Crimea Peninsula with a USV.⁵

But it is notable that Ukraine is using drones not only for strike purposes. It uses many drones to gather information and most of their purchasing costs are paid for by crowdfunding.⁶ This shows how Ukraine has been earning financial support from people all over the world. It is also planning to sell artwork featuring cat characters wearing Ukraine soldiers' uniforms and allot the revenues to purchase drones and eventually build up a fleet of USVs.⁷ So military support for Ukraine is expanding not only among national governments but also among various people around the world.

Crisis Going Beyond Region & Territory

Putin has tried to weaponize even economic interdependency. Taking advantage of European nations' dependency on Russia for energy resources such as natural gas, he countered their support for Ukraine by threatening to shut down their natural gas provisions. Especially during the freezing winter. But with warmer winters in Europe and European nations' securing of other natural gas supplies, gas prices returned to the level before the invasion of Ukraine. The unexpected decline in Russian-produced fossil fuel prices and

Moscow's strategic misjudgment in this field, as well as the impact of economic sanctions imposed by Japan, the US and European nations against Russia, had a severe impact on the Russian oil and gas industry, and thus Putin's strategy to use energy as a weapon in the economic war has proved unsuccessful.

On Nov. 23, 2022, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz reported to the Bundestag that the country's winter energy supplies were secure, and on Jan. 18, 2023 German Finance Minister Christian Lindner stated in a media interview that Germany was not greatly dependent on energy imports from Russia anymore. According to the BBC, thanks to the German government's efforts to promote purchases of energy sources from markets all over the world even at high prices, German natural gas storage is now plentiful.⁸

But while European nations have emerged from the energy source crisis, as they began competing for natural gas with their economic power, the international order of energy demand and supply was disturbed. It has affected emerging and developing nations. Due to the war, production and exports of wheat in Ukraine – often known as the “bread basket of Europe” – suffered tremendous shocks.⁹ Putin's blockade of the Black Sea stopped Ukraine from exporting its home-grown foods to the rest of the world from Odessa, the largest port facility in Ukraine. Ukraine is the fifth-largest wheat exporter in the world and most of its wheat exports had been shipped through the Black Sea. This blockade triggered a serious worldwide shortage of food provision and soaring price hikes, which in the poorest nations in Africa can lead directly to starvation. This is one way in which a war in Europe causes food crises in emerging and developing nations in other regions of the world.

On July 22, 2022, an agreement concluded with the mediation of the United Nations and Turkey to enable exports of grain from Ukraine and of fertilizers from Russia was signed in Istanbul, and has been extended thereafter.¹⁰ Russia's constant reluctance to sign such an agreement each time¹¹ caused great concern, but with this agreement global food prices fell somewhat compared with the historically high prices at the beginning of the war, though they are still rather high and concerns about starvation in poor nations remain.

Europe & US Military Arms Support for Ukraine

Disruption from the war has occurred not only among emerging and developing nations, but also within developed nations in Europe itself. Germany has succeeded in securing sufficient energy sources but some have not, and the impact of the war differs among European nations. In each nation, there are some views critical of support for Ukraine because of the economic damage entailed and the degree of support differs from country to country. However, all the European nations' governments have clearly shown a consistent

intention to support Ukraine actively. But in the US, there is a growing reluctance to continue to support Ukraine. For example, in the run-up to the US presidential election in 2024, Republicans are asking for reduced support for Ukraine, while the administration of President Joe Biden is committed to continuing support.

Nonetheless, there is a general consensus among the US and European nations that they will continue to support Ukraine until it is satisfied.¹² The joint communique of the G7 leaders meeting in Hiroshima issued on May 20, 2023 mentions that they would support Ukraine as far as it is necessary, given Russia's unlawful invasion, as a primary and specific measure of G7 collaboration.

Nations in the West believe that Putin must not succeed in this war. He began the invasion of Ukraine while trying to constrain Western nations' military intervention by threatening them with the possibility of nuclear war. If he succeeds in only a partial unification of Ukraine into Russia, other nations or armed forces might have an enhanced incentive to attempt forceful changes of current territories. We must prevent the international order from collapsing not only in the economic domain but also in the foreign policy and military domains.

In this light, NATO members have been providing various weapons to Ukraine and trying to create a situation where the Ukraine forces could gain advantages over the Russian forces. But NATO has also repeatedly stressed that it will not send soldiers to Ukraine.¹³ Ukraine is not a member of NATO and NATO is not obliged to defend it. Also it does not want to risk any military conflict with Russia, as this would involve a high price, including a possible escalation to a nuclear war.

