

## **Is Russia launching a military operation to defend China's western defense line?**

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Some people in China mistakenly consider that the war in Ukraine is simply about US/NATO and Russia. This is quite wrong. Russia's war in Ukraine is in reality also the Western flank of defence against US aggression against China – as any realistic analysis of the geopolitical situation makes clear. The aim of this article is to analyse the geopolitical situation on this issue.

**The US considers China, not Russia, the main country it wants to weaken**

The US is quite explicit in its official positions, as well as numerous unofficial analyses, and a bipartisan Democratic-Republican Party-political consensus, that it considers that the main country it wishes to weaken, and attack, is China. But the tactics the US has to use in this attack on China are dictated by its overall strategic position. And these dictate that the US has to first launch a full-scale attack on Russia before China.

The real dynamics of the situation regarding relations between the US, China and Russia may be made clear by a comparison to the US's first "Cold War" against the USSR. In that the Soviet Union was militarily strong but economically weak compared to the US. The USSR's nuclear forces were essentially equivalent to the US, and it possessed extremely strong conventional forces. But, in contrast to its military strength Soviet post-World War II economic policy was a failure. Its economic growth rate was not significantly above the world average and from the 1970s onwards its GDP growth was actually slower than the US.

The strategic situation of that Cold War therefore dictated that the strategy of the US was to attempt to transfer struggles onto the economic terrain. Even the US military build-up in the 1980s under Reagan was not intended to wage war with the USSR. It was intended to put economic pressure on the Soviet Union by forcing it into an arms race – that is, the US intended to take advantage of the post-World War II failure of economic policy by the USSR.

The US finds itself in the exact opposite situation in its competition with China. In this competition the US is militarily strong but its economic position is weaker than its military position. China's economy has been growing much faster than the US for more than four decades. China's economy is in market price terms approximately twice as large in relation to the US as the USSR ever was. In purchasing power parity (PPP) terms China's economy is already larger than the US. Most recently China has come through the last two major international economic crisis – the post-2007 international financial crisis and the Covid19 recession – with much more rapid economic growth than the US.

However, in military terms the US is still considerably stronger than China. Objectively, as the US is stronger militarily but weaker economically, this means the logical strategy for the US is to attempt to transfer conflicts from the economic to the military terrain.

To make an historical comparison, the notorious declaration by German Chief of Staff von Moltke in 1912 was that 'war is unavoidable and the sooner the better.' But this was not an empty bellicose

statement but, from the point of view of German imperialism, a rational calculation. But 1912 both Russia and the US were growing economically more rapidly than Germany - which would inevitably lead to them becoming militarily stronger than Germany. Therefore, von Moltke called for war as soon as possible.

This is similarly the great danger of US war against China at the present. That the US will decide to try to use its military strength compared to China to attack China before China's economic growth makes it a military equal to the US.

### Russia and China

This makes it clear why Russia becomes a serious factor in the defence of China. China certainly has enough nuclear weapons to be a serious deterrent to the US. But, nevertheless, on Western estimates, the US has around ten times as many nuclear war heads as China. This means that China could certainly inflict appalling losses on the US – with tens of millions of Americans dead. But nevertheless, China could not yet completely destroy the US.

Russia is a different situation. Due to the inheritance from the military strength of the USSR Russia has even more nuclear warheads than the US. Russia is the one country in the world with the ability to completely destroy the US. Over the long-term Russia cannot maintain that position because of the failure of its economic policy. Nevertheless, in the next 5-10 years, possibly longer, Russia is the strongest nuclear military power in the world compared to the US. And the combination of Russia and China is certainly the nuclear equivalent of the US.

That is, the US recognises that in the field of strategic warfare, which means nuclear weapons, it does not dare to launch a military attack on the combination of Russia and China. Therefore, the combination of China and Russia, in the next 5-15 years, creates a situation in which the US would not dare to launch nuclear war and in which, therefore, China can build up its nuclear forces to the point where it could deliver an attack on the US which the latter would find unacceptable – the ability to totally devastate the US.

The obvious conclusion that the US draws from this is therefore that it must separate Russia from China. If Russia can be persuaded or forced to become hostile to China then China becomes much more vulnerable to US military, including nuclear, attack.

