



## China's Possible Role to Play to End Russia-Ukraine Conflict

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Since the start of Russia-Ukraine conflict, severe casualties and damages to properties occurred in Ukraine; and world economy, especially European, suffered substantially from energy and food crises due to sanctions and counter-sanctions between the West and Russia; the United States too suffers from skyrocketing hyper-inflation. This conflict is the most brutal and destructive in Europe since the end of World War Two. It has caused a lot of damages to global economy. Therefore, people around the world are looking for an end to conflict through a peaceful negotiation. Some countries such as Turkey and Israel have attempted to mediate behind the scene, or even in the open, while French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz have called Chinese President Xi Jinping to mediate. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi declared on March 7, 2022 that when the conditions are mature, China would be willing to mediate Russia-Ukraine conflict. Wang Yi told reporters that on February 25, 2022, Chinese President Xi Jinping phoned Russian President Vladimir Putin, urging him to start peaceful negotiation with Ukraine. European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell told Spanish reporters on March 4 that for peaceful negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, the country to serve as a viable mediator "must be China, since China is a big power; neither US nor European Union is capable of serving as a mediator, but China is." Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba indicated that China possesses enough instruments to play a diplomatic role on the issue on March 5, 2022 ("*Wang Yi: When Conditions Are Mature, China Will Be Willing to Serve as Mediator – Emphasis on Solid Like Stone Russia-China Relations, Criticism of US for Instigating War, European Union: It Must Be China to Serve As Mediator,*" page A4, Focus - 3 section, Tuesday, March 8, 2022, The World Journal).

This article intends to discuss China's policies toward Russia and Ukraine, views on the root causes of the war, and to predict the possible role to play to end Russia-Ukraine conflict. It will also propose some possible solutions to end the conflict, which hopefully could be acceptable to both Russia and Ukraine, comply with the stipulations of the UN Charters and other international laws and conventions, and bring tangible benefits to the great powers, i.e., the United States, the other Five Eye League nations (United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and New Zealand), the European Union, China, and to the entire international community.

## China's policies toward Russia and Ukraine

How can we interpret China's real position on this Russia-Ukraine military conflict? Well, looking at China's relations with both countries in the recent decades, we can see that China's position is somehow "neutral," "realistic" and "fence-sitting." Both countries are China's "Strategic Partners" and shared complicated interests in economic and military collaborations to various degrees.

In terms of Ukraine-China relationship, before early 2021 when Ukraine Government started to block Chinese attempts at buying important defense enterprises or aerospace engine technology, relations between both countries were very close. Other areas of cooperation include provision of COVID-19 vaccines made in China to Ukraine (more than 2 million doses, or one third of what Ukraine received). All political parties, from left to right, pro-European or pro-Russian, maintain good relations with China and its ruling Communist Party. China also provided low-interest loans to Ukraine for the construction of airports, roads, railroads and seaports. Ukraine was the first European country to join China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), an ambitious plan for the construction of economic infrastructure, similar to President Biden's subsequent proposal of Build Back the World Better (B3W) and to European Union's Global Gate plan. In recent years, China surpassed Russia and Germany to become Ukraine's largest trading partner. Ukraine exports to China large quantities of iron ore, food (corn and sunflower oil, etc.). After the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the independence of its Union Republics, China acquired a lot of military and space exploration technology, most of them from Ukraine and a few from Russia. In 2011, China and Ukraine established a Strategic Partnership. China is Ukraine's largest trade partner and source of finance for the construction of economic infrastructure, and an important gateway to reach European market, while Ukraine is a major source of import of wheat and energy for China.

In Terms of Russia-China relationship, both countries are "shoulder-to-shoulder" and "back-to-back" "Strategic Partners," through a de facto para-alliance based on both countries' worries about the eastward expansion of NATO's and United States support for Taiwan's attempt to break-away from China, and encirclement of both Russia and China with NATO in the West and US-AUKUS alliance in the East. Russia today is still a military giant fully-armed with the largest nuclear arsenal in the world (around 6,300 total, with 1,458 deployed; in contrast to around 5,500 total, and 1,389 deployed for the United States); however, Russia has a very weak economy, depending on export of weapons and low-tech, low-price energy products and raw materials for economic survival, with a small GDP that equals the figure of Guangdong Province in China. China is the third largest nuclear power (estimated to be around 350 warheads, just over a hundred deployed). In 1945, the Los Alamos Lab scientists concluded that it would only take between 10 and 100 "Super" bombs to end the world ([pic.twitter.com/01I8ypmIP0](https://pic.twitter.com/01I8ypmIP0)). Therefore, China possesses enough nuclear warheads to end all life forms one time while Russia and the United States together possess enough nuclear warheads to kill all life forms on the Planet Earth approximately 100 times. Therefore, in any nuclear conflict among these three powerful nations, there shall be no winner at all. Thus, any rivalry or war among the three major powers must be restricted to conventional (and ideally through client states, not through direct confrontation); even so, the loser still needs to be treated by the winner nicely in order to avoid any suicidal nuclear attempt. China is also the second largest economy in the world; and since Russia is weak in attracting foreign investment, China is a good partner for Russia to supplement its needs for civilian consumption. Thus, both Russia and China depend on each other for mutual benefits in

economic prosperity and military security. Nuclear weapons are deterrence only; and as mentioned before, there would be no winner in any nuclear confrontation among Russia, USA and China. The Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races, issued by the Five Permanent UN Security Council Members on January 3, 2022, is a correct move. Hopefully, both Russia and the United States could restrain the current conflict in Ukraine to a limited-scope conventional warfare.

Because of the above complicated relations between Russia and China, it is very unlikely that China will join US-led campaign to sanction Russia. However, China could use its economic leverage to try to mediate and to persuade both sides in the conflict to make mutually agreeable compromises and concessions to end the war. However, any such mediation could not succeed unless the United States, European Union and China could cut some deals beneficial to all parties, and acceptable to both Russia and Ukraine, based on the principles of mutual compromises and concessions.

These compromises and concessions could be based on (1) full implementation of the stipulations of the Minsk Agreement II already signed by Russia and Ukraine, on February 12, 2015, (2) negotiations on the terms of Russia's six demands on the basis of the United Nations Charter, international laws, and previous examples of settlements of international disputes involving Russia and its neighbors, and (3) geo-political realities.