Nonetheless, NATO nations continue to supply Ukraine with massive amounts of arms and ammunition and have eventually provided it with weapons that could inflict greater and more serious casualties. But the US, in particular, has been prudent to provide weapons that could drastically change the landscape of the war, such as long-range precision strike weapons, tanks, and fighter aircraft. At the start of the Russian invasion, the weapons provided by the US were the portable Javelin anti-tank weapons system and the Stinger air defense system. The NLAW anti-tank missile developed jointly by the United Kingdom and Sweden was also provided to Ukraine. In the Japanese media, these weapons were seen as being effective against Russian tanks. But in actual combat, the M777 Howitzer provided by the US, Australia and Canada, the PzH2009 Self-Propelled Howitzer provided by the Netherlands, and the Caesar 155 mm Self-Propelled Howitzer provided by France, were more effective.

The US has also been providing the Switchblade self-destruct drone since the beginning of the war.¹⁴ The Howitzer's range is at most 30 kilometers and the large Switchblade 600 has a maximum 40-km range. The Ukraine army's land battles to regain territory

occupied by Russia are based on the use of long-range guns and so it needs massive precision strike weapons. In June 2022, the US provided the HIMARS multiple rocket launcher, which can fire surface-to-surface ballistic missiles at a range of 300 km, but being cautious about a possible attack on Russian territory it provided only 70-km range rockets. HIMARS achieved great success in Ukraine's military campaign in Kherson Province.

To protect Ukrainian cities and military facilities, in November 2022 the US provided the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAMS) developed jointly with Norway, and in December 2022¹⁵ decided to provide the Patriot Air Defense system.¹⁶ These air defense systems have been preventing Russia from gaining air superiority over Ukraine. Land forces are vulnerable to air threat. Therefore strong air forces and robust air defense systems are indispensable for Ukraine to initiate any large-scale counterattack.

NATO nations then decided to provide necessary weapons like tanks for Ukraine's offensive military campaign. In January 2023, the UK decided to provide Ukraine with its newest main tank, the Challenger 2. In the same month, the US announced it would provide 31 M1 Abrams tanks after withdrawing its previous objection. Germany had continued to be ambivalent about providing tanks, but decided to offer Leopard 2 tanks also in January 2023.¹⁷ Both the US and Germany were cautious about providing tanks because they feared provoking Russia to use strategic nuclear weapons. German tanks are widely used all over Europe, but it is necessary for those European nations to get approval from Germany for reexporting and they could not make any decision while Germany was hesitating.

For the Ukraine army to initiate a large-scale tank battle, some operations to reduce Russian defense capabilities are needed prior to it. Elimination of landmines and obstacles by combat engineer units and reclamation of trenches are included in it. Russians, of course, understand these operations and are trying to attack combat engineer units with long-range artillery. Ukrainians need to destroy these Russian howitzers, cannon and rockets launchers with their own long-range weapons. It is notable that some European nations and the US have decided to provide long-range cruise missiles, which they had been reluctant to do at first. It was the UK that took the lead in this measure by deciding in May 2023 to provide Ukraine with its Storm Shadow cruise missile that has a range of more than 250 km.¹⁸ Ukraine, encouraged by this UK provision, then asked Germany to provide its Target Adaptive Unitary and Dispenser Robotic Ubiquity System (TAURUS) cruise missile.¹⁹ This is equipped with a two-stage warhead system called "Mephisto" and has the dual capacity of penetration and diffusive destruction of robust targets underground. TAURUS could be particularly effective against Russia which has constructed fortified defensive positions.

In addition to this, the UK and the Netherlands reached an agreement in May 2023 to build an "international coalition" to

support procurement of F-16 fighters for Ukraine at the beleaguered country's request. This international cooperation framework aims to support Ukraine from the training of pilots/maintenance men to procurement of weapons, and this is seen as a long-term project. Any single weapon cannot be a game changer in the war, but with the provision of weapon systems that could give Ukrainian forces an advantage against the Russian army, European allies and the US have been clearly showing their determination to continue military support for Ukraine, having been led by the UK.

European & US Views on a Ceasefire

In conjunction with this, though, the US and European nations have a great interest in the restoration of Ukraine. The EU set up a new working group to examine whether frozen Russian assets can be used to rebuild Ukraine.²⁰ This means that they are thinking about at least a ceasefire of some sort, though this could only be achieved in line with the intentions of Ukraine and could not be proposed publicly without convincing the Ukrainians of its utility. Ukraine must officially keep saying that it will continue to fight until it can retrieve its territory and restore the country to its status before 2014 when Russia unlawfully annexed the Crimean Peninsula. It is likely that any possible ceasefire is being discussed with other European nations and the US in terms of this reality.