### US attempts to separate Russia and China

This determines US tactics. In order to be able to attack China the US must try to separate Russia from China. The only major difference in the US foreign policy establishment is over how to get Russia to abandon its good relations with China.

The first, minority, analysis within the foreign policy mainstream in the US was that the expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe, which inevitably was a threat to Russia, was a terrible mistake – as it would lead Russia to become closer to China in order to defend itself. George Kennan, author of the famous “Long Telegram” which defined US policy against the Soviet Union in the Cold War, [analysed](#) in 1997: “In late 1996, the impression was allowed, or caused, to become prevalent that it had been somehow and somewhere decided to expand NATO up to Russia's borders.... But something of the highest importance is at stake here.... bluntly stated... expanding NATO would be the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-cold-war era.”

Similar analyses have been put forward by John Mearsheimer, one of the most eminent US analysts of foreign policy, who already in 2014 wrote an [article](#) “Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault”.

Mearsheimer has since done a lecture featured on YouTube with 13 million views, on the US responsibility for the crisis in Ukraine, and following the outbreak of fighting in Ukraine launched a bitter attack, also with many million views on YouTube, on US role in the crisis. A similar position has been taken by Jack Matlock, the last US ambassador to the USSR.

The CATO institute, a well-known US think tank, has analysed: “ Analysts committed to a US foreign policy of realism and restraint have warned for more than a quarter-century that continuing to expand the most powerful military alliance in history [NATO] toward another major power would not end well. The war in Ukraine provides definitive confirmation that it did not... History will show that Washington’s treatment of Russia in the decades following the demise of the Soviet Union was a policy blunder of epic proportions.”

#### Trying to separate Russia & China by making concessions to Russia

The second US analysis to attempt to create a break between Russia and China was to propose to make concessions to Russia - to get it to abandon good relations with China. This was attempted purely in words, without serious concessions, by Trump, and at earlier stage by Hillary Clinton when she was Secretary of State with her call for a “reset” with Russia- although she has now entirely abandoned that position. Trump said nice words about President Putin, and held one to one summits with him from which other US officials were excluded for long periods. Trump did not, however, propose any major change in US policy towards Russia and, therefore, there was no change in Russia’s policy either – it remained on good terms with China.

Kissinger, who was much more realistic than Trump, understood that it was impossible to detach Russia from good relations with China simply by words. He, therefore, proposed to make some real compromises with Russia – notably by accepting that Crimea would be accepted as part of Russia. But these proposals were peripheral compared to Russia’s most important concerns – that Ukraine should not be part of NATO, as this would pose an intolerable military threat to Russia with missiles a few minutes flying time from Moscow, and of the situation in the Donbass region of the East of Ukraine, which is both Russian speaking and the most important economic region of Ukraine.

In summary this wing of the US foreign policy establishment, which wanted to “seduce” Russia from good relations with China, failed entirely because it was not prepared to make serious concessions to Russia – even if Russia had been as short sighted as to accept being on bad terms with China.

#### The US attempts to use force to break up good relations between Russia and China

The US third line was therefore to try to force Russia out of good relations with China by application of strength. This was in fact a continuation of the fundamental US policy after 1991 and the break up of the USSR.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union brought out very clearly into the open the real character of US policy towards Russia. During the period of the USSR’s existence the US had officially claimed it was simply against Communism but very friendly to the Russian people and wanted them to flourish – exactly the same claim it makes about China now.

But if that were true then after the disintegration of the USSR in 1991, and the collapse of Communism in Russia, the US should have pursued a friendly policy to Russia. That is certainly what those in Russia who had believed the US propaganda expected. I was living in Moscow from early 1992 onwards and there was no more pro-US country in the world. There were bilingual Russian-English newspapers, English language newspapers, English language radio stations, foreigners, above

all Americans, were treated with extraordinary respect – almost as “gods”. These were the same symptoms I saw among some groups in China when I first started to work there in 2009.

When I explained in Russia at the beginning of 1992 that anyone who believed the official US policy was naïve, that the US really wanted to weaken Russia and not to aid it to become strong, I would estimate at that time 90% of people disagreed with me – many thought I was delusional.