### **China's views on the root causes of the war**

The way the Chinese Government and mainstream intellectual circles understand and interpreted the root causes of the current Russia-Ukraine military confrontation, has great impact on Chinese foreign policies, regarding the current crises and its global consequences. Paradoxically, Chinese political elites' understanding and interpretation of these root causes are very similar to American scholar and long-time advocate of the so-called "Doctrine of China Threat," Professor John Mearsheimer, a Wendell Harrison Distinguished Service Professor in the Political Science Department at the University of Chicago since 1982.

Mearsheimer has been one of the most famous critics of American foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. As a proponent of realistic great-power politics, Mearsheimer has argued that the eastward expansion of NATO and strengthening of military relations with Ukraine has increased the likelihood of war between nuclear-armed powers and laid the groundwork for Putin's aggressive position toward Ukraine. In 2014, after Russia annexed Crimea, Mearsheimer wrote that "the United States and its European allies share most of the responsibility for this crisis." With regards to the current invasion of Ukraine, Mearsheimer maintains his position that the US is at fault for provoking Putin. "The Russians made it unequivocally clear at the time that they viewed this as an existential threat, and they drew a line in the sand. Nevertheless, what has happened with the passage of time is that we have moved forward to include Ukraine in the West to make Ukraine a Western bulwark on Russia's border. Of course, this includes more than just NATO expansion. NATO expansion is the heart of the strategy, but it includes E.U. expansion as well, and it includes turning Ukraine into a pro-American liberal democracy, and, from a Russian perspective, this is an existential threat. [...] If Ukraine becomes a pro-American liberal democracy, and a member of NATO, and a member of the E.U., the Russians will consider that categorically unacceptable. If there were no NATO expansion and no E.U. expansion, and Ukraine just became a liberal democracy and was friendly with the United States and the West more generally, it could probably get away with that. You want to understand that there is a three-prong strategy at play here: E.U.

expansion, NATO expansion, and turning Ukraine into a pro-American liberal democracy. [...] It's not imperialism; this is great-power politics. When you're a country like Ukraine and you live next door to a great power like Russia, you have to pay careful attention to what the Russians think, because if you take a stick and you poke them in the eye, they're going to retaliate. States in the Western hemisphere understand this full well with regard to the United States. [...] There's no country in the Western hemisphere that we will allow to invite a distant, great power to bring military forces into that country. [...] We do have that say, and, in fact, we overthrew democratically elected leaders in the Western hemisphere during the Cold War because we were unhappy with their policies. This is the way great powers behave."

With regards to international politics in the post-Cold War era, Mearsheimer advocates that the United States should consider China as a "threatening" challenge and a "peer competitor," stating that "We should be pivoting out of Europe to deal with China in a laser-like fashion, number one. And, number two, we should be working overtime to create friendly relations with the Russians. [...] what we have done with our foolish policies in Eastern Europe is driving the Russians into the arms of the Chinese." Although Mearsheimer's idea about a model of US-Russia versus China Balance of Power Politics have offended China's leadership and mainstream scholars who regard him as an advocate of the "Doctrine of China Threat," paradoxically, his idea about a new Ukraine that is liberal and democratic, but not a member of either NATO or EU, and at the same time friendly to both Russia and the United States, but not "too close" to the later, is probably the closest American diplomatic opinion in line with China's "neutrality" or "fence-sitting" policy.

Based on the above understanding and interpretation of the root causes of the current crises in Ukraine, paradoxically, both American scholar Mearsheimer and Chinese Government are less critical of Putin's behavior than of Zelensky's, or to be more straightforward, both are obviously more sympathetic to Russia than to Ukraine, although in terms of global system in general, the positions of both are in direct confrontation.

### **Russia's geo-political dilemma and its habitual and pathetic modus operandi of territorial expansion**

Historically, Russia (both Czarist and Soviet) is an aggressive territorial expansionist empire that caused many European countries such as Finland, Sweden and Poland to lose big chunks of territory. Czarist and Soviet Russia also caused China to lose one quarter of her historical territory (South-East Siberia or Outer Manchuria, Outer Mongolia including Tuva or Tanguwulianghai, and Outer Xinjiang); therefore, there is no way China could support Russia's territorial expansions today. On the other hand, as a close neighbor of the Hairy North Polar Bear who possess the largest quantity of nuclear warheads (more than 6,000) that is 20 times the amount China possesses (currently estimated to be about 350), China cannot afford to offend Russia for no solid reasons. China cannot afford to condemn Russia openly as an invader for fear of inviting wrath and retaliation of the vengeful Hairy North Polar Bear, but has to recognize Russia's demand for Ukraine's "neutrality," "de-Nazification," and "No Membership in NATO" as somehow "reasonable" geo-political concerns for Russia's national security. However, Chinese government officers did openly make a declaration that the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries including Ukraine, must be respected; this is an indirect but clear criticism of Putin's strong-handed behavior towards Ukraine.



Figure 1. Map of the Mongolian Empire (Source: Creative Commons).



Figure 2. Map of the Russian Empire (Source: Creative Commons).



Figure 3. Putin The Modern Day Attila the Hun and Genghis Khan, photo-illustration by Edward Locke

The vast territory of today's Russia is the outcome of over 400 years of several waves of bloody expansions under both Czarist and Soviet Empires. The majority of Russians today live in the western part of Russia, west of the Ural Mountain Ranges; the eastern part or Siberia is sparsely populated by a lot of ethnic and racial minorities. The entire territory of Russia (and even the much larger one of the former Soviet Union) is basically composed of large frozen flat land mass

with few natural buffers (mountains, rivers, lakes and others) that could be used for territorial defense. Therefore, in the last 400 years, Russians have always been busy trying to acquire new territories to be used as buffer zones; and once the new territories become prosperous heartland of Russian Civilization, Russian rulers became paranoid again and try to expand into new territories to be used as newer buffer zones. This recurring thirst for new buffer zones has become a vicious cycle of Russian territorial expansion and empire-building, injecting a mentality of aggressiveness in the mindset of not only political elites but also ordinary folks in Russia. In Europe, there is a popular saying that “if you remove the skin of a Russian, you see a Mongolian.” This saying vividly describes the serious impact of Genghis Khan’s Mongolian imperial territorial expansion on Russian rulers’ paradigm for national defense strategy. Originally a collection of culturally and technologically backward Eastern Slavic tribes sharing similar racial and ethnic heritage with today’s people in Ukraine and Belarus, the ancestors of today’s Russians collaborated with Genghis Khan’s Mongolian armies to acquire the power to rule over other Eastern Slavic tribes; and after more than 200 years of subservience to Mongolian overlords, the Russian aristocrats took over the power and mandate of the Mongols to continue the cause of territorial expansion. A lot of Russian elites have Mongolian blood lineage due to intermarriage. The Russian language contains a lot of Mongolian vocabulary. In Europe, a lot of people consider Russian not as fellow Europeans, but as “white Tartars” (or “white Mongols”). As Figures 1 and 2 show, the Russian Empire is an expansion of the Mongolian Empire.

