

THE IMPACT AND RESPONSE OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

It is noteworthy that as the Russia-Ukraine war enters its third year, China still maintains a firm position consistent with that of the previous year, endeavouring to promote peace talks and ceasefires. This paper employs the content analysis of 97 academic papers on the Ukraine Crisis in Chinese core journals (CSSCI) from February 22, 2022, to February 22, 2024. The research results suggest that Chinese scholars offer a multidimensional analysis of the development of the Russia-Ukraine war. The paper concludes through content analysis and comparison that Chinese scholars share the same stance on the Russia-Ukraine conflict as Chinese officials. First, Chinese scholars call for promoting the transformation of the global energy system, accelerating the development and use of new energy sources, and promoting the development of innovative capabilities to cope with the multiple crises caused by economic sanctions. Second, the Russia-Ukraine war has exacerbated multiple global security crises and traditional and non-traditional security issues, severely affected the global security system, and created a new security dilemma. Third, scholars advocate the concept of “a community with a shared future for mankind” and build a post-Russia-Ukraine war world security pattern.

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Introduction

The crisis in Ukraine has been escalating for more than two years. It is not only the biggest crisis on the European continent since the Second World War, but also a global and composite crisis that has plunged humanity into multiple security challenges. The promotion of an early, peaceful settlement of the crisis in Ukraine is a major concern of the international community. In this situation, and considering China's influence as a major power and its international status, all parties expect China to play a greater role in the political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China released a 12-point document entitled "*China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis*" (hereinafter referred to as "*China's Position*") on February 24, 2023, one year after the Ukraine crisis, to reiterate once again China's official position in clear terms (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China 2023). It is a direct response to the crisis in Ukraine. This document consists of three main parts. First, it criticises the direct involvement of the United States and NATO in the Ukraine crisis. Second, it calls on Russia to respect the sovereignty of other countries and to oppose nuclear war. But, at the same time, it demands a ceasefire and an end to unilateral sanctions. Third, it is a humanitarian appeal, which includes demands for the protection of civilians and civilian nuclear facilities, the establishment of humanitarian corridors and aid, and the protection of food exports.

It should be noted that as the Russia-Ukraine war enters its third year, China still maintains a firm position consistent with that of the previous year, endeavouring to promote peace talks and ceasefires. On February 21, 2024, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, was interviewed by Chinese media after attending the 60th Munich Security Conference and visiting Spain and France. Wang Yi said that the "four musts" put forward by President Xi Jinping are the fundamental guidelines for China to promote a political solution to the Ukrainian crisis. The "four musts" are the following: "China maintains that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries must be respected, the purposes and principles of the UN Charter must be fully observed, the legitimate security concerns of all countries must be taken seriously, and all efforts that are conducive to the peaceful settlement of the crisis must be supported" (Xinhua 2022b). China will continue to play a constructive role in rebuilding peace and supporting the construction of a balanced, effective, and sustainable European security architecture. On February 28, 2024, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Mao Ning, announced that Li Hui, the Chinese government's special representative for Eurasian affairs, would visit Russia, the EU headquarters, Poland, Ukraine,

Germany, and France from March 2 to conduct a second round of shuttle diplomacy on promoting a political solution to the Ukrainian crisis.

Chinese scholars tend to be reticent about engaging in open debate when discussing policy. Consequently, there is a paucity of direct, in-depth, and thorough debates on different points of view in publicly published academic papers. However, the rather complex evolutionary process that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict has undergone since 2014 has led to a divergence of views among scholars on the conflict. This is reflected in academic papers (Song 2015). Since 2022, the Chinese government's repeated emphasis on its official stance on the Ukrainian crisis has had a significant impact on the views of Chinese scholars. It is possible that the perceptions of scholars and the official position of the government have served to reinforce each other. Chinese scholars pay great attention to the breakout and development of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Substantial academic articles with research subjects on the "Russia-Ukraine crisis/war" have been published in Chinese core journals (CSSCI). Several roundtable meetings and seminars were held for open discussion on the Ukrainian issue in Chinese think tanks and universities. Chinese mass media such as "People's Daily", "China Daily", and "Global Times" also opened columns that commented on the Russia-Ukraine war. Through content analysis and comparison, the research finds that the views of Chinese academics on the Russia-Ukraine war are in line with the position of the Chinese government.

Methodology

In order to answer the question of how Chinese scholars interpret the development of the Russia-Ukraine war, this study used content analysis as the main method. Therefore, the current research was based on all the academic papers in Chinese core journals (CSSCI) that had the "Russia-Ukraine conflict/war" as the main research topic from February 22, 2022, to February 22, 2024, which were used as data sets. There are 97 academic papers in total. Each paper is a unit of analysis.

Codebook Development

The analysis in this study includes the following categories:

1. Basic information (including scholars' job area: Beijing, Shanghai, or other location; working type: think tank or university).
2. Content issues (including content topics and international relations theories used).
3. Narrative features (including assessment and forecast of the Ukraine crisis).

Three researchers (Cai Liang, Song Lilei, and Wu Zitong) read through each paper independently and used single words to describe the thesis of each paper.

Next, the team held a discussion to group them into three categories according to their topics: the nature of the Russia-Ukraine war, analysis of the process of the Russia-Ukraine war, and the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war.