But I knew that would change. From the nature of the US and its policies it would try to weaken and attack Russia. But the most powerful force in Russia is patriotism – therefore the patriotism of the Russian people meant they would fight to defend their country and break with their illusions in US propaganda as the real character of US policy became clear. It did not take long for this process to begin.

First, within a few months, the adoption of capitalism that the US had advocated for Russia created an economic disaster – from 1991 to 1998 Russia experienced the largest economic decline of any major country in peacetime in history.

Second, wars began to break out on the territory of the former Soviet Union - notably between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and within Russia itself a separatist breakaway in Chechnya.

In October 1993, the US supported the armed coup d’etat carried out by Yeltsin with an attack by tanks on the Russian Parliament.

#### NATO expansion

But it was the expansion of NATO, an anti-Russia military alliance, right up to the borders of Russia that made the aggressive policy of the US totally clear.

Initially after the disintegration of the USSR in 1991 Russia had attempted to cooperate with the US/NATO – showing illusions in US policy. Putin has confirmed that Russia proposed it would become part of NATO – Russia, as a member, would have had veto rights against aggressive policies against Russia. The US refused for the reasons Zbigniew Brzezinski, former US National Security Adviser, and one of the key theorists of US foreign policy made explicit in his book *The Grand Chessboard*: “any accommodation with Russia on the issue of NATO enlargement should not entail an outcome that has the effect of making Russia a de facto decision-making member of the alliance.”

Then Russia gave assistance to the US in its invasion of Afghanistan after the 9/11 Al Qaeda terrorist attack – Russia in essence proposed “we have a common enemy in jihadism fundamentalism, let us cooperate”. The US used this offer of cooperation to establish military bases in Central Asia in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan – although when the real character of these bases, which was to intervene in Central Asia and surround Russia, became clear they were kicked out of Uzbekistan in 2005 and Kyrgyzstan in 2014.

But none of these attempts by Russia to cooperate with the US was reciprocated. Instead, the US began the remorseless military expansion of NATO towards Russia’s borders. In 1999, led by the US, NATO incorporated Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Then in 2004 NATO was expanded to include Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. In 2009 NATO expanded to include Albania and Croatia, in 2017 Montenegro, and in 2020 North Macedonia.



Finally, in 2007, faced with this remorseless military expansion of NATO towards Russia's borders, Putin broke with illusions in the peaceful and non-aggressive character of the US and at a speech at the Munich Security Conference clearly outlined the aggressive character of NATO expansion.

Within this framework it was clear that Ukraine was a decisive issue because of its geographical proximity to Russia. The distance from Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, to Russia is only 862 kilometres – a few minutes flying time for a missile, making possible a lightening attack on Russia. Russia made repeatedly clear, therefore, that Ukrainian membership of NATO would pose an unacceptable military threat to Russia.

#### Ukraine as deadly threat to Russia

The US responded by claiming that it was the "sovereign right" of Ukraine to enter into any military alliance it wished. But the US knew that in reality this argument was pure sophistry. For example, at the time of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, when the Soviet Union put missiles into Cuba, the US never argued that it could not oppose Soviet missiles being in Cuba because Cuba had the right to decide its own defence alliances! Despite the fact that the distance from Havana to Washington, 1,826 kilometres, is twice that from Kyiv to Moscow the US made clear it was prepared to risk world nuclear war to prevent Soviet missiles being in Cuba.

Fortunately, in 1962 the Soviet leadership recognised that an attempt to put missiles so close to the US, making US defence against a missile attack impractical, was an adventure – which was certain to be unacceptable to the nuclear armed US. The USSR therefore withdrew the missiles from Cuba – resulting in a peaceful outcome to the crisis. But the US has insisted on the right of Ukraine to enter NATO – thereby creating a situation which has created a war. In short in the discussion in the US on policy towards Russia the most aggressive all possible approaches were eventually decided upon.