Russia’s current leadership is very afraid that once Ukraine joins the NATO, the West could invade Russia and take over Moscow within a few hours, and meanwhile, “Color Revolutions” in the Asian part of Russia by minority ethnic groups could cause the complete disintegration of the Russian Federation.

In fact, after World War Two, all European colonial empires, such as British, French, Dutch and Portuguese, all lost their former colonial territories. The United States has granted the Philippines and Cuba independence too. The Soviet Union was the only big power that actually gained new territories from its Eastern European neighbors and from China (Outer Mongolia); the former Soviet Union, not happy enough with its gains at the Yalta Conference, tried to advance into Afghanistan, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Angola, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and other parts of the world, encroaching upon the economic, political, and military interests of the United States and allies, and finally collapsed because of its costly territorial expansion. Russia’s political elites today are very paranoid about further disintegration of its territory after the disintegration of the former Soviet Union.

Thus, it is predictable that post-Putin Russian rulers shall continue arms race with the West, unless, by well-coordinated efforts of all nations, we could strengthen our defensive capabilities to prevent Putin and company from further degenerating into neo-Nazism and territorial imperialism, while providing Russian people genuine guarantee for their national security and opportunities for ecologically sustainable and socially responsible economic growth as well as healthy spiritual and cultural rejuvenations, within the frameworks of Globalization and free exchange of ideas and commodities.

### **Possible outcomes of Russia-Ukraine conflict and its impact on global system**

One of the most obvious reasons Chinese political and intellectual elites are not interested in opposing Russia's "Special Military Operation" in Ukraine is the geo-political reality and regional security arrangement in Euro-Asian Continent and in the Pacific Ocean. Currently, the military presence of US and allies in their standoff with China in South China Sea and around Taiwan Strait has pushed a lot of Chinese elites into the embrace of the North Polar Bear. On March 17, 2022, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Viktorovich Lavrov has issued a threatening warning to China that Russia is the last fortress before the West starts to threaten China, claiming that if Russia falls, China's future would be miserable facing a more aggressive West. Russian strategic planners are very sensitive to high-level talks between American and Chinese officers. They work hard to promote a belief among Chinese intellectuals that if Russia was defeated in the current Russia-Ukraine conflict, then NATO could take over Central Asia, and complete an encirclement around China with hostile India, Taiwan and Japan.

After 30 years of rapid economic development, China's economic strength is now getting close to the United States' and new generations of Chinese strategic thinkers are openly discussing how Chinese economy could match American economy in the near future. Some of them believe that there exist Three Models of Economic Development based on the global division of labor and distribution of benefits: (1) "providers of resources" or countries that export raw materials and import manufactured products and technologies, such as Saudi Arabia and Russia (oil, natural gas, and raw materials); (2) "manufacturers of commodities" or countries that make consumer products for export and import raw materials, energy products and technologies, such as China and South Korea; (3) "consumers and rule-makers" or countries that import large quantity of consumer products for domestic consumption, export high technology, control strategic products such as food and energy, and make rules for international trade, such as the United States. In this pyramidal order of Three Models of Economic Development, the economic benefits of Globalization go up from Model 1 to Model 3, while political and cultural value system go down from Model 3 to Model 1. The advocates of this theory claim that the United States relies on the above pyramidal order to establish a world economic order under American control; the US dollars are anchored on the credibility of the US Government, on the amount of tax paid by Americans, and more than that, on petroleum production from Middle East. Regarding China's current role in the above pyramidal order, the above theorists believe that China is now ready to maintain the status as a "manufacturers of commodities" while seeking opportunities to become "consumers and rule-makers," through changes in the process of Globalization. They further claim that under the current model of Globalization dominated by the United States, there are three possibilities for China to pursue:

1. Accepting the status quo: Continue to play the role of a provider of cheap labor, be obedient to all rules established by the United States, without any right to speak; Chinese people obviously could not agree to this orientation. This is a conservative argument for maintaining the status quo.
2. Working within the system but demanding some reforms: China continues to work within the current system of Globalization as established by the United States, but tries to coordinate the endeavors of all developing countries to demand some revisions of the current global system, so as to raise the status of China and increase China's power to speak, to setting new rules, and to increase the economic interests of the developing countries, but still within the current US-dominated global system; the theorists claim

that the United States, in order to defend its “hegemony,” will not agree to any reforms. This is a moderately liberal and progressive argument for gradual change.

3. **Building a separate and parallel system:** The theorists, based on a seemingly “leftist,” or quasi-Marxist, and Sino-centric perspective, claim that the United States will not agree to any reforms in the current global system of economics, then advocate that China should cooperate with Russia and the developing countries to promote and to develop China’s own version and system of Globalization, to lead in the establishment of new rules of game and new mechanism of distribution of economic benefits; the theorists claim that this new system could operate in parallel with or be integrated with the current United States dominated system; the theorists claim that China currently possesses strong industrial production capability and technology, to try to establish its own system, with Renminbi as one of the settlement currencies together with US dollars, Euros and others for international trades. The theorists claim that this new system is an egalitarian one that is good for both developing and developed worlds. This is a radical argument for challenging the existing system.

