

Public Opinions about Russia's Invasion of Ukraine in Chinese-American Communities

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This news report intends to analyze public opinions in Chinese-American communities about Russia's invasion in Ukraine.

In Chinese-American communities, opinions are generally in favor of Ukraine's resistance; however, an important ethnic-political divide exist, based on historical grudge, personal experience or partisan identities. Among Chinese-Americans whose ancestors have been in the United States long before 1900, the positions are totally Americanized to be either liberal or conservative. For those whose parents immigrated to the United States after the United States and China normalized diplomatic relations after Nixon-Mao's handshake in the 1970s, most of them hold "neutral" positions regarding Russia as an aggressor but Ukraine a provocateur, similar to the arguments of John Mearsheimer, Professor in the Political Science Department at the University of Chicago, or to the position of Congressman Madison Cawthorn from North Carolina. For those whose parents immigrated from Taiwan, the positions are split based on group identity or partisanship; Taiwanese society is sharply divided into "Blue Camp" (Mainlander-Taiwanese or descendant of the supporters of Chinese Nationalist Party who retreated to Taiwan after 1949) and "Green Camp" (Native Taiwanese whose ancestors settled in Taiwan before World War Two); in general, "Blue Camp" people are more likely to blame Ukraine's President Zelenski as a trouble-maker who caused Biden Administration to "forget" or to "neglect" that "Communist China" is the "Red Dragon" or "Number One Threat"; "Green Camp" people for most part are more sympathetic to Ukraine.

Among Mainlander-Taiwanese, or descendants of the followers of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalist Party, opinions are sharply divided based on the current attitudes of the individual, either strongly anti-Communist and extremely right-wing, or pragmatically reconciliatory toward China's current government and strongly nationalist. The former advocate reconciliation between United States and Russia on the current Ukraine crises and preparation to fight China together even with a "pre-emptive strike;" the later criticizes US foreign policies towards both Russia and China.

In Chinese-American communities, mass media controlled by the "Green Camp," or the political parties supported by Native Taiwanese, or Taiwanese whose ancestor live in Taiwan since ancient times, including the center-right wing Progressive Democratic Party which advocates "Taiwan independence," are mostly sympathetic to Ukraine and opposed to Russia. This is true for other "Green Camp" parties and factions that might not be right-wing or advocating

“independence” for Taiwan; a small minority of “Green Camp” Taiwanese are middle-of-the-roader or even accept China’s call for peaceful unification under the “One Country Two Systems” formula. The common ground shared by “Green Camp” people and groups is not ideology or values, but their common grievances against the “White Terror” totalitarian regime of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek’s Chinese Nationalist Party, and monopoly of positions of power in Taiwan’s government institutions, state-owned enterprises, and mass media by the exiled Mainlander Chinese, during the “White Terror” rule. The basic consensus of “Green Camp” regarding the outside world include widely accepted conclusions that (1) the Chinese Nationalist Party’s “White Terror” regime was much worse than the Japanese colonial rule before; (2) the Mainlander Chinese who retreated to Taiwan after Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek lost the Chinese Civil War in 1949 were not as well-educated and “civilized” as Native Taiwanese or even their previous Japanese colonial rulers; and (3) Native Taiwanese, NOT Mainlander Taiwanese or Chinese from the People’s Republic of China, should be the masters of Taiwan’s destiny; and finally, any solution to the relations between Taiwan and China should be found between the Native Taiwanese and Chinese Government; in other words, the exiled Mainlanders or supporters of the Chinese Nationalist Party, cannot cut private deals with Chinese Government, because it is a so-called “Outsider’s Regime.” In the recent three decades, political elites in the United States have basically stopped supporting the Chinese Nationalist Party in Taiwan; and accept Native Taiwanese right to govern Taiwan. The current ruling party of Taiwan, the Progressive Democratic Party, is still pushing agendas to eliminate traces of legacies of Chiang Kai-shek’s rule in Taiwan. Each year, around February 28, the day of Taiwanese people’s armed insurrection against Nationalist Chinese Government, the Taiwan Center will hold commemorative events at its facilities at 3001 Walnut Grove Ave. Rosemead, CA 91770, which features a library with books on the subject. Thus, most of “Green Camp” people are sympathetic to Ukraine, not to Russia, for obvious reasons.