#### US differences to China are only tactical

Despite these differences in approach in the US towards Russia it is necessary to be clear that these were in the overwhelming majority of cases only differences on tactics. Almost all those participating in the formulation of US foreign policy were agreed that the most important strategic issue for the US was to prevent China's development. Thus, for example, [Mearsheimer](#), as already noted a fierce critic of US policy towards Russia, and of the attempt to bring Ukraine into NATO, made clear that his position was due to the fact that it was instead necessary to attempt to break up the good relations of Russia and China, in order to be able to better attack China: "Russia is not a serious threat to the

United States. We do face a serious threat in the international system. We face a peer competitor. And that's China. Our policy in Eastern Europe is undermining our ability to deal with the most dangerous threat that we face today.... 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. The Russians are part of our balancing coalition against China. If you live in a world where there are three great powers—China, Russia, and the United States—and one of those great powers, China, is a peer competitor, what you want to do if you're the United States is have Russia on your side of the ledger. Instead, what we have done with our foolish policies in Eastern Europe is drive the Russians into the arms of the Chinese. This is a violation of Balance of Power Politics 101."

Similarly, Brzezinski, who, unlike Mearsheimer was a supporter of NATO expansion into Eastern Europe, motivated this by putting pressure on Russia as a way of dividing it from China. As he put it in particularly direct language regarding US policy towards both Russia and China. Zbigniew Brzezinski noted. "For the first time ever, a non-Eurasian power [the US] has emerged not only as the key arbiter of Eurasian power relations but also as the world's paramount power." This was: "the rapid ascendance of a Western Hemisphere power, the United States, as the sole and, indeed, the first truly global power." The blunt conclusion Brzezinski drew from this was that: "the three grand imperatives of imperial geostrategy are to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together."

In summary, some in the US formulating foreign policy wished to attempt to break up good relations between Russia and China by putting pressure on Russia, others wanted to attempt to separate Russia and China by making concessions to Russia. But these were merely tactical differences on how to achieve the strategic goal that they all agreed on – that it was necessary to break up the good relations between Russia and China so as to be able better to pursue a policy of weakening China. All understood that agreement between Russia and China, in particular because of China's economic strength and Russia's military strength, was a formidable obstacle to US aggression against China. Therefore, it was necessary by either "seduction" or force to break up the good relations between Russia and China.

### Consequences for China

The consequences of this for China are, of course, enormous. China's economic development means that eventually it will be able to create military forces that are the equal of the United States. But this cannot be done rapidly. If Russia were to be detached from good relations with China, then China would be faced with a US which was militarily stronger than China – particularly in the field of nuclear weapons. The US has over 3,500 nuclear warheads – many times more than China.

Therefore, the US has a considerable nuclear superiority over China. However, Russia also has over 3,500 nuclear warheads – an inheritance from the USSR. Russia and China combined therefore have essential parity in nuclear weapons with the US.

Certainly, China's nuclear arsenal would inflict appalling damage and deaths on the US – to the point where it is a serious deterrent to the US. But this does not alter the fact that in the most extreme of circumstances, nuclear war, the US has an advantage compared to China, whereas the combination of Russia and China is equal to the US in nuclear weapons – a factor be taken into account by the US.

In the field of conventional armaments the situation is similar. A US conventional invasion of China (or Russia) is totally unrealistic. But given the aggressive US use of military force against weaker states, as seen in Iraq, Libya, Syria and other countries, more partial conflicts are not to be excluded.

In such struggles, the combined conventional military forces of Russia and China are much more powerful than either separately. Therefore, while there is no military alliance between China and Russia, the US has to take into account that if it launches any aggressive war on a country of joint concern to Russia and China it may have to deal with indirect or direct military support given by both Russia and China to the country under attack by the US.

In addition to these military and economic factors there is also a direct political lesson for China of US policy to Russia. In China, as in Russia in 1991, there were people who claimed that the US was not aggressive and/or was simply opposed to Communism. But US policy towards Russia has shown that this analysis was entirely false. After 1991 Russia was a capitalist country, not Communist – but the US continued to attack it. Russia under first Yeltsin and in the early period of Putin, took a huge number of steps to attempt to come to agreements with the US – but the US continued to attack Russia.

As the claim that the US was aggressive because it was simply opposed to Communism will not stand the test of facts, and neither will the claim that the US was aggressive to Russia because of “self-defence”, why therefore did the US pursue its continued aggressive policy towards Russia? And what are the lessons for China?