Coding Procedures and Inter-coder Reliability

Three trained coders independently reviewed and coded all papers. In order to develop and complete the codebook for content analysis of all the papers, a random sample of 10% of all posts (n=10) was selected. Each paper was classified under only one theme. In the case of disagreement between the two coders, a third coder was used to determine the final coding. The kappa score of 0.815 was calculated, which demonstrated that the inter-coder reliability was valid. If the content of the paper did not fit any of the themes, it was coded as “other” and was not included in the final analysis of this study.

Results

The research found that among these 97 papers from February 22, 2022, to February 22, 2024, regarding the word frequency analysis, it was found that some keywords, such as “conflict”, “International Relations”, “Russia”, “security”, and “economy” (see Table 1), reflected concern about *China’s position document*.

Table 1: Comparison of keywords in academic papers and *China’s Position Document* (rank according to times mentioned)

Most used words in 2022-2024 academic papers	Number of occurrences of academic papers (in units)	12 key words in <i>China’s Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis</i>
Conflict	374	Peace
International relation	192	Sovereignty
Russia	158	Ceasing hostilities
Security	147	Security
China	145	Humanitarian crisis
Economy	121	Civilians
Nation	119	Convention on Nuclear safety (CNS)
Influence	111	Nuclear proliferation
Global	109	Food security
Trade	102	Unilateral sanctions
/	/	Industrial and supply chains
/	/	Reconstruction

Source: Author’s research.

According to the classification results, of the 97 papers on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict/war, 32 focused on the characterization of the Russia-Ukraine war (32.9%), 15 focused on the process of the Russia-Ukraine war (15.4%), and 48 studied the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war (51.7%). Chinese scholars present a comprehensive, multi-faceted analysis of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, focusing on three key areas. Chinese scholars have focused on the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on the global economy and the upheaval of the current international order. In the analysis of the process of the Russia-Ukraine war, it is more often analysed from two perspectives: the weapon-striking capability of the Russia-Ukraine war and the importance of the public opinion war. Scholars are concerned about global food supply and energy issues. In terms of the scope of impact, scholars do not only discuss the impact on the European region but also argue that this conflict affects the security order in the Indo-Pacific region, and some articles discuss the position of the middle ground and China's cooperation with the countries of the global South.

The Characterization of the Russia-Ukraine War

In the papers dealing with the nature of the Russia-Ukraine war, scholars discussed the definition of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and where the crisis is headed, including questions such as whether the Ukrainian crisis signals the end of the Cold War and the landmark stagnation of the world economy in the wake of the crisis.

Is the World Economy Facing Another Stagnation?

In the papers related to the definition of the economic situation after the crisis, scholars mainly discuss whether the world economy is facing stagnation. Chinese scholars argue that it is true that Western sanctions have had a significant impact on the current Russian economy. However, the objective economic environment and conditions in Russia do not make it realistic for the Russian economy to collapse due to sanctions (Liu 2022, 62).

The Russia-Ukraine war puts the global economy at risk of falling back into stagflation. Global economic governance will move towards fragmentation, and the process of global reserve currency diversification will accelerate. The Russia-Ukraine war will largely put an end to the current round of economic globalisation, and Western multinationals will struggle to find a balance between trade-in values, supply chain security, and maintaining corporate competitiveness.

Particularly noteworthy in terms of specific instruments is that the US and Europe are using SWIFT sanctions against Russia for the first time in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war. That is essentially an escalation and intensification of the financial sanctions imposed on Russia by the US and Europe since the Crimea crisis in 2014. The aim is to completely isolate Russia from the international financial system. These sanctions have had a strong impact on the global economic and financial landscape, undermining the fairness of the international payment and settlement system, weakening the credibility of the US dollar itself, and contributing to the transformation of the international monetary system (Li 2022, 79).

The United States and the West have imposed unprecedented, all-encompassing digital sanctions on Russia, hitting and limiting the development potential of the Russian digital economy. The digital competition embodied in the Russia-Ukraine war also confirms its strategic importance and the need for timely strategic adjustments in the digital economy (Liu 2023, 23).

This geopolitical conflict has unleashed a far-reaching economic war between the major powers, which, if prolonged, will not only further weaken Russia's economic base but will also affect the stability of global markets and threaten the post-pandemic recovery of the global economy. Moreover, this economic war will further undermine the already fragile process of economic globalisation and the free international economic system, highlighting the importance of safeguarding national economic security.

The Turmoil of the International Order After the Cold War?

In the papers related to the definition of the international order after the crisis, Chinese scholars mainly answered the following question: Does the Russia-Ukraine war mean the end of the post-Cold War International Order?

The current Russia-Ukraine war is a general outbreak of the crisis in relations between Russia and the West and a general outbreak of geopolitical contradictions and conflicting interests between Russia, the United States, and Europe. The Russia-Ukraine war has accelerated the restructuring of relations between the major powers, which will compete to increase their armaments or strengthen their alliances, and the trend of multipolarization in the world will accelerate. This round of confrontation and games will first unfold in Europe and extend to Africa and the Middle East. The widening of the crisis and its longevity will bring great harm to Europe that could have been avoided. The war between the two sides has taken a huge toll on both sides of the conflict, with Ukraine ravaged by it and Russia isolated and sanctioned by many. The US will reinforce the role of ideological and values-based alliances in addressing

the challenges. A less powerful Russia could trigger a polarisation and restructuring of the regional order in Eurasia. The Russia-Ukraine war signals the end of the post-Cold War international order, and the choices and behaviour of the other world powers will largely determine the shape of the new international order that is emerging (Ma 2022, 93).