The economic policies Putin’s government has adopted to resist US and EU sanctions, in particular, the demand that all “Unfriendly States and Regions” pay for Russia’s energy and other products with Russian Rubles, clearly demonstrate Russia’s desire to adopt the third option of “building a separate and parallel system” of Globalization, as an alternative to the current US-dominated system. So far, the anti-Russian sanctions did not produce tangible outcomes to stop Putin’s “Special Military Operation” as the current advances of Russian troupes in Eastern Ukraine have indicated. The military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine has not produced tangible outcomes either; in fact, a lot of weapons shipped to Ukraine have been destroyed by Russia’s precision missiles; and worse than this, some high-tech weapons have been captured by Russian troupes or sold to Russian troupes by corrupted Ukrainian officers or secret societies. The continuation of military conflict in Ukraine has caused severe damages to the economic health of US and EU nations, and thus, it clearly is not a sustainable option. If this conflict continues, it might cause further damages and severely shaken the dominant position of the United States in global affairs. Therefore, it is time for Americans to seek a political and diplomatic solution instead.

The current crises in Ukraine, if continued beyond 2022, will severely hamper President Biden endeavors to promote and implement the \$600 billion Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/06/26/memorandum-on-the-partnership-for-global-infrastructure-and-investment/#:~:text=The%20PGII%20will%20mobilize%20public,jobs%20at%20home%20and%20abroad>). This program is ambitious; however, according to Professor Shaocheng Tang (汤绍成), at the Center of International Research, the University of Governance (政治大学国际研究中心), in Taipei, Taiwan, the amount is probably less than 10% of what China has or plans to spend on the Belt and Road Initiative with more than 1,000 projects, some of them have been already implemented for many years ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EhHdskfiB\\_w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EhHdskfiB_w)).

The United States is currently competing with China for the position of global leadership. This competition could not be won through a new Cold War, or a military confrontation in South China Sea or in the Taiwan Strait. In fact, a healthy relationship between the two powerful nations can only be one based on principled cooperation and benign competition based on internationally accepted rules, not on the basis of “cut-throat” or malicious rivalry or warfare



(conventional or nuclear). To make it simple, to maintain the status of the United States as the Number One leading nation in this century, the United States should work harder on the planning and implementation of the PGII, so as to win the hearts and minds of the peoples in the developing nations and to open up opportunities for American corporate investment in this vital area for economic opportunities. Therefore, we have a practical need to end the current conflict in Ukraine as soon as possible.

### **China's possible role to play to end Russia-Ukraine conflict**

China's current policies with regards to Russia's "Special Military Operation" in Ukraine include the following four items:

#### **No. 1. Ukraine's and Russia's legitimate rights**

Based on official statements and news reports, Chinese Government appears to support Ukraine's national independence and territorial integrity "morally," while respecting Russia's demands for a system of security guarantees including Ukraine's status as a "neutral" Finland-style neighbor without deployment of offensive weapons, and without NATO membership.

China, unlike a dozen pro-Russian countries, has neither recognized Russia's annexation of Crimea or supported the "independence" of Donetsk and Luhansk; nevertheless, Chinese mass media do support the right of ethnic Russians in Donbas and Crimea to high degree of local autonomy (something similar to Hong Kong's current status as an autonomous city ruled by local or "native" business and political elites instead of Beijing-appointed bureaucrats). Recently, China's official representative in Hong Kong has indicated that the capitalist political-economic system and way of life could continue in Hong Kong for another 50 years beyond June 30, 2047, except that, all anti-Communist or neo-Nazi political activities aimed at the overthrow of the current Chinese Government in Mainland China would be suppressed by the implementation of the National Security Law on Hong Kong promulgated in 2020. China's current policies in Hong Kong clearly indicate that both Chinese Government's right to national security and Hong Kong residents' rights to local autonomy could coexist in Hong Kong. By the same token, Russia's reasonable demand for a militarily "neutral" Ukraine, the rights of ethnic-Russian in Ukraine to local autonomy, and Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity, could co-exist too, under some multilaterally beneficial agreements.

For all practical purposes, a multilaterally acceptable solution could integrate all of these goodies, i.e., de facto high degree of local self-government in Eastern Ukraine (based on Minsk II Agreement), coupled with Ukraine's de jure sovereignty and territorial integrity, Ukraine's neutrality and non-membership in NATO (Ukraine's membership in EU is acceptable by Russia), as a way to satisfy Russia's geographical national security concerns.

The above framework is currently challenged by (1) Russia's military victory in Eastern Ukraine, and (2) Russian leaders' recent declaration that the current Russian Government will not honor the transfer of sovereignty of Donbas and Crimea from Russia to Ukraine by the previous Communist Party-dominated Soviet Government; in other words, Russia is now demanding that the Russian-Ukrainian border during the pre-Communist Czarist period be restored. This demand, coupled with Russia's military advances, has made the issues of territorial sovereignty and integrity more complicated, both geo-politically and diplomatically. Realistically speaking, as recent news about the changing positions of France and Germany suggests, Zelensky's Ukraine Government most likely would have no choice other than returning to Russia its Donbas and Crimea territories as a condition for an eventual peace settlement, unless some kind of

international alliance among other major powers (US and allied, China and the rest of the UN member states) could persuade Putin to change mind.



Map 1. Historical expansion of Ukrainian territory (image source: Wikipedia Commons).

From the Map 1, it is clear that only the light green and yellow portions constitute Ukraine's traditional territory when Ukraine was a part of the Czarist Empire. The olive portion was a part of Poland when it was ruled by the Czarist Empire; but it was seized by the Communist Red Army of the Soviet Union in 1939 and 1945 and given to Ukraine. In the Olive, light green and yellow portions on the map, the majority of residents are currently Ukrainians. Therefore, these three portions constitute, based on the generally accepted understanding of the principle of "self-determination of the people," on anthropological and ethno-racial legacies and realities, the absolutely legitimate territory of the Ukrainian Nation and State. Ukraine's territorial claim on these three areas could further be substantiated by the historical experience of the people living in the areas. During the Soviet period, these areas' economy was based on agriculture, and they suffered heavily from (1) Soviet annexation of the Ukraine People's Republic led by the Ukraine Social-Democratic Labor Party under Symon Petliura, and supported by a lot of working-class people at the grass-roots, in 1921, during the chaotic and bloody Civil Wars following the Bolshevik Revolution (during the Civil Wars, the Bolsheviks-dominated Red Army defeated and suppressed all other political groups, including Marxist-oriented Socialist Revolutionary Party and Mensheviks faction of the Social-Democratic Party, capitalist-oriented Constitutional Democratic Party, and supporters of the autocratic Czarist regime; the Bolsheviks won the Civil War by promising peace and Russia's withdrawal from World War One); (2) the Great Famine of the 1920s due to failed policy of collectivization and confiscation of food for export; (3) Stalinist political purges against political dissidents especially Ukraine nationalists; and (4) Soviet Government's severe suppression of Nazi collaborators (or supporters of Stepan Bandera) with excessive use of death penalty. Due to these tragic mistakes of the former Soviet Union, Ukrainian people in these areas are strongly anti-Russian and anti-Soviet, pro-Nazi and even Neo-Nazi, and would resist Putin's Russian troupes for a long period of time; any attempt of annexing these areas or rule them through a pro-Russian puppet regime would invite

Afghanistan-style, or at least, Northern Ireland style, disaster for Russia, in a “Protracted People’s War.”