#### Russia and US policy in Europe

To answer this question, it is necessary to understand that even after the disintegration of the USSR Russia was the most powerful country in Europe. It has a population of 144 million – almost as many as Germany (83 million) and France (67 million) combined. Due to Russia's great size, geographically it is the largest country in the world, It also has the world's greatest natural resources - energy, metals, all types of raw materials etc. Russia has a military power far greater than that of any other European country. Therefore, how Russia is to be dealt with strategically in Europe has been a decisive issue for European geopolitics - and later for countries relating to Europe - for centuries and continues to be so.

For US “hegemonist” foreign policy the most important goal is to ensure that Russia is excluded from the overall European economy and political system. The reason for this is that Western Europe plus Russia is as powerful economically and militarily as the US. Western Europe has highly advanced manufacturing industry, but it is lacking in raw materials and energy – the resources which Texas and other “raw material states” supply to the US. But the energy and raw material resources of Russia not merely equal but are greater than those of the US. Russia also has a powerful position in science. Western Europe plus Russia is the economic equal of the US. However Western Europe by itself cannot be as strong as the US.

The conclusion which the US draws from this situation is, therefore, that it must strategically aim to separate Western Europe from Russia. This is why, for example, the US has so strongly opposed Germany and Western Europe's use of Russian oil and gas – originally carried out under Reagan's fierce objection to the first gas pipelines from the USSR to Western Europe and continuing up to the US's recent attempts to block the Nordstream 2 pipeline from Russia to Germany. Separating Western Europe from Russia is therefore a key US strategic goal to weaken both Western Europe and Russia compared to the US.

The US aggression against Russia is therefore not due to the fact that Russia was Communist, or that Russia was aggressive. US aggression against Russia was to try to prevent Russia being strong – whether Communist or capitalist.

As Paul Wolfowitz, Under Secretary of Defense for policy in the George H. W. Bush administration, wrote in 1992, in issuing a Defence Policy Guidance: “Our policy [after the fall of the Soviet Union] must now refocus on precluding the emergence of any potential future global competitor.” Note this paid no attention to the question of Communism or capitalism, merely that no other state should be powerful enough to be a competitor to the US. That is, the crucial issue was not whether Russia was Communist or capitalist but that it should be weaker than the US. Later, exactly the same US policy was applied to China.

The most extreme/ideal solution for the US to weaken Russia was to split up Russia. In the 1990s several analyses were published in the US calling for Russian to be split up between European Russia and an independent “Siberian Federation”. However, while the actual splitting up of Russia is not considered possible by most US analysts nevertheless all possible policies to weaken Russia are considered correct to pursue.

This is exactly the same policy that the US pursues towards China. The fundamental reason for US aggression towards China is not that it is Communist, it is that China has become strong – although, of course, it is Communism that has allowed China to become strong. Therefore, the aim of the US is to weaken China whether it is Communist or capitalist.

In pursuing a policy of attempting to weaken China the aim of the US to try to support separatists in Taiwan is well known. But what is not so well understood in China is that the most extreme forces in the US regard as desirable the disintegration of China itself in the same way that the USSR was split up. This would, of course, be ideal for the US - as it would make China permanently weak.

An example of this is the projections made in the map below – which is one of several such schemes promoted in the US. This shows a China in which Tibet is made independent, in which Xinjiang is separated from China as “East Turkistan”, in which Inner Mongolia is separated from China etc

### Germany and France’s policy towards Russia

Returning to the situation regarding Russia itself, US policy, however, also significantly, but not completely, coincides with the policy of Germany and France. Germany and France jointly control the EU – if they are in agreement no other country can block them. But if Russia were allowed to play a real role in the EU system, either through formal membership or simply by indirect influence, then Germany and France would no longer be able to entirely control the European situation. For that reason, both France and Germany agree with the US, for somewhat different reasons, that Russia must be excluded from real participation in the European system. This is why Russia’s naïve attempts in the 1990s and early 2000s to become part of the European system were always doomed to failure.