The Russia-Ukraine war is a watershed in the post-Cold War era and the world's development since the end of World War II. It will trigger a profound evolution in Europe and Eurasia and will have a profound impact on the future development of the world order. Regardless of the final outcome of the war, Russia has suffered serious political, economic, and diplomatic setbacks, and its influence in international politics and the world economic system is expected to be on a downward trend for quite some time in the future (Feng 2022, 72).

In the longer term, geopolitical risk concerns will gain further weight in the restructuring of global supply chains, undermining the efficiency-first globalisation pattern (Yang 2023, 28).

The Process of the Russia-Ukraine War

Is There a Fifth-Dimensional Battlefield of Public Opinion?

Because of the special nature of war embodied in the Ukrainian crisis, Chinese scholars have also noted the value of studying the Ukrainian crisis within the field of war and have focused on this definition of fifth-dimensional war. The most striking feature of the Russia-Ukraine war that suddenly erupted in 2022 was that both sides used the mainstream media at their disposal as a weapon in this round of "hybrid war". Russia, Europe, and the United States have opened up a fifth-dimensional battlefield of public opinion manipulation, warfare discourse, cyberattack, and defence, systematically demonstrating how the media can be used to manipulate information and shape perceptions in the global arena of public opinion.

In the age of social media, the public opinion debate on the Russia-Ukraine war is immersed in the current communication environment, where traditional media and new media converge. A variety of factual and opinion-based information, including the media images of the political leaders of both countries, the latest war situation, civilian casualties, international public opinion, and the economic impact of the war on other countries, is presented in an indistinguishable manner (Wu and Wu 2022, 50).

After the outbreak of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, social media became an important means of promoting a favourable narrative for both sides. The application of technologies such as social robots will create a strong volume of support for a certain point of view or a certain side, which can give people

the illusion that they are different from the majority opinion. It will be more difficult for people to obtain realistic information from the online opinion space, and they will be less willing to speak out. With the intervention of social bots, online public opinion does not fully reflect realistic public opinion. And it is important to reflect on how people can obtain truthful information from social media (Zhao 2022, 89). The researchers found that both sides used social media as an important platform for wartime propaganda but obtained different results: Russia's will to fight was largely weakened by the internal and external discourse game, while Ukraine's will to fight was significantly enhanced through a series of consensus-building media strategies (Dai and Shao 2022, 23).

The United States has won a staged victory in the information war against Russia, characterised by occupying the ideological high ground, playing a unique role in intelligence, manipulating social media, and using technology to block it. The United States has made innovations in the shaping of discourse, mobilisation of forces, focus of attacks, and means of suppression. At the same time, the United States is using information attacks to internationalise the Taiwan issue (Hou 2023, 7). Researchers have found that the value of the use of intelligence and intelligence disclosure is becoming more prominent, and it is increasingly important to comprehensively enhance intelligence and cognitive attack and defence capabilities (Wang 2023, 12).

The Possibility of a Future Nuclear War?

Chinese scholars also discussed the future course of the Ukrainian crisis and answered this question: Is there any possibility of a future nuclear war?

The Russia-Ukraine war poses many risks to international nuclear arms control and disarmament. These include the use of nuclear weapons by nuclear-weapon states, the destruction of nuclear facilities in non-nuclear-weapon states, the crossing of the nuclear threshold by more non-nuclear-weapon states, the stalemate in international nuclear arms control and disarmament negotiations, and the further upgrading of nuclear armaments by nuclear-weapon states (Ling and Chen 2022, 15).

In the past two years of conflict, the United States and Russia have almost launched an open nuclear game. A ceasefire would be the only solution. However, it is not difficult to find that the current situation of tit-for-tat and spiralling risks makes it difficult to realise a ceasefire quickly, and it can only be expected that the United States and Russia will remain calm and leave enough time and space to find the way to peace (Zhao 2023, 1).

The Impact of the Russia-Ukraine War

How Do We Deal with Global Food Security and Energy Issues?

In terms of the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war, Chinese scholars mostly discussed the challenges to global food security and the energy issue. There are nine papers on the topic of food security, accounting for 9% of all papers. The Russia-Ukraine war, combined with various factors, has perpetuated global food insecurity, which is becoming a major issue in global governance. The Russia-Ukraine war has had a serious negative impact on global food prices, supply, demand, and production. It has led to a decrease in international agricultural exports, a decrease in Ukrainian crop production and agricultural exports, restrictions on the export of Russian products such as fertilisers and energy, a sharp increase in international prices of agricultural inputs such as food and fertilisers, a transmission of higher energy prices to higher global food prices, and an increase in global food supply tensions. In particular, the Russia-Ukraine war has exacerbated the food security dilemma in the African region. Russia and Ukraine are the main suppliers of food imports to many African countries. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has created great uncertainty about food security trends in Africa. It has not only damaged the food supply chain and reduced the purchasing power of food in African countries, but it has also increased the risk of supply and demand for food aid from the international community. This situation, in turn, has exacerbated political and social instability in African countries (Zhang 2022, 51).