Ukraine is a sharply divided country where Western and Eastern parts possess very different cultural patterns, lifestyles, self-identities, and economic structures. In terms of language, western and central portions of Ukraine is mostly Ukrainian speaking while eastern and southern portions of Ukraine are mostly Russian speaking. In terms of religion and culture, Roman Catholicism with Orthodox Rites and European cultural influence from Poland and Germany are predominant in western and central Ukraine, while Russian Orthodox Church and cultural influence are predominant in eastern and southern Ukraine. In terms of national identity, Ukrainian nationalism is strong in western and central Ukraine, while pro-Russian feeling is predominant in eastern and southern Ukraine largely due to several waves of Russification campaigns and settlements of Russians by both Czarist and Soviet Governments, especially large-scale industrial development during Soviet rule. The above differences are more “spiritual” than “tangible;” they are not sufficient to cause two ethnic groups, Ukrainians and Russians, who are descendants of the same Eastern Slavic ancestors from Kyiv Rus, to fight each other.

More serious difference between the two regions is in their economic structures, which are related to economic benefits people in each region perceive. As the “basket of bread for Europe,” the basic economic assets in western and central Ukraine are agricultural products; if Ukraine joins the European Union, then it could enjoy monetary assistance for its agricultural sector. For eastern and southern Ukraine, the basic economic sector is industrial, and Russian standards are dominant; therefore, it could be seamlessly connected with other former Soviet Republics to survive; if Ukraine joins the European Union, and starts to use European standards, then a lot of industrial enterprises would go under. Understanding this economic factor is very important for understanding why ethnic Russians in Donbas rebelled against Ukraine’s nationalist government in Kyiv and declared the so-called “People’s Republic of Donetsk” and “People’s Republic of Luhansk.”

If we hold a United Nations supervised referendum, then the overwhelming majority of residents in these three portions (light green, yellow and olive) would most likely vote to support Ukraine’s sovereignty over the territory. On the other hand, the light pink and light violet portions have been given by the former Soviet Union for political and ideological reasons, without first holding a referendum to get the approval of Russian residents who, up to this point, constitute the majority of population, culturally and racially identify with Russia, NOT Ukraine. Therefore, if we hold a United Nations supervised referendum, then the overwhelming majority of residents in these two portions would most likely vote to support Russia’s sovereignty over the territory.

Politically, during the Soviet period, the economy in these areas was based on heavy industrial development which, due to Soviet policy of exploiting farmers to accumulate primitive capital and to subsidy industry; therefore, to certain degree, Soviet policies applied in these areas did bring financial benefits to the urban working-class in the areas; therefore, the majority of residents living in these areas, although accepting American and European style liberal democracy, are nevertheless not as staunchly anti-Soviet or anti-Communist as the Ukraine nationalists in western and central portions of the country; instead, a lot of them are up to this point, nostalgic of Soviet rule and of the legacy of the Czarist Empire. This general pro-Russian tendency is further strengthened by the Russian Orthodox faith which constitutes the spiritual

fortress of ethnic-Russians living in Donbas and Crimea. From Maps 3 through 6, it is obvious that in eastern and southern areas of Ukraine, the majority of residents are pro-Russian and opposed to Zelensky's anti-Russian and pro-West Ukraine nationalist government. In fact, the current military conflict in Ukraine includes two parts: (1) Russian invasion of Ukraine; and (2) Ukrainian Civil War between Zelensky's government that controls approximately two thirds of territory, and ethnic-Russian separatists who controls approximately one third of Ukraine's territory. Clearly, Zelensky's government's popular support is relatively weak in eastern and southern portions of Ukraine.

Due to the above factors, in any protracted war between Russia and Ukraine, there is ABSOLUTELY NO WAY Ukraine could recover the light pink and light violet portions in Map 1, simply because Russia could arm the local population to refuse Ukraine's territorial claim. On the other hand, Russia would have no choice but to respect Ukraine's sovereignty over its traditional territory as a legacy of the Czarist rule.

Recent pronouncement of Russian leaders not to honor the Communist legacy of the Soviet Union's transfer of sovereignty of eastern and southern parts of the above map from Russia to Ukraine, but to recover Russia's traditional territory it lost during the totalitarian rule of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, has basically removed any possibility for Ukraine to reverse the outcomes of Russian occupation through political and diplomatic means. This outcome is very tragic. However, based on the case of Yugoslavia's civil war, in which US and NATO both supported Kosovo's breakaway from Serbia using the same mechanism of popular referendum, Russia is currently granting citizenship to residents in Donbas areas, and preparing for referendums for the territory to re-join Russia, Neither the United States nor China could have any persuasive arguments to deny Putin's demand to reclaim Donbas for Russia.