Media reports often mention the damage to Russia's military forces and weapons or the shortage of ammunition, but Ukraine is also exhausted. With ceaseless fighting, there is even the possibility that Ukraine, with its smaller population, will be the first to lose its capacity to continue. But in order for Ukraine to accept a ceasefire, it must at least achieve a convincing victory symbolized by Putin's failure in battle. The provision of tanks and precision-strike weapons, as well as other ground and air support, is aimed at facilitating Ukraine's large-scale roll-back operation and indicates the intention of Ukraine's allies to continue their military support over the long term to keep pressurizing Russia,

On May 11, 2023, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky said that his country could make progress and achieve success with its existing arms, but on the other hand that many human lives would be lost and this would be unacceptable, and so they would have to wait for a certain period of time to acquire more weapons. Then on May 30, Zelensky announced that he had received a report on the timing of a counteroffensive, as well as supply of ammunition, training of forces and fighting strategies, suggesting that a decision had been made on a counteroffensive campaign. It was thought that this might prompt the possibility of a ceasefire.

But it is China that is disturbing Western nations' actions. China would not accept a ceasefire led by the transatlantic alliance, especially the US, and President Xi Jinping must also be thinking

about how to stop a Ukrainian victory from leading to Putin's losing power. On Feb. 24, 2023, one year after the start of the war, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced China's position on a political solution of what China called "the Ukraine crisis", generally called a "12-point peace plan". This was taken as an attempt by China to propose a ceasefire which would favor its own interests. Japan, European nations and the US recognized the plan is for Russia, because China used the term "Ukraine crisis". Ukraine, of course, refused to accept it²¹ and the US strongly opposed it.²² The West was concerned that China's attempt to play the role of mediator for a ceasefire may disturb Western efforts for a ceasefire.

China's Position

On Feb. 24, 2022, when Putin initiated the invasion of Ukraine, the state-run Xinhua News Agency reported that Putin had announced the commencement of a "special military campaign" in the Donbass region and quoted him as saying that Russia had no intention of occupying Ukraine. Since then, the Chinese media have been issuing news releases on the Ukraine situation almost every day. While trying to avoid criticizing either Russia or Ukraine, these media reports have been based on Russia's published information and opinions, implying that the Chinese Communist Party passively supports Russia. Xinhua particularly claims that the Ukraine crisis was mainly triggered by NATO.

China avoids condemning Russia in the UN and supports Russia in a limited manner in spite of economic sanctions against it. Yet China's views are somewhat inconsistent. On March 7, 2022, Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi made four significant remarks, as follows.

First, the need to remain committed to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and respect and protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries. This is the principle always advocated by China concerned about possible use of military forces by the US or Russia (Soviet Union). Based on this, Ukraine's sovereignty and territory must be protected.

Second, the need to uphold the principle of indivisible security and accommodate the legitimate security concerns of relevant parties. "Indivisible security" is claimed by President Putin and he claimed that NATO threatened this principle and thus he assigned Russian military around the border between Russia and Ukraine. In this light, this means that we would have to understand the background of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine.

Third, the need to rely on dialogue, negotiation and peaceful means for dispute resolution. This is used by China as its official stance.

Fourth, the need to aim for lasting peace and stability in the region and forge a balanced, effective and sustainable European security

mechanism. This means that it is not NATO ensuring national security in Europe.

China must support the Russian invasion of Ukraine because it understands that this represents a battle against NATO, and in particular the US. China also wants to see an end to US hegemony. It is also afraid that the growing influence of the anti-establishment movement inside Russia could cause something similar in China. The biggest threat to authoritarian states exists within them. If the Russian people oppose Putin's regime and remove him from power, there would be a perception in China as well that leaders of authoritarian regimes could be eliminated, and a political movement might grow in China that could topple the communist administration.

China supports Russian views and the Chinese media actively voice condemnation of the US. For example, Xinhua published a series of six articles from March 31 to April 5, 2023, that claimed the "Ukraine crisis" was caused by the US as a backstage player. These articles also included one saying the US is further exacerbating the crisis to benefit the US military industry, and another saying the US is provoking the "Taiwan Strait Crisis" by taking advantage of the Ukraine situation. At the beginning of this series, the editors put a footnote that translates as follows: "More than one month has passed since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine War. The US government and media as a whole have been trying to entrap China by reversing truth and falsity, confusing the good and the bad and making slanders and defamation. This cannot be tolerated at all. Xinhua announces a series of six articles aimed at clarifying the truth, arguing against falsified US arguments and revealing the hegemonic nature of the US as a nation inducing war and benefitting from it."

This actually suggests that China's main concern is whether the US would intervene militarily if China invaded Taiwan. In a US-China leaders teleconference as well on March 18 after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, while Biden tried to dissuade China from supporting Russia, Xi told Biden not to support Taiwan.

However, unlike Russia which is using military force as a hard power over what it hoped would be the short term, China has been trying to implement its own standards and rules in the international community to counter US hegemony. This can be interpreted as a long-term investment to raise its status in the international community, and for this purpose China must avoid isolation in the international community and may need to get support from emerging and developing nations, the so-called Global South.