Five articles focus on energy security issues. The escalation of the Russia-Ukraine war and the reciprocal sanctions imposed by the US, Europe, and other Western countries on Russia have had a major impact on Russian oil exports. The international oil trade pattern is undergoing a structural transformation. Russia is shifting its oil exports to the Asia-Pacific region. In recent years, Russia has shifted the focus of its energy exports to the Asia-Pacific market due to declining demand for Russian oil from the EU and economic sanctions from the US and Europe. In the short term, the sensitivity and vulnerability of Russia's and Europe's interdependence in the gas sector remain high. The significant shock of a disruption in the gas trade and the lack of short-term viable low-cost alternatives in either side's policy toolboxes make it unlikely that either side will completely disrupt trade relations for the time being. The EU has accelerated the pace of oil import diversification. In the short term, countries may increase their reliance on fossil energy sources such as coal, delaying the energy transition process. In the longer term, the gradual implementation of the EU's "decoupling" policy will further reduce the degree of interdependence between the two sides. In the long run, however, this will lead to an accelerated transformation of the energy landscape. While promoting the diversification of

energy supplies, countries will vigorously develop alternative and renewable energy sources and accelerate the development of a complementary multi-energy pattern.

In 2023, Chinese scholars also noted some new changes. Along with the prolongation and expansion of the Russia-Ukraine war, the sanctions and countersanctions between the West and Russia have continued to push forward the changes in the trade pattern and structure of the international mining market, which in turn have caused a shift in the production pattern and structure. Global coal production and consumption have reached record highs, and the cost of achieving the global “double carbon” target has increased (Zhu 2023, 20).

However, in addition to the study of concerns pertaining to food and energy security, the impact of various crisis actors has also been examined in studies regarding the impact of the Ukrainian crisis. Chinese scholars have mainly discussed the impact of the crisis on the United States, Europe, and the middle-ground countries.

Will The US Strategic Focus Deviate from the Indian Pacific Region after the Russia-Ukraine War?

Scholars discussed major state actors in the Russia-Ukraine war, the situation in Asia under the shadow of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, and its implications for the Indo-Pacific strategy. The US is reluctant to become directly and openly involved in the Russian-Ukrainian military strife for its own interests. However, it seeks to achieve the goal of making Russia unable to change the security landscape of Eurasia by military means while maintaining the rhythm of its global strategic focus on the east. The US attempts to increase its deterrence against China by strengthening its system of allies and partners, which remains a key element of its competitive strategy towards China. After the Russia-Ukraine war, the US will not reduce its strategic posture to contain China. The US fears that Sino-Russian cooperation would weaken US hegemony. Instead, the US has strengthened the strategic cooperation of its allies in Northeast Asia and promoted a strategy of checks and balances between Japan and South Korea against China and Russia. The United States has also been trying to draw the ASEAN into the “Indo-Pacific Economic Framework”. Presently, Japan and South Korea have made their “following” position clear, while the ASEAN is tentatively beginning to accept the “Indo-Pacific Economic Framework”. With the new South Korean government in power, it is changing its “middle power” strategy, proposing the goal of a “global axis power”, expanding its diplomatic scope throughout Asia, suggesting a values-based foreign policy, promoting trilateral alliance cooperation between South Korea,

the US, and Japan, and announcing its membership in NATO's cyber-centric defence system and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). "The scope and intensity of US-South Korea cooperation will increase, and new variables will emerge in the power dynamics of Northeast Asia. After the Russia-Ukraine war, Japan, like Germany in Europe, may leave behind its historical baggage and reverse its geopolitical role in Northeast Asia. (Ba 2022).

The Russia-Ukraine war has profound and complex implications for US-China relations. The US is using the Russia-Ukraine war to promote the so-called "China threat" by using the strategy of "tying up China and Russia", manipulating value barriers in the global economy, and creating an economic warfare system with sanctions at its core. The US will also tend to intensify its pressure on China in the area of global governance. The Russia-Ukraine war will not change the US determination to implement the "Indo-Pacific strategy", and the US will use this conflict to accelerate the construction of an alliance system, especially to enhance the offensive capabilities of Japan, Australia, and other countries in the military. Against the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war, the US has further strengthened its military, economic, trade, and technology ties with the Taiwan authorities. The US seeks to build an "international barrier" for Taiwan through the US-Japan alliance, the quadrilateral mechanism, and the US-European linkage, and its so-called "strategic clarity" in its policy towards Taiwan has become more pronounced (Zhao 2022a, 1).

The United States and other NATO countries echo each other in the Indo-Pacific region, promote their interests in the region, shape the regional order, maintain regional hegemony, encircle China at every level, interfere with China's safeguarding of its sovereignty, and restrict China's regional influence. The expansion of the United States and its dominant NATO in the Indo-Pacific region against the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war has brought many challenges to China's neighbourhood and is not conducive to regional stability, cooperation, and development (Men 2023, 70).

Does the European Union Speak in One Voice?

Regarding the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on the European regional level, Chinese scholars have mainly discussed European integration. Chinese scholars have the following views: The EU itself is suffering from the consequences of inflation and rising energy and food prices triggered by the sanctions against Russia, and the crisis has also posed significant challenges to relations between member states within the EU. For the EU, an important way out of the crisis and the dilemma lies in promoting a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine as soon as possible (Men 2022, 87).