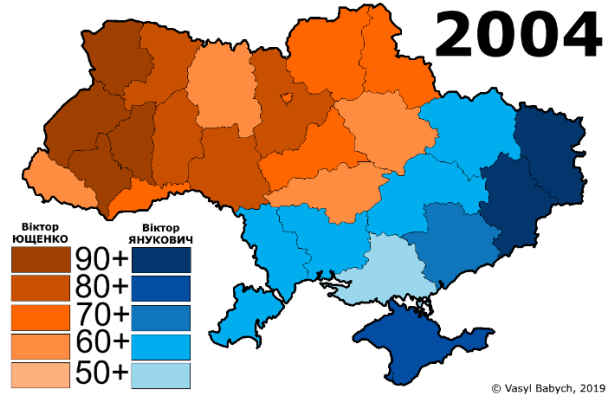
Map 2. Historical changes of Ukrainian territory (image source: Wikipedia Commons edited by Edward Locke)

From the Map 2, the blue portion is the Ukraine administrative area under the Czarist Empire (or Ukraine's historical territory); the red portion marked "Added in 1939, 1945" was seized from Poland by the Soviet Union and given to Ukraine; the red portion marked "Added in 1922 and in 1954" have been taken away from Russia and given to Ukraine by the Soviet Union's central

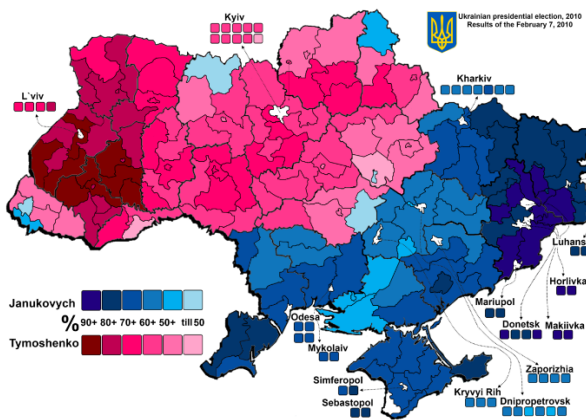
government in Moscow, without the consent of Russian-dominated local residents or through a legally acceptable referendum. The current Russian Government under President Vladimir Putin has recently indicated its refusal to recognize Ukraine’s sovereignty over the red portions of territory (Added in 1922 and 1954), and its desire to recovered them for Russia.



Map 3. Ethnic Russian rebellion against Kyiv authorities (image source: Wikipedia Commons)



Map 4. Outcomes of 2004 Presidential Election in Ukraine; blue areas represented support for pro-Russian candidate Victor Yanukovich (image source: Wikipedia Commons)



Map 5. Outcomes of 2010 Presidential Election in Ukraine; blue areas represented support for pro-Russian candidate Victor Yanukovich (image source: Wikipedia Commons)



Map 6. Area of Ukraine supporting pro-Russian President Victor Yanukovich (image source: Wikipedia Commons, edited by Edward Locke)

From the Map 6, the red area is inhabited mostly by ethnic Russians who identify more with Russia than with Ukraine, and supported pro-Russian President Victor Yanukovich, and would choose to leave Ukraine and join Russia in any referendum. The white area, on the contrary, is controlled mostly by Ukraine nationalists who want to defend Ukraine’s independence from Russia and join the EU. Thus, Ukraine is a sharply divided society.

To be realistic, in order to protect the interests of the United States and allies, China and the rest of the world, and to prevent further damages of the conflict on the global economy, we should encourage Zelensky’s government to concentrate its defense efforts on Ukraine’s pre-Communist territory and be prepared to accept its Czarist Era border as its permanent defense line for territorial integrity. We should continue to support Ukraine’s sovereignty over its traditional, Czarist era territory and continue to oppose any attempt of Putin’s Russian troupes to advance beyond the Czarist ear Ukraine-Russian border.

## No. 2. Peace through negotiations

Chinese Government has been urging and encouraging both sides to hold direct talk to negotiate a peaceful settlement, with a promise to join the process as a mediator in an unspecified “due time.” It is reported that the second day after Putin ordered Russia troupes to invade Ukraine, President Xi made a phone call to President Putin asking him to solve the problem through direct negotiation. In response to calls made by France, Germany and the United States to intervene as a mediator; other countries such as Israel and Turkey have volunteered to mediate.

China probably could persuade Russia to stop planning about further territorial expansion beyond Ukraine, with economic incentives of further cooperation to rescue Russia’s stagnant economy; but China is most likely unable to get Putin unconditionally withdraw from Ukraine. Although overall, China’s economic power is far better than Russia’s, Russia’s military might is overwhelmingly far superior to China’s. Thus, the role China could play dealing with an enraged North Polar Bear threatening to use nuclear warheads if cornered to a dead end is very limited or even non-existing, especially in terms of Putin’s demand that Ukraine becomes a neutral state or buffer zone between Russia and NATO. This policy of encouraging a peaceful settlement through negotiation is in line with China’s overall strategic plan of Euro-Asian economic integration friendly to China’s economic expansion through the Belt and Road Initiative. Again, the conflict in Ukraine is a severe blow to China’s plan for the Belt and Road Initiative linking both Russia and Ukraine and leading to the heartland of Europe; thus, there is plenty of incentives for China to promote a quick end to the military conflict with a solution acceptable to both Ukraine and Russia.

Chinese Government’s official policy appears to be for (1) Ukraine’s acceptance of “neutrality” to satisfy Russia’s national security concern and guarantee of the right of ethnic-Russian in eastern and southern Ukraine to local self-government; and (2) Russia’s respect for Ukraine’s territorial integrity. The implementation of this policy, however, has been made complicated due to various historical factors and current geo-political and military realities.

Due to Russia’s current military advances on the battlefield, its relatively successful economic performance despite of the maximal US and NATO sanctions, its counter-sanctions that have caused tremendous damages to US and EU economies, continuation of military confrontation is obviously not in the best interests of the United States and European allies. Therefore, the United States and allies should look for a way to end the conflict as soon as possible, so as to end the collateral damages of the conflict, such as inflation, economic stagnation and others. Under these circumstances, some European political elites are calling for Zelensky to give up Crimea and Donbas areas in exchange for peace with Russia.

In addition, due to Russian military advances in the battlefields, and the resolute will of the nationalistic Russian people to recover their lost historical territory, by abolishing the current Russia-Ukraine border imposed by the now defunct Communist Party of the Soviet Union and by replacing it with the traditional border established by the Czarist Imperial Government before the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, there is ABSOLUTELY NO WAY for “outside powers” to force Putin’s Russia to give up its plan to recover Czarist period territory in Crimea or Donbas, without making further concessions or inviting stronger retaliation from the North Polar Bear. Any further escalation of the conflict might cause unprecedented damages to the United States and allies, and also, tangible damage to China’s Belt and Road Initiative.

In fact, the “outside powers” are fairly fragmented; we have serious internal differences among Western Industrialized Democracies; in addition, we have standoffs between the United States and China over Taiwan and South China Sea islands; Russia is actively exploiting these differences to guarantee its success in the Ukraine crises. Even in the most unlikely scenario that the United States, European Union and China could overcome their differences to form a solid international coalition, there is still no way we could force Russia to give up its plan to “recover” the pro-Russian areas of Ukraine, without risking a nuclear war that will mean the end of all life forms on the Planet Earth.