For China, the war in Ukraine is a challenge that has forced it to respond inconsistently. It finds it difficult to provide Russia with military support in order to preserve its official standpoint as a "neutral superpower pursuing peace". On the other hand, it cannot ignore the prospect of Putin's losing power. The best outcome for China is to mediate a ceasefire on its own initiative. Xi visited

Moscow from March 20 to March 22, 2023 and had a meeting with Putin. Xinhua referred to this visit not only as a “journey of friendship” or “journey of collaboration”, but as a special “journey of peace”, suggesting a ceasefire would be discussed. But since that visit, the Chinese media have never talked about a “journey of peace”. This is interpreted as Putin’s refusal of the conditions for a ceasefire proposed by China.

On the other hand, the two leaders called each other “dearest friend”, and in this meeting Chinese economic support was committed and a “multi-polarized world order” was advocated. Though China failed to get Putin’s approval of its proposed ceasefire and Russia could not persuade Xi to provide military support, both nations had to emphasize their cooperation to topple “the US-dominated world order” alleged by them.

Conflict Between New Game & Geopolitical Thinking

As seen from the above, Europe and the US, and China and Russia have been playing an action and reaction game in responding to each other’s words and attitudes. A “game” is defined as something that is played for participants to achieve specific goals through the use of strategies or techniques. The game that Europe, the US and Japan want to play is different from the one that China and Russia want to play. The first one is a new game that the whole international community is expected to participate in, and not one of geopolitics.

The reason why Zelensky participated in the G7 summit meeting in Hiroshima from May 19 to 21, was not only to take advantage of the opportunity directly to request weapons and ammunition from the G7 but more importantly to appeal to the international community that it should regard this war as a new game. The key to this appeal by Zelensky was Japan, the only Asian nation among the G7 supporting Ukraine and imposing economic sanctions on Russia. It was considered most effective to appeal in Japan that the Ukraine issue is not only one for the concern of Europeans.

Japan, Europe and the US are now trying to demonstrate that no nation could achieve its original goals by threatening to use nuclear weapons, though it could provoke a war of invasion. With an increasing number of nations believing in the effect of such a threat, we will not only fail to stop nuclear armament expansion but also see the nuclear non-proliferation regime destabilized. The implications of advocating for an international order as a rule of this new game to deal with the war are not limited to the foreign policy and military security domains. Putin tried to weaponize interdependency, taking advantage of European nations’ excessive dependency on Russian energy resources. This attempt was unsuccessful in Europe, and ended up disrupting the whole international community’s demand and supply of energy sources, as well as demand and supply of food.

It is the Global South that has been suffering most in this confusion. Zelensky may be thinking that gaining the support of the Global South is crucial to achieving success by showing it the need for a new game order not subject to geopolitics but to protect the international order.

The attempt to create a new game order had been made in the past as well. The League of Nations began with a similar idealism but failed to prevent World War II. At this moment, the international community is at a crossroads in deciding whether a new game order based on the UN can be created. Russia and China are playing the power balance game among the superpowers based on geopolitical thinking. European nations may have hoped that inter-state wars could be ended by building up interdependency with Russia, but Putin viewed NATO as battling against him for territories and thought it necessary to try to recreate the greater Russia that existed in the past.

China, meanwhile, has repeatedly warned on the Taiwan issue that the US, an outsider in Asia, should not intervene in this affair. On NATO’s establishing a Tokyo liaison office, China criticized Japan by asking, “Would Japan try to let a wolf come into the room?” It says that Asian affairs must be managed by China and that actors from outside of the Asian region like the US or European nations must not intervene. China criticizes “Cold War thinking in the West”, but thinking in this way suggests China itself is playing the old power balance game based on geopolitics, and it has also tried to expand this old thinking to the Global South.

Of course, playing a new game would not mean the players in the game like Japan, Europe and the US can escape from geopolitical bindings. Nations and the military forces belonging to them physically exist. Europeans, though showing interest in the Indo-Pacific, having seen US-China strategic competition in the region,²³ would find it difficult to deploy their large-scale military forces in Asia to make an intervention in any military conflict there.

However, the entire international community would need to cope with any attempt by invasion or any other use of force to destroy the international order, wherever in the world that may be and whoever provokes it. For this purpose, we need to promote international cooperation even in space (satellites networks) or cyberspace not bound by borders or geographical conditions, and furthermore in economic and technology domains. Military support for an invaded nation and economic sanctions against the invader can be an offset strategy to avoid a nuclear war or world war. A complex action and reaction game between Japan, Europe and the US, eager to play a new game, and China and Russia, playing a power-balance game based on old geopolitical thinking, will influence both the Ukraine war and the international order hereafter.

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