Following the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, changes in the demographic and social structure, and the succession of new crises and issues in the new century, historical memory has played a weaker role in constraining Germany's diplomatic decisions. The transformation of the new German government's foreign and security policy will have far-reaching consequences for intra-European security cooperation as well as for European-Russian and Euro-American security relations. Germany will likely continue to normalise its armed forces, intensify its confrontation with non-Western states, and adopt more diverse means of maintaining its comprehensive security. However, it should also be recognised that security policy adjustments are a long-term process and that the inputs will not have an immediate impact. Germany has a tradition of pragmatic and balanced policies and will not pursue military hegemony but assume more responsibility for security within the Western alliance (Li and Guan 2022, 12).

The role of the UK is particularly prominent. Far from being an "improvisation" or a deliberate hype, the UK's approach to the Russia-Ukraine war is the result of careful consideration of the European security landscape based on its own strengths and security interests. By actively intervening in the Russia-Ukraine war, the UK intends to reverse the four-way game between the US, Europe, China, and Russia. By forcing the US to suppress Europe, it maintains the unity of the transatlantic camp. On the other hand, by exaggerating the "China-Russia threat", it drags the world into a bipolar situation, thereby reversing the development trend of multipolarity. Using this set of strategies, the UK is trying to pre-empt the initiative and become a "leader" in shaping the new European security landscape (Kong 2022, 58).

In addition, the further spread of the Russia-Ukraine war is also accelerating changes in the EU's regional view and bringing about adjustments in the paths and ways of constructing a regional order. This is reflected in the intense collision of the EU's regional view between the logic of regional integration and the logic of interregional cooperation, as well as between economic interests and geopolitical instruments (He 2023, 102).

The Middle Ground: Gain Advantage from Both Sides?

In the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war, the concept of the "middle ground" has re-emerged in academic discussion. The case in point is the Arab region, where the global order has been in flux since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war. The Middle East has emerged as a new middle ground in the global political landscape, with a relaxed diplomatic space not seen since the Arab Spring. The Arab states, while varying in their stances, have generally followed the neutral principle of "not taking sides" and adopted a hedging policy. The relative decline of US and Russian influence in the Middle East, Arab public dissatisfaction with

Russia's military actions and the West's double standards, and the stalemate in the international crisis, both on and off the battlefield, have all contributed to the Arab states' refusal to actively support either side in the conflict. In the future, the tendency of the new "middle" countries, including the Arab world, to "succeed one way or another" in the competition between the great powers will be further accentuated, exerting greater influence in the region's affairs and becoming a powerful pillar in resisting a return to full-scale Cold War relations.

Iran is one of the core political forces in the Middle East. Compared to other Middle Eastern countries, post-Islamic Revolution Iran faces a more serious structural conflict with the US-dominated liberal international order. The Russia-Ukraine war has increased the spectre of violence beyond Iran's borders. Since the Russia-Ukraine war broke out, Iran's foreign engagement strategy has been to preserve regional parity in order to obtain appropriate gains for its national objectives while also reducing insecurity.

Turkey has actively sought diplomatic balance in the great power game, avoiding taking sides and continuing to grow in influence in regional and global politics. As a NATO member, EU candidate, and Black Sea littoral state, Turkey is leading balanced diplomacy between Russia and Ukraine, Russia and the US (NATO), and Russia and Europe for a number of reasons, including to safeguard its national interests, win public support, seek strategic autonomy, and demonstrate its pluralist identity. However, there are limits to Turkey's balanced diplomacy, which is threatened by the growing strength of the opposition party and the West's desire to see it come to power in the 2023 elections.

India's "neutrality" is the result of geopolitical trade-offs, an assessment of the pros and cons of India-Russia and India-US relations, strategic autonomy, and the specificity of India-Russia defence cooperation. It is also an inevitable choice for India to avoid strategic risks and pursue its own interests to the maximum extent possible. India's energy cooperation with Russia has also received attention from scholars, including the institutionalisation of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, the development of oil and gas resources, energy trade and investment cooperation, and the construction of nuclear power plants, all of which have achieved greater success. The future of India-Russia energy cooperation is bright, as evidenced by the country's economy growing at a rapid pace, the strengthening of India-Russia special bilateral relations, and Russia's energy policy being actively or involuntarily changed in light of the international environment. As a result, the scale, scope, and depth of this energy cooperation will gradually increase in the coming years. As the Russia-Ukraine war spreads further, Chinese scholars have also discussed the issue of predicting the pattern of foreign behaviour of swing states. Scholars have analysed India's position and proposed a new approach: strategic autonomy. The reason for India's overall neutral position is not only to gain various real economic benefits

from “choosing sides” in the Russia-Ukraine war but also to ensure that its strategic autonomy is not undermined. Therefore, it struggles to maintain a swing state identity in its favour in the international system (Zhang 2023, 81).

Israel decided to intervene because it judged that its national interests, such as national security, legitimacy, economic functioning, and social stability, were actually or potentially affected by the conflict. On the one hand, Israel’s mediation facilitated the transfer of information and communication between the two sides of the conflict. Its pragmatic diplomatic initiatives towards both sides in the mediation process have realised the national interests at stake to a considerable extent. On the other hand, Israel’s involvement has created uncertainty in the bilateral relations between Israel and Russia, Israel and Ukraine, and Israel and the United States, reflecting the fragmentation of Israel’s political and social situation.