The peoples of the United States and allied nations, and of China and the rest of the world must understand that (1) there is ABSOLUTELY no winner in any nuclear war among the powerful nations; (2) in any large conventional confrontations between the United States and allied on one side and Russia on the other side, there is no guarantee that the American-led side could win the war, because, although the United States possesses the most powerful military forces in the world, the military might of its allies are no more than “paper tigers;” (3) theoretically, if the United States and its allies overcome the differences among themselves and with China to form a global alliance to fight Russia with conventional weapons, then theoretically, the global alliance could defeat Russia; however, the desperate Russians would use nuclear weapons to confront the global anti-Russian alliance and this will mean the end of all life forms on the Planet earth; and (4) continuation of conflict in Ukraine could escalate global economic crises that could damage the national interests of all countries, including the United States and European allies.

For the above reasons, political elites in France and Germany and even from the top leadership of NATO are currently talking about Ukraine giving up portions of territory in exchange for peace with Russia, reflecting Europe’s desperate need for a quick end to the war and to the West’s sanctions and Russia’s retaliations or counter-sanctions that is hurting European economies. This kind of appeasement is ethically questionable. However, due to complicated historical causes and current military and political reality, we could rationally conclude that, regarding Ukraine’s national sovereignty and territorial integrity, Ukraine most likely would have no choice but to agree to give up the portions of territory it acquired during the Communist Soviet period and return it to Russia, or agree to a United Nations-supervised popular referendum, in which the most likely outcome would simply legitimize Russia’s desire to recover its lost territory, due to the ethnic composition of the eastern and southern portions of Ukraine. For the future post-war, demilitarized and neutralized Ukraine serving as a buffer zone between Russia and NATO member states, the territory of Ukraine most likely would be restricted to whatever it had during the pre-Communist Czarist time, i.e., the western and central portions of its Soviet period map.

This outcome would be very tragic for Ukraine nationalists; however, realistically speaking, it would be a potentially pragmatic outcome that can prevent further damages of the war in Ukraine.

However, there could be a better outcome that could be ethically correct and practically beneficial to all party concerned. This is to seek a political and diplomatic solution based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and on the established precedents of the practice of international laws and conventions. If the United States, European allies, and China could iron out their differences to reach a consensus on a political solution to the current crises in Ukraine, and work out a solution that could satisfy the legitimate needs of both Russia and Ukraine, and within the frameworks of the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)

announced by President Biden June 26, 2022, at the G7 Leaders' Summit, and of China's Belt and Road Initiative which has been implemented for years in many countries, offer both Russia and Ukraine some economic incentives for post-war reconstruction of their war-damaged infrastructure, we might be able to persuade Russia to pursue the goal of local self-government for ethnic Russians in eastern and southern regions of Ukraine instead of trying to recover its Czarist period territories.

This solution could include (1) Ukraine's recognition of Russia's sovereignty over Crimea and Constitutional Amendment for other ethnic-Russian dominated regions to high degree of local self-government plus Russia's right to permanently station peace-keeping troupes, but NOT troupes with offensive capabilities, in the concerned areas for the protection of civil and democratic rights of the ethnic Russians, in exchange of Russia's recognition for Ukraine's sovereignty in these same ethnic-Russian dominated areas (this idea is similar to US-Cuba relations; the United States recognizes Cuba's sovereignty in exchange for Cuba's recognition of the United States's right to permanently station troupes in Guantanamo Bay, and a pledge not to deploy Russian missiles, in exchange for a pledge from the United States not to invade Cuba); (2) Ukraine's status as a non-NATO neutral state for a pledge from Russia not to send troupes to the western and central portions of Ukraine; (3) a Constitutional Amendment in Ukraine to protect foreign investment from all nations regardless of ideologies. If this could be done by a consensus among the United States, European allies, the other Five Eye League nations (UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), and China, then the legitimate interests and national dignity of both Russia and Ukraine might be satisfied, and the political and economic interests of the all great powers (US, other Five Eyes nations, EU, Russia and China) could be equally protected.

### **No. 3. Military neutrality**

So far, China offers no supply of weapons to either side in the conflict. The United States Government has recently urged China not to support Russia's war efforts with Chinese weapons and warned that such move would cause serious consequences in Sino-American relations. In response to reports from right-wing mass media in the United States, Europe and Taiwan that Russia is asking China to supply advanced weapons, China's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Mr. Zhao Lijian categorically denied its possibility. At the White House, US National Security Advisor Sullivan has said on March 22, 2022, that since Biden-Xi online summit (March 18, 2022), there is no indication to suggest that China is supplying Russia with weapons, and that US intelligence surveyance will continue ("*White House: Biden to Announce New Sanction on Visit to Europe, China's military support for Russia Not Seen Yet,*" page A4, March 23, 2022, The Epoch Times)

The United States and NATO allies so far have pledged military support to Ukraine in terms of supply of mostly defensive conventional weapons; these weapons could help Ukraine to resist Russia for a while. However, so far, its effectiveness is quite limited. In the long run, Ukraine could not realistically avoid a military collapse simply because Russia is by far militarily much more powerful than Ukraine.

Russia's military action so far has destroyed most of Ukraine's military power; this has basically accomplished Putin's goal of de-militarization. Without direct US and NATO involvement, the fall of entire Ukraine is a matter of time. Ukraine's major military power is gone. Russia's "De-militarization" goal has been 80% completed with the destruction of its air force, navy and most of high-end equipment and military infrastructure. In fact, Russia has already destroyed most of



Ukraine defense capabilities. In other words, Putin's demand for Ukraine's "demilitarization" has for all practical purposes been accomplished. Therefore, the only viable solution to the crises is political and diplomatic, not military. A possible final solution could include

- (1) Global-wide peace treaty: A negotiated peace treaty among the great powers (US, other Five Eyes nations, EU, Russia and China) not to damage the interests of each other through a new round of Cold War, to cooperate as partners and to restrict their competition within the frameworks of commonly agreed principles and rules.
- (2) Agreement for security guarantees: A formal agreement among the great powers to guarantee Ukraine's national sovereignty and territorial integrity as a militarily neutral nation (Ukraine could still become a European Union nation).
- (3) Reform of Ukraine's armed forces: Democratization and reorganization of Ukraine's armed forces to eliminate neo-Nazism and to make them a purely defensive forces without offensive weapons, under the United Nations' supervision.
- (4) Open-door amendment in Ukraine's constitution: To protect legitimate interests of all foreign investors regardless of ideology, values or countries of origin.