In contrast, the mass media controlled by the “Blue Camp,” or descendants of the exiled Mainlander Chinese in Taiwan, are split between pro-Zelensky and pro-Putin, but mostly apologetic of Putin’s war and unsympathetic to Ukraine, and lecturing on Ukraine about a “peace with honor.” This is primarily due to its traditional conservative and right-wing ideology that appeared to be aligned with the strong and looked down upon the weak, and to the positions of privilege and wealth they occupied in Taiwan. The root causes of pro-Putin and anti-Zelensky sentiments of some “Blue Camp” commentators in Taiwan include the support of American political elites for the process of political democratization in Taiwan in the last three decades, which brought an end to the totalitarian rule of Chinese Nationalist Party in Taiwan, and an end to Mainlander Taiwanese monopoly of political power in Taiwan, and consequentially, grievances among some Mainlander Taiwanese against United States foreign policies. Recently, some “Blue Camp” figures started to defend the positions of the Chinese Government, reversing their parents’ staunch anti-Communist stand; this reflects the fact that a lot the wealthy “Blue Camp” tycoons have invested heavily in Mainland China and amassed unprecedented amount of profit out of China’s cheap labor and out of China’s “United Front Preferential Treatment” policies towards its former enemies, i.e., the exiled Chinese Nationalists in Taiwan; and thus, have a stake in maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, or “maintaining the status quo.” This does not necessarily mean that they want genuine peace with Mainland China;

In fact, what is needed for them is “status quo” or a “no independence, no war, no unification” framework for them to make profits playing the United States and China against each other, but under controllable conditions. These positions are reflected in the statements of some important figures of the “Blue Camp,” including party leaders, specialists on international politics and “Big Mouths” (well-known talk-show hosts). Some analysis about the Russia-Ukraine conflict and predictions about its potential outcomes made by “Blue Camp” people are rational and interesting; while the “conspiracy theory” about the United States’ plan to transform Taiwan into Asia’s Ukraine and reduce China’s power through a bloody military confrontation across Taiwan Strait, as predicted by a few “Blue Camp” commentators, are rather irrational and “self-fulfilling,” reflecting the latter’s traditional modus operandi of playing with China and United States at the same time, getting both sides to confront each other, so as to harvest political benefits for themselves. As US president Joe Biden already declared several times in official occasions, the United States does not intend to have a Cold War in China, does not intend to promote a regime change in China, and does not support Taiwan’s independence from China, and Russia is an enemy while China is a competitor/cooperator depending on issues, the “self-fulfilling prophecies” of a few “Blue Camp” people are not credible, although their capabilities of fomenting nationalist sentiments in both Taiwan and Mainland should not be ignored.

Staunch anti-Communist Chinese-Americans, usually far-right wing Republicans, advocates a change in US foreign policy to fight a new Cold War against China, the “Red Dragon.” These far-right wing Chinese-Americans, many of them being politically conservative Chinese-American evangelical church-goers, believe that the United States has a “Biblical Mission” to oppose the current government of the People’s Republic of China, or the “Red Dragon,” as a “Heavenly Dragon-Slayer” (倚天屠龙派); and they consider the Democrats and Democratic Presidents such as Bill Clinton, Barak Obama, and Joe Biden, as “Panda-Huggers” (拥抱熊猫派) “too soft on Communist Red China.” They are usually active in Republican Party and have contributed 80% of funds to support “Proud Boys” during the Capitol Hill Insurrection on behalf of former President Donald Trump. A conservative Chinese-American named Tang Jingyuan published a full page article on the issue of Ukraine-Russia war; the author praises Putin as an anti-Communist but criticizes his “Great Power Chauvinism” and war in Ukraine; blames former President Barak Obama’s policy of regarding US-Russia relations as confrontational and US-China relations as competition as a “wrong direction;” bashes China as the “greatest threat” to the United States; and furthermore, denounces President Biden for reversing Trump’s policies, and returning to the “old path of Obama” to regard Putin as an enemy, pushing Putin to engage in a marriage of convenience with “Communist China.” Jingyuan concluded that “the strategic mistakes of the United States and the NATO finally became the fuse of Putin’s large-scale invasion of Ukraine, for which Biden at least should bear partial responsibility” (“*Russia’s Five Conditions for Ceasefire and Three Root Causes for Starting the War,*” by Tang Jingyuan, page A10, In Depth section, Friday, March 11, 2022, The Epoch Times). Another staunch anti-Communist from Chinese-American community, named Shen Zhou, went so far as to advocate that, learning a lesson from the war in Ukraine, the United States should use pre-emptive strike against China in any possible standoff over Taiwan: “Do not let Communist China wrongly believe that the United States will not fire the first bullet [...] Russia firmly believes that the United States will not intervene; thus it finally invaded Ukraine; Communist China enjoys no luxury to believe that the United States Armed Forces shall not intervene in the war over Taiwan; however, as long as the United States Armed Forces refrains itself from firing the first shot,