Discussion

The Causes of the Outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine War

There has not been much discussion among scholars about the causes of the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war. This is probably because when the Russia-Ukraine war broke out in 2014, Chinese scholars had already clearly stated their positions, and most of them considered NATO enlargement as the root cause of the Ukrainian conflict (Song 2015, 187). This position is also reflected in the document “*China’s Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis*” issued by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which actually does not explicitly mention NATO but critically states that the Cold War mentality should be abandoned. The security of one state cannot be compromised at the expense of the security of other states, and regional security cannot be guaranteed by strengthening or even expanding military blocs.

The “No Upper Limit” of Russian-Chinese Relations?

There are doubts about the so-called “no upper limit” of Russian-Chinese relations. Most Chinese scholars think this term is over-interpreted and that China and Russia are strengthening cooperation by partnering, not aligning. It is a feature of China’s foreign policy that it has partnerships with almost all countries, including Russia, the European Union, and others. China’s relations with Russia or other countries are not treaty-based alliances but partnerships.

China’s Position on the Ukraine Crisis Has Been Consistent

Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward four principles, called for joint efforts in four areas, and shared three views on Ukraine, which are the basic guidelines

for China's handling of the issue. Recently, China released *China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis*, which offers 12 principles, including respecting the sovereignty of all countries, abandoning the Cold War mentality, ceasing hostilities, resuming peace talks, and stopping unilateral sanctions.

China should pay close attention to potential concerns about the development of global industrial chains in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war, grasp the new trends in the development of globalisation amidst major changes, and play the role of the "Belt and Road" as a hub between China and the rest of the world. Given the risk that the US and Europe may use SWIFT to impose financial sanctions on China, China should continue to treat SWIFT in a cooperative manner in the short term. In the long term, however, it must continue to promote the construction of the CIPS and speed up research into the applicability of cross-border use of the digital RMB to wean itself off its dependence on SWIFT.

The Russia-Ukraine war is a general outbreak of conflict between Russia and the West, indicating that the political, security, and diplomatic arrangements of the US and other Western countries to integrate Russia into the so-called liberal international order have basically failed. The Russia-Ukraine war is a full-scale game with far-reaching political, economic, and military implications. As a result, the international order and global governance will be profoundly affected. The Russia-Ukraine war is actually a great power rivalry, i.e., the US is using Ukraine to maintain its hegemonic position. It is waging a chaotic war against Russia, Europe, and even its "allies" to inflict severe damage on Russia, keeping Europe in check, kidnapping its "allies", and threatening China. The European countries will come under enormous economic, social, and existential pressure. European-American relations will become closer, and NATO will be revived. The EU's "strategic autonomy" will be seriously undermined but not extinguished. European integration will face new resistance while gaining the centripetal force created by the crisis. The Russia-Ukraine war is also the most significant crisis to hit the European security system in the post-Cold War era. It will significantly change mutual perceptions between Russia and Europe, leading to dramatic changes in Russian-European relations and triggering a historic restructuring of the European security landscape and order. Stimulated by the Russia-Ukraine war, the "drift away from Russia" of the former Soviet Union countries will increase, and the Eurasian region will become more diversified and open.

How To Play a Constructive Part in the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis

Some scholars believe that the Chinese government should adhere to the stance of "no leadership, no participation, no encouragement" and properly respond to the various causes of MNCs' "choosing sides" by taking a proactive

approach and putting forward alternative “B-solutions” in key areas in advance. Chinese MNCs should follow the principle of “active avoidance and minimal intervention” and adopt hedging strategies to reduce the risk and negative impact of being forced to “choose sides” (Liang 2022, 121).

Scholars provide the following suggestions about how to play a constructive role in the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis: China should maintain strategic ambiguity towards Russia, keep partners but not allies, deepen China-EU economic and trade cooperation, expand new space for cooperation in the energy and food sectors, and promote the internationalisation of the RMB and the development of the digital RMB. Wars should not be the way to solve problems, nor should sanctions be the first choice to end wars. China is willing to play a bigger role in maintaining world peace and security and promoting development.

China should carefully deal with the complicated situation and, at the same time, learn from the lessons of Russia being isolated and squeezed into multilateral institutions after the conflict. China should stick to its position as a developing country and provide as many public goods as possible for multilateral institutions in order to unite the majority of their members and jointly promote an open, inclusive, and mutually beneficial multilateral agenda. China should also unswervingly stick to the policy of opening up to hedge against attempts by a few Western countries to decouple from China.

China prioritises the following areas when it comes to security governance issues: First, since the Russian-Ukrainian war conflict began, the China-Railway Express lines have been affected by Western ideals and so-called “political correctness”. However, the overall pattern of the transport routes dominated by the Northern Corridor has not changed, while the trans-Caspian “Middle Corridor” has formally established itself as an alternative route in the Eurasian transport system and China-Europe transport. In view of the changes in the current international situation, it is better for China to further the development transformation of the China-Railway Express within the country and enforce the development model of “basing on local industries, market-oriented, and government-enterprise cooperation”, thus shifting from the extensive development of scale expansion to refined development with quality and efficiency. In the international market, we should adapt to the changing international situation and implement the strategy of “stabilising the Northern Corridor while exploring the Southern Corridor” in order to realise the high-quality and healthy development of the China-Railway Express.