#### **No. 4. Peaceful incentives to both without standing with either side**

After the start of Russia-Ukraine military conflict, China has offered limited amount of humanitarian aid to Ukraine while refusing to sanction Russia. China continues trade with Russia under normal terms previously agreed upon. China had previously offered Ukraine medical supplies for fighting COVID-19 pandemic. China has so far sent three shipments of humanitarian aid supply to Ukraine; they included milk powders, clothes, blankets, food, and others, worth \$1.5 million. As a gesture of friendship towards Ukraine, China has moved its embassy from Kyiv to Lviv, apparently to void Russia's attack or take-over of Kyiv, the capital city of Ukraine. According to the website of local authorities in the city, Chinese Ambassador Mr. Fan Xianrong met with the head of local authorities to discuss humanitarian aid and economic cooperation with Ukraine; the Ukrainian officer said that the war with Russia would end one day and the people of Ukraine would proceed to post-war reconstruction; the Chinese Ambassador assured his Ukrainian friend that, as a Strategic Cooperative Partner, China would remain a friendly country to Ukraine, is willing to offer assistance to Ukraine especially in economic development, and would handle the crises in a responsible way ("*China's Embassy Moved from Kyiv to Lviv*," page A2, Friday, March 18, 2022, Zhong Guo Daily News).

Overall, China's position on Russia-Ukraine conflict is clear; it is based on good relations with both countries in conflict. Chinese Government has maintained dialog with the United States on the issue. During the 110-minute long Biden-Xi online summit on March 18, 2022, both leaders exchanged ideas on Ukraine-Russia conflict; President Biden urged China not to support Russia's brutal attacks on Ukraine's cities and civilians; explained the policies of the United States and allies or partners on the crises, including measures that have been adopted and implemented at present time, as well as plans to be adopted at the next step; and the potential impact and consequences in case of China's support for Russia. According to Psaki, White House news secretary, President Biden did express his serious concerns on the potential alliance between China and Russia, possible Chinese supply of weapons to Russia, or assistance to Russia to escape sanctions; however, President Biden did not ask President Xi to intervene quickly to urge Putin to withdraw Russian troupes as soon as possible. Responding to the journalist's question about "why President Biden did not present to President Xi Jinping the United States' clear request during the online summit," Psaki replied that "China needs to make

its own decision as to which side they want to stand with during this crises, and what type of evaluation they want to get in history.” On the side of President Xi Jinping, he reiterated China’s position that all parties in the conflict should support Russia-Ukraine negotiation for a peaceful outcome; that the United States and NATO should hold a dialog so as to eliminate the root causes of the conflict behind the scene, and to dissolve the worries for national security of both Russia and Ukraine. President Xi then criticized current United States and NATO policies on the Ukraine crises, indicating that comprehensive and indiscriminate sanctions would hurt civilians; and should they be escalated, it could lead to serious crises in global trade, monetary system, energy supply, food supply and the industrial chain of demand and supply, causing irreparable damages to the already strained world economy; therefore, what are urgently needed now include (1) continuing dialog and negotiation, (2) avoiding civilian casualty, (3) preventing humanitarian disasters, and (4) achieving a ceasefire as soon as possible (“*Biden-Xi Summit: US Not Intended to Be in Conflict with China*,” page A04, US News section, China Press). For a long-term solution, President Xi’s advocacy include (1) forsaking “Cold War mentality,” or the mentality of confrontation between military blocks based on ideologies or “values,” (2) promoting a genuinely balanced, effective, and sustainable framework for regional security, so as to achieve long-term peace and stability in Continental Europe (“*Ceasefire – Wang Yi: Xi Has Presented China’s Plan*,” page A14 China section, Sunday, March 10, 2022, The World Journal, [www.worldjournal.com](http://www.worldjournal.com)).

On the one hand, China’s advocacy for “respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations and of the charter and principles of the United Nations” literally means that China does NOT support Russia’s “Special Military Operation” in Ukraine as legitimate, neither does China recognize the “independence” of the “People’s Republic of Luhansk,” of the “People’s Republic of Donetsk” or the legitimacy of any “referendum” to “join Russia.” Unlike a dozen of countries in the world, China does not recognize Russia’s annexation of Crimea as legitimate. In fact, China regards territorial separatism within any sovereign country as a very sensitive and thorny issue; this is consistent in all cases regardless of ideology or value system. For example, in 1971, a civil war occurred in Eastern Pakistan, between the para-Marxist-Leninist, secular and socialist Bangladesh People’s League that won the election, and the anti-Communist Muslim League dominated central government in Western Pakistan that refused to transfer power; India militarily intervened to support the Bangladesh People’s League, which proclaimed in Mujibnagar, India, the establishment of the Provisional Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, which was immediately recognized by the Soviet Union and its satellite states. China regarded this as India’s war of aggression against the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan, and did not recognize the independence of Bangladesh until many years later. China does not recognize the “independence” of Kosovo, a former province of Serbia either, regarding it as a result of NATO’s “aggression against Yugoslavia.” In addition to the above long-standing policy of opposing territorial separatism encouraged by foreign powers, China’s position on the issues of status for Crimea, Donetsk and Lugansk is also reflective of China’s bitter experience in the past dealing with Great Britain, Japan, Russia and Soviet Union in terms of territorial integrity.

The only viable solution to the current crises in Ukraine is through political and diplomatic means; and this would require international cooperation. US President Biden is now preparing a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Hopefully, they could cut some deals on Russia-Ukraine crises, which shall benefit both US and China and be acceptable to both Russia and Ukraine. Although Putin’s Russia is determined to push Ukraine’s border back to Czarist time,

and neither US nor China possess enough power to pressure Putin on this issue, there still exists some possibility that, through international cooperation, in particular among the global powers (US, EU, other Five Eyes states, and China), and economic incentives to both Ukraine and Russia, there could be some compromise to yield some multilaterally acceptable outcomes. This article has already explained how such compromise could be achieved.



"Peace Now!" photo-illustration by Edward Locke