The partial difference between EU policy to Russia and the US was that while both agreed on the need to keep Russia out of the overall European system nevertheless, for economic reasons, Germany in particular benefitted from trade with Russia in the field of energy and raw materials – German manufacturing is extremely efficient and internationally competitive, but Germany lacks energy and raw materials. Therefore, Germany attempted to pursue a policy of subordinating itself



militarily to the US but pursuing its own economic interests – for example, in participation in construction of the Nordstream 2 pipeline.

The US, however, wanted to weaken Germany economically and therefore opposed construction of Nordstream 2 - as it had earlier opposed other gas pipelines from Russia to Germany. The US, understanding that Germany was militarily subordinate to the United States, therefore found, as a secondary goal, that it was highly useful to increase military tension with Russia in order to force Germany to “choose sides” between the US and Russia and thereby weaken Germany-Russia economic relations.

Expansion of NATO, which was clearly an aggressive policy against Russia, was therefore an ideal policy for the US. Brzezinski, for example, specifically noted that NATO expansion would be aggressive against Russia but also ensure that Western Europe would be weaker than the US: “It follows that a wider Europe and an enlarged NATO will serve well both the short-term and the longer-term goals of U.S. policy. A larger Europe [enlarging the EU] will expand the range of American influence—and, through the admission of new Central European members, also increase in the European councils the number of states with a pro-American proclivity—without simultaneously creating a Europe politically so integrated that it could soon challenge the United States on geopolitical matters of high importance to America.”

While the main European goal of the US’s aggressive policy was therefore to weaken Russia, and separate it from China, nevertheless, a secondary US goal was to weaken Germany – which was achieved, for example, through the postponement/cancelling of the Nordstream 2 gas pipeline and in general terms breaking up economic relations between Germany and Russia.

In summary, US policy was designed to achieve several objectives.

1. Most importantly to try to separate Russia from China in order to make easier US aggression against China
2. Second to weaken Russia
3. Third to weaken Germany compared to the US.

#### Immediate consequences for China

If these were the strategic issues involved in the Ukraine conflict what are the immediate consequences for China?

First, it must be understood that whatever is the short-term outcome of the war in the Ukraine US aggressive policy against Russia, within the framework of aiming to create bad relations between Russia and China, will continue. Obviously, the US would prefer that Russia lost the war in Ukraine – it hopes that a Russian defeat might lead to the replacement of Putin by a pro-Western anti-China government. But the US has made clear that its attack on Russia and China will continue even if Russia wins the Ukraine war. The *Washington Post*, under the self-explanatory headline, “U.S. and allies quietly prepare for a Ukrainian government-in-exile and a long insurgency” noted that the working Washington and EU assumption is that Russia will win the war. But in that case the US would continue to attempt to pressure and destabilise Russia: “The ways that Western countries would support a Ukrainian resistance are beginning to take shape. Officials have been reluctant to discuss detailed plans, since they’re premised on a Russian military victory... But as a first step, Ukraine’s allies are planning how to help establish and support a government-in-exile, which could direct guerrilla operations against Russian occupiers, according to several U.S. and European officials...”

“As early as last December, some U.S. officials saw signs that the Ukrainian military was preparing...

“During an official visit, a Ukrainian special operations commander told Rep. Michael Waltz (R-Fla.), Rep. Seth Moulton (D-Mass.) and other lawmakers that they were shifting training and planning to focus on maintaining an armed opposition, relying on insurgent-like tactics.

“The weapons the United States has provided to Ukraine’s military, and that continue to flow into the country, would be crucial to the success of an insurgent movement, officials said. The Biden administration has asked Congress... to take up a \$10 billion... military package that includes funding to replenish the stocks of weapons that have already been sent.”

In short US aggression against Russia will continue – with the strategic goal of weakening Russia and also forcing it to break off good relations with China.

“War is the continuation of politics by other means”

Second, it needs to be understood it is superfluous for real politics to discuss whether Russia’s invasion of Ukraine was or was not the right tactical way to deal with US aggression against Russia – whether it was a wrong method, whether it was a premature, whether it was correct etc. This decision has been taken. What is crucial is what is the outcome of this struggle? If Ukraine is admitted into NATO, that is Russia is blocked in the attempt to prevent this, this will be an enormous step forward for the US in its aggression against Russia and, therefore, to increase US pressure on Russia to have bad relations with China.