Second, the geo-conflict represented by the Russia-Ukraine war has strong warning implications for China to ensure food security. China should be wary of the shortage of food and oil supplies brought about by comprehensive sanctions, re-evaluate the risks and difficulties of using international markets

to maintain food security, and guard against the spillover effects of seeds, energy, logistics, and other factors on the food market. To this end, China should firmly establish a food security initiative, assess the impact of a “hard decoupling” of China’s economic and trade relations with the West on China’s food market from all angles, and take early cautionary measures, such as actively choosing countries and regions with lower geopolitical risks and friendly relations with China to conduct trade, so as to reduce the impact of international markets on China’s food security at source. This will reduce the impact of international markets on China’s food security at source. Again, we should strengthen monitoring, warning, and assessment of international risks and take timely cautionary measures to reduce the transmission of natural disasters and other emergencies to the Chinese food market through the international market. We should proactively address the pressure of the international cycle on the domestic cycle and make good use of the international market to sustain China’s food security. China should actively adopt measures such as diversifying import sources and participating in the development of global food trade rules to optimise its food distribution and reserve system. As a major food importer, China needs to strengthen measures to ensure food distribution, especially by keeping overseas transportation channels open. It should focus on global food trade trends and changes in shipping conditions and assess the impact of distribution channels on China’s food security in a timely manner. The current food crisis has seriously affected social stability and sustainable development in the Middle East and Africa. As a practitioner of building a community with a shared future for mankind, China should give full play to its “One Belt, One Road” Initiative, participate in the governance of food security in the Middle East and Africa, and contribute to the development of human society.

Third, China should deepen international energy cooperation, promote the diversification of oil imports, strengthen oil exploration and development, enhance oil supply capacity, speed up the construction of the crude oil futures market, improve the development of the oil price discourse, vigorously develop renewable energy, and accelerate the low-carbon energy transformation. At the same time, China should take advantage of the trend to strengthen Sino-Russian natural gas cooperation, expand the diversification of natural gas foreign trade, improve the flexibility of natural gas trade, and expand strategic natural gas reserves. Since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, the cost of crude oil imports and the cost of downstream enterprises have risen, and inflationary pressure has increased. The Sino-Russian crude oil trade has advantages but also some downsides. We should further accelerate the diversification strategy of crude oil imports, strive to improve domestic oil security capability, accelerate the improvement of China’s energy structure, improve the discourse power of

China's crude oil pricing, continuously consolidate and deepen Sino-Russian crude oil trade, and better ensure China's crude oil security.

Fourth, the Russia-Ukraine war is a profound warning and wake-up call. It requires adhering to the basic premise of comprehensive cooperation, reform, and opening up and forming a new strategic perception of the Sino-US conflict, the European and American games, and so on. It warns us to make early preparations for cyber warfare and public opinion warfare to avoid strategic passivity. In this Russia-Ukraine conflict, NATO took measures at various quasi-war levels, such as weapons supply, intelligence support, cyber warfare cooperation, advanced technology support, extreme pressure, and sanctions. It is clear that cyber warfare and public opinion warfare, which used to be quite separate, will be increasingly integrated in the future and will be more closely linked to global economic warfare, military operations, and international politics. China, therefore, needs to become more familiar with US and Western strategic deployments and tactics and gradually build up an arsenal of concrete tools to address these challenges in the nick of time. The immediate priority is to organise a special research team for the Russia-Ukraine war, bringing together teams from the military, technical, academic, and industrial sectors in China who truly "know, understand, and appreciate the network", and to carry out systematic, in-depth, and comprehensive research at the relatively open and secret levels.

Over the past year, China has taken positive actions to curb the secondary and spillover effects of the crisis. In March 2022, China put forward a "six-point initiative" (Xinhua 2022a) to prevent a large-scale humanitarian crisis in Ukraine and has since provided emergency humanitarian aid to the Ukrainian side, as well as kindness supplies and other support to Moldova and other countries receiving Ukrainian refugees.

Conclusion

This study, based on 97 papers written by Chinese scholars in the last two years and collected from Chinese core journals, took into account authors who are all experts focusing their research on Russia, the EU, and the CIS. The results of the research suggest that Chinese scholars offer a multidimensional analysis of the development of the Russia-Ukraine war. Through content analysis and comparison, this paper finds that the stance of Chinese scholars on the Russia-Ukraine conflict is aligned with that of Chinese officials, especially on the document of *China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis*. China's position has been gradually formed over the past few years. The content is gradually clarified in the context of Chinese scholars' thoughts and proposals on the Russia-Ukraine war. Since 2022, the Chinese government has repeatedly

articulated its official position on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which has, to some extent, also influenced the views of Chinese scholars. The views of scholars and the stance of the government are mutually reinforcing.

The Russia-Ukraine war has raised China's concerns about nuclear security. China's position also explicitly states that a nuclear war cannot be fought. Considering the impact of nuclear weapons on global security, the international community should take these nuclear risks as an opportunity to prevent nuclear proliferation further, secure nuclear facilities and prevent nuclear conflicts, repair the international nuclear arms control and disarmament mechanism, and promote global nuclear governance. First, the international community should take full advantage of the opportunity provided by the Tenth Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to reaffirm the goals of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear arms control. Second, it should advance cooperation on nuclear security and further strengthen the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in the control of civilian nuclear facilities. Third, the international community should continue to urge the nuclear-weapon states to fulfil their responsibilities for nuclear arms control and disarmament. Finally, it should promote the restoration of strategic mutual trust among nuclear-armed states. On the one hand, in the face of the threat of nuclear war and nuclear blackmail, China, while adhering to its long-standing policy of nuclear self-restraint, will continue to play an active and constructive role in working with the international community to explore a new way for more effective arms control and disarmament.