Communist China possibly could behave in a more belligerent way. [...] the United States [...] should make decision in advance whether to make pre-emptive strike, or under what conditions first strike could be made, instead of waiting for the Communist China to launch the first strike and then start a counter-attack; and should determine the scope of pre-emptive strike. [...] The United States [...] needs to determine the procedures of launching a pre-emptive strike as soon as possible” (“*Does the War in Ukraine Wake Up the United States Sufficiently?*” page A9, Commentary section, Wednesday, March 3, 2022, The Epoch Times). The Epoch Times is an ultra-right wing mass media associated with Falungong, an exiled opposition group from China; it is well-known for its staunch anti-Communist, anti-Liberal, anti-Woke, anti-LGBTQ+, anti-labor union, anti-Democrat, and anti-environmentalist positions. The above two articles are the most aggressively China-bashing and war-mongering ones we could find so far.

Another pro-Putin and China-bashing article, by Chinese-American right-winger (“*Russia is Not America’s Main Enemy,*” by Zhong Wen from Virginia, page B5, World Forum section, Wednesday, March 2, 2022, The World Journal), criticizes President Biden for engaging China in the process of persuading Putin not to go to war: “In the recent three months, Biden asked Xi Jinping six times to persuade Putin not to go to war, with a posture of ‘allying with China to contain Russia,’ forgetting that Xi is the principal enemy; and subverted the relationship of friends and enemies. [...] Biden encouraged Ukrainians to join the NATO; but when Russia invaded, he sits on the fence to let the Ukrainian troupes fight on their own, doesn’t this hurt the Ukrainians? The trouble-maker should end the trouble,” Zhong Wen advocates that “the future solution to end Russia’s war in Ukraine depends only on one promise from the United States that ‘Ukraine will not join the NATO,’ letting Russia have a buffer zone between itself and NATO countries, giving Putin a sense of security that he wanted, letting Russian troupes to withdraw; in fact, Putin does not have the ambition of expanding and restoring the Russian Empire. After the solution of the crises in Ukraine, Biden should quickly return to the orbit that ‘Xi Jinping is the principal enemy,’ ally with Russia to contain Xi, coordinating with full forces with anti-Xi forces inside the Chinese Communist Party, to prevent him from becoming a Communist Emperor for Life.” Here, the Chinese-American right-winger is advocating an unrealistic alliance with America’s long-term rival, Russia, to start a larger-scale confrontation with China, America’s major trade partner, and lecturing to American President on how to conduct foreign policies.

Locally, in a Taiwanese-American evangelical church, a conservative Mainlander-Taiwanese who plays piano during Sunday service believes that both President Biden and President Zelenski were controlled by the so-called “Deep State,” or an instrument of the Illuminati and Free Masons to promote a New World Order, under a “World Government,” harboring “conspiracy,” “woke culture” or “cancel culture;” and Putin’s mother is a devout Russian Orthodox, thus, Putin is God’s chosen instrument to end “woke culture” in Ukraine and the West. This “conspiracy theory” is in the Party Line of the controversial stand of GOP Congressman Madison Cawthorne from North Carolina, when he said, “remember that Zelenskyy is a thug, remember that the Ukrainian government is incredibly corrupt, and it is incredibly evil, and it has been pushing woke ideologies.” Conservative opposition to Ukrainian President Zelensky is probably caused by his support for some “liberal agendas,” such as the free distribution of medical cannabis, free abortion, and the legalization of prostitution and gambling. Very recently, during Congressional vote on the bill to sanction Russia, several GOP congressmen voted as naysayers. On April 6, six House Republicans voted against a bill

aimed at holding Russia accountable for its invasion of Ukraine, directing the government to collect evidence “related to war crimes and other atrocities committed during the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine;” they were Reps. Andy Biggs (Arizona), Warren Davidson (Ohio), Marjorie Taylor Greene (Georgia), Paul Gosar (Ariz.), Thomas Massie (Kentucky) and Scott Perry (Pennsylvania). On Thursday March 17, eight GOP Representatives voted against *The Suspending Normal Trade Relations With Russia and Belarus Act*; they include Lauren Boebert (Colorado), Matt Gaetz (Florida), Marjorie Taylor Greene (Georgia), and Thomas Massie (Kentucky). Most of the above naysayers are conservative and right-wing Republicans and they are among the most loyal supporters of former President Donald Trump.