Equally there is not at all need for anyone in China to get involved with the issue of whether the Russian military invasion of Ukraine is the right way tactically to deal with this situation. China is entirely correct push for a peaceful negotiated outcome to the situation. It is perfectly possible to believe that this military action by Russia was not the correct method, that it should only have been launched after other alternatives were exhausted, or that it was correct. This does not alter the fundamental situation.

Lenin, in his work of “The Collapse of the Second International” in 1915 clearly outlined the correct analysis of war. ““Perhaps the most primitive of these [false analyses] is the “who-started it?” theory, which may be worded as follows: we have been attacked and are defending ourselves; the interests of the proletariat demand that the violators of the peace... should be properly dealt with. This is merely a rehash of the declarations made by all governments and of the outcries of the bourgeois and the gutter press all over the world...”

“With reference to wars, the main thesis... is that “war is simply the continuation of politics by other [i.e., violent] means”. Such is the formula of Clausewitz, one of the greatest writers on the history of war... And it was always the standpoint of Marx and Engels, who regarded any war as the continuation of the politics of the powers concerned—and the various classes within these countries—in a definite period.”

Mao Zedong’s On Protracted War similarly uses Clausewitz’s famous analysis “War is the continuation of politics” (point 63)

In line with this point that war is the continuation of politics it is unnecessary for anyone to become involved in a discussion of Russia’s military tactics – whether it was correct or incorrect for Russia to launch this war at this time. What is clear is the politics of the situation. If Russia is defeated in this war this will mean a greatly increased risk that Ukraine is incorporated into NATO, increasing the pressure on Russia to break from its good relations with China.

## The trend of global politics

Finally, of course, Ukraine is a major change in the international situation and its outcome will have many global effects. It is being accompanied by stepped up aggression by the US against China. As already seen, whatever the differences among key US foreign policy strategists on Ukraine and NATO, they are almost all in the framework of how to attack China. Some of the proposals on this are becoming more extreme. For example, Pompeo, former US Secretary of State, has become the first candidate for the Republican Party for President in 2024 to openly call for the US to recognise Taiwan Province as an independent state, [declaring](#): “the U.S. government should immediately take... steps to... offer the Republic of China (Taiwan) America’s diplomatic recognition as a free and sovereign country.” Former US deputy assistant secretary of defence Elbridge Colby has similarly called for the US to fight what he terms a “limited war” with China over Taiwan – that is, Colby attempts to argue such a war should be fought by the US but could be prevented from becoming nuclear.

Such views as those of Pompeo and Colby show that open attempts to cross China’s red lines on Taiwan, or to actively prepare to mount a war against China, have moved from extreme fringe politics in the US to a minority position within the US foreign policy mainstream.

This, of course, has the most profound strategic consequences for China. Since 1978 China’s entire policy for development has had as an essential premise that the main trend in global politics will be peaceful – that is, while local wars cannot be avoided unfortunately, a war between major powers will not take place. But the willingness of the US to engage in an extreme provocative policy towards Russia and the emergence, even as a minority, of positions in the US foreign policy mainstream entirely crossing China’s red lines on Taiwan, means that this assumption has to be explicitly examined. The implications of this, and a judgement on this, can only be accurately considered by those who are in the centre of geopolitical decision making, not by outside analysts. But it is an issue which clearly needs to be considered given the increasingly aggressive character of US foreign policy.

## Conclusion

Returning to what is happening in Ukraine this is, of course, a terrible tragedy. China’s foreign policy statements are clearly correct to emphasise restraint on all sides. It would be very very much better to have a negotiated outcome than a war. As Maria Zakharova, Director of the Information and Press Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, [stated](#) clearly: “The goal of returning Ukraine to the origins of its sovereignty sealed in the Declaration of Independence, which proclaimed neutrality and cooperation with Russia, will be achieved. It would be better if this is done through peace negotiations.” But the cause of the situation in Ukraine is the US led aggressive expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe and most directly into Ukraine – which is a deadly threat to Russia. Therefore, Russia has to defeat it. The situation in Ukraine is the Western flank of defence of Russia. But, for the reasons already given, it is also the Western flank of defence of China.