The Russia-Ukraine war is the first war in the real sense of the cyber age, the first highly integrated war between local warfare in real space and global integrated public opinion warfare in cyberspace. It marks the transformation of the form and mode of human warfare and a fundamental shift in the paradigm of public opinion warfare. The paradigm shift in social information dissemination is the premise and foundation of the paradigm shift in public opinion warfare. Based on the global information networking of the Internet, the mobilisation of the global public, and the extensive use of artificial intelligence technology, public opinion warfare has gone beyond traditional propaganda and popular mobilisation to a more complex cognitive war and hybrid war.

In terms of conflict resolution, China's position calls for the removal of "unilateral sanctions", i.e., those imposed not in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions (Russia has the right to veto). China's call to "avoid fanning the flames" can also be interpreted as a proposal to stop arms supplies to Ukraine, which China has repeatedly advocated. This reflects the critical attitude of scholars towards the United States but seeks to achieve the goal of making Russia unable to change the security landscape of Eurasia by military means.

In terms of the impact of the crisis, China's position refers to issues such as food exports, supply chains, and sanctions, which should be understood as a reference by China to the problems faced by many developing countries. This reference to the UN Charter is of fundamental importance to many post-colonial societies. China intends to convey that it is the guardian of the current global order, presenting the practical aspects of the Global Security Initiative to the Global South. The Global Security Initiative should become the foundation of the new international architecture, which requires the support and participation of developing countries as a whole.

China's position on the Ukrainian crisis is neutral but not negative; more precisely, it is "positive neutrality". The Chinese position document not only reflects the demands of both parties—Russia and Ukraine—but also responds to the concerns of the international community regarding broader issues such as nuclear war, food security, and global strategic stability. It can be said that the document, based on full recognition of the complexity and difficulty of the issue, shows that China neither stands idly nor adds fuel to the fire, which is more opposed to the responsible attitude of plundering while taking advantage of the fire.

As the Russia-Ukraine war enters its third year, the Chinese side's views remain positive and neutral. At several international conferences on the Ukrainian crisis, Chinese representatives have encouraged the international order and the international community to play a role in stopping the fighting, stressing respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states and adherence to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In the past year, when large-scale conflicts have erupted again in the international community, China has attached greater importance to the idea of a common destiny for mankind and has opposed the international community's attempts to draw ideological boundaries and stir up confrontation. At the level of crisis resolution, China has placed greater emphasis on military issues in the second year. China reminds NATO to abandon its excessive obsession with force and stop calling for war. Military overexpansion is also the root cause of the frequent occurrence of large-scale conflicts in the international community.

The Chinese government's position is very clear. Complex problems require creative and systematic thinking to solve. The position document responds to the expectations of all parties and insists on persuading peace and promoting talks. As a result, it is the first attempt by the international community to explore a systematic political solution to the Russia-Ukraine war. On May 23, 2024, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Chief Special Adviser to the President of Brazil, Amorim, in Beijing. The two sides had an in-depth exchange of views and reached a six-point consensus on promoting a political solution to the Ukrainian crisis and

calling for the situation to cool down (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China 2024). Both sides believe that the only feasible way to resolve the Ukrainian crisis is through negotiation. The two sides welcome members of the international community to support and join the consensus and to play a constructive role in cooling down the situation and promoting peace and negotiation.

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UTICAJ I ODGOVOR NA SUKOB IZMEĐU RUSIJE I UKRAJINE: MULTIDIMENZIONALNA ANALIZA U KINI

Apstrakt: Važno je napomenuti da, kako rat između Rusije i Ukrajine ulazi u svoju treću godinu, Kina i dalje održava čvrst stav dosledan onom iz prethodne godine, nastojeći da promovise mirovne pregovore i prekide vatre. Ovaj rad koristi analizu sadržaja 97 akademskih radova o Ukrajinskoj krizi u kineskim osnovnim časopisima (CSSCI) od 22. februara 2022. do 22. februara 2024. godine. Rezultati istraživanja sugeriraju da kineski naučnici nude multidimenzionalnu analizu razvoja rata između Rusije i Ukrajine. Rad zaključuje kroz analizu sadržaja i poređenje da kineski naučnici dele isti stav o sukobu između Rusije i Ukrajine kao i kineski zvaničnici. Prvo, kineski naučnici pozivaju na promociju transformacije globalnog energetskeg sistema, ubrzavanje razvoja i korišćenja novih izvora energije i promociju razvoja inovativnih sposobnosti kako bi se suočili sa višestrukim krizama uzrokovanim ekonomskim sankcijama. Drugo, rat između Rusije i Ukrajine je pogoršao višestruke globalne bezbednosne krize i tradicionalne i netradicionalne bezbednosne probleme, ozbiljno uticao na globalni bezbednosni sistem i stvorio novu bezbednosnu dilemu. Treće, naučnici zagovaraju koncept „zajednice sa zajedničkom budućnošću za čovečanstvo” i izgradnju obrasca svetske bezbednosti nakon rata između Rusije i Ukrajine.

Gljučne reči: Ukrajinska kriza; EU; Rusija; Kina; SAD.