More moderate or even liberal voice on Russia-Ukraine conflict could be found in mainstream evangelical circles within Chinese-American communities. An opinion article titled *Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine Extremely Dangerous and Lack of Caution Could Lead to Bigger War*, by Shi Qi, page A3, Sort Commentary on Current Affairs section, April 2022 Southeast USA Version, Herald Monthly, by Chinese Christian Herald Crusade Inc., cchcla.org, includes this statement: “Since the end of Cold War, the distinction between Communist Camp and Capitalist Camp has become blurry and unclear, and it even lets people suspect about its very existence. This is so because both camps now walk on the path of market economy. Everyone has realized that the only way to stabilize the state power is to let people enjoy a life of abundance, and to bring prosperity to the nations. Therefore, the biggest difference between the two camps is that, the Liberal Democratic Camp is under the influence of Christian civilization, while the Dictatorial Camp is under the rule of men. [...] In fact, this is the difference between worshipping God and self-aggrandizement. [...] The democratic idea that all people are created equal came from the Bible; dictators mostly do not believe in God but trust themselves, and think that, in order to preserve political power, they have to persecute Christians. This is because of fears; when people do not have God in their mind, they do not feel secure! Of course, there are bad horses that harm people in democratic countries, because the sinful nature of humans exists everywhere. There is fierce competition in market economy; at the beginning when countries are open to world market, they often are taken advantage of by businesspeople from countries practicing free trade. It could be believed that with regard to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine this time, economic causes weigh more heavily than real issues of national security; this is so especially because for many militarily and economically powerful countries in the West, their blood-sucking behaviors of economic looting have already led to teeth-gnashing hatred of the countries in the Dictatorial Camp! This lets the ‘Soviet Russian Big Brother’ to vow to take a breath for revenge on behalf of his camp, patting on his heart! Hopefully, businesspeople in the West could genuinely revere and worship God, instead of trying to satisfy selfish desires and misguide the whole Democratic Camp into the Armageddon!” This statement sounds like a religious or spiritual interpretation of Professor Mearsheimer’s understanding of the root cause of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.



"The Congressional GOP Pro-Putin Caucus" photo-illustration by Edward Locke

To sum up, the position of Chinese-American right-wing is that, President Putin is “Chosen by God” to fight the “Deep State” or “Illuminati/Freemason conspiracy” of promoting “woke culture,” “cancel culture,” LGBTQ+, as a devout Orthodox Christian; therefore, instead of punishing Putin’s aggressive behaviors in Ukraine, the United States should instead persuade Ukraine to yield to Russia’s demands, so that Russia could ally with the United States to fight the “Communist Chinese Red Dragon.” In other words, according to Chinese-American right-wing, the Democrats should ally with Russia in order to fight China.

In an opinion article titled “Immediate Withdrawal of Troupes is Putin’s Best Choice,” published on the conservative Chinese-American newspaper *The World Journal* (page A8, World Forum section, March 23, Wednesday, 2022), the author Zhang Shigong from New York expressed his opinion that (1) Putin’s military action in Ukraine is going to fail due to resistance of local people and to NATO’s supply of weapons to Ukraine; (2) Putin should learn from the practice of Deng Xiaoping several decades ago when Chinese PLA fought Viet Nam and withdrew immediately after some victories have been won; since the goals of destruction of Ukraine’s military force and of denazification have been basically reached, Putin should withdraw and declared victory to please his people; and (3) Putin should seriously learn from the model of collective leadership of Xi Jinping’s Chinese Communist Party, instead of practicing his model of the dictatorship of one person, i.e., Putin himself as a strong man.

Paradoxically, the ultra-right wing and conservative organizations in the United States, barely one month after Putin’s “Special Military Action” or invasion in Ukraine, started to express similar opinions that echoed Putin government’s propaganda, wrapped as “conspiracy theory,” going so far as to brand the NATO-based Western Power as the initiator of the current Ukrainian crises; these ultra-right information appear frequently in their own channels under the Telegram communication app. The fake news spread by the Russian Government on March 6, 2022 in its official declaration about the United States Department of Defense’s involvement in and financing of biological weapons laboratories in Ukraine started to surface in social media, wired TVs, and other printed or online media, in both English and Russian languages, reaching over 1,000 per day of online discussion; Fox News Anchor Tucker Carlson went so far as to describe the Ukraine Government as “the puppet of Biden Administration,” while totally ignoring the behaviors of Putin (“*Conspiracy Theory - The Ultra-Right in America Became Putin’s Mouthpiece*,” by Lin Meijie, page A4, Focus section, Friday, March 25, 2022, *The World Journal*, www.worldjournal.com).

Another example of dissenting position among conservatives and right-wingers is the one upheld by Madison Cawthorn, GOP Representative from North Carolina; he openly called Ukraine’s President Zelenski a “thug,” and the Ukrainian government “incredibly corrupt” and “incredibly evil” for “been pushing woke ideologies” and “misinformation on America.” The GOP Congressman’s statements were aligned with former President Donald Trump’s praise of Russian President Vladimir Putin but in sharp contrast to the United States’ broad bipartisan support for President Zelenski of Ukraine. The GOP Congressman further said that he is praying that the United States is “not drawn into conflict based on foreign leaders pushing misinformation.” Cawthorn is a self-identified conservative Republican; he is a member of the House Freedom Caucus, a caucus of conservative House Republicans; he is opposed to women’s

rights to abortion, to gun control legislation. (“*GOP lawmaker calls Zelensky a ‘thug’ and Ukrainian government ‘incredibly evil’*,” by Alex Rogers, CNN, Friday, March 11, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/10/politics/madison-cawthorn-volodymyr-zelensky-comments/index.html>). The so-called “woke ideologies” refer to the values of the social movements in recent decades towards greater awareness of and attention to important facts and issues, especially issues of social justice and racial equality, i.e., issues surrounding marginalized communities, questioning the dominant paradigm and striving for something better, usually from a liberal or progressive perspectives; examples of “wokeness” include the Black Lives Matter and African-American Slave Reparation, LGBTQ+ rights, and women’s rights movements in the United States, and Russian feminist rock group Pussy Riot, whose members had been imprisoned in 2012.

More professional and politically “neutral” commentaries could be found on Chinese-language mass media as well; some of them discussed changes in global system as a result of the Russia-Ukraine War. One article discusses the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine; the authors believe that Europe will have a moral obligation to finance the post-war reconstruction, but the project will be very costly; the author points out that at the time of Germany’s reunification, the East German economy was the best in the entire Soviet Block, and operated more efficiently than today’s Ukraine; however, the burden of its re-construction almost crushed West Germany’s economy; the “Unification Tax” paid by West Germans was not ended until 2021; even so, after 30 years of subsidies, there are still a lot of differences between eastern and western parts of Germany; furthermore, East Germany at the time of reunification had 16 million people, Ukraine today has 4.4 million people, including 3 million refugees living in EU member states now; and due to the practical need to free itself from the burden of surplus population, post-war Ukraine could encourage more people to emigrate to EU countries; this in turn will cause heavier burden on EU economy. The article next discusses which countries or groups are winners and which are losers in this conflict; it concluded that: (1) Putin has for most part achieved his principal goals of keeping Ukraine out of NATO and de-militarizing it; (2) China is the biggest winner in this conflict, which pushed Russia eastward into China’s embrace, and allow China to escape the pressure from the West; (3) Ukraine is a loser but not the biggest loser, because its dilemmas in Crimea and Donbas has been dissolved; (4) the biggest losers are Russian liberals, Hong Kong’s Black-Shirts anti-Communist political dissidents, China’s “Public Intellectuals” or liberal free-thinkers, and “International Legion” mercenaries from the West who jump into the conflict to “beat up the Russians;” (5) whether the West is a winner or a loser depends on how the West step down from the top of the tall soapbox it stays in; the war in Ukraine has occupied all stages of Western public opinion and covered up various social and political problems; the West is facing serious problems such as inflation, breakdown of industrial supply chains, and others; and these problems need solutions, not coverups; (6) President Zelenski might become a loser too; and except good performance in his interaction with the public, he is in shortage of political wisdom or leadership capabilities; in fact, the current crises of the war in Ukraine started with his order issued to Ukraine’s armed forces to provide a “military solution of the Donbas problem” (“*Russia-Ukraine War: China Became the Biggest Winner*,” page A4, China Topics section, Friday, March 18, 2022 Zhong Guo Daily News). Other commentators concluded that the United States is the biggest winner in this crisis, and that Europe is a loser; their conclusion is based on

the facts that facing threats from Russia, EU countries have no choice but to rely more on US protection; therefore, US position of leadership in the NATO organization has been strengthened, capital is fleeing Europe to find refuge in the United States, orders for defense equipment are coming to American defense industry; but with refugee crisis and inflation, European economy is suffering.

In conclusion, Chinese-American public opinions regarding the war in Ukraine is sharply divided along political and ideological lines.