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HOW DOES THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR CHANGE ASIAN GEOPOLITICS?

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Russia's war against Ukraine is one of the most significant political events of the decade. The reason for this is the impact of this confrontation, which is not confined to Europe, but affects Asia as well. The war will echo in other regions of the world, including the Indo-Pacific, particularly the part in Asia. The key actors who will have a major impact in this part of the world are China, India, and Japan. Each of them has taken its own position regarding the war and Russia. At the same time, each of them pursues its own national interests and geopolitical ambitions.

Introduction

The ongoing war in Ukraine, along with sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation, delivers a major shock to the world. This war has led to skyrocketing prices for food, fuel and fertilisers, since Russia is one of the main suppliers of these products to world markets and Ukraine is one of the largest grain exporters. However, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has not only economic, but also geopolitical consequences. The ripple effects of this war are spreading across the world, and already hitting East Asia's geopolitical environment.

India's Pragmatic Neutrality

With the outbreak of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, India officially remained neutral. On the one hand, the country does not support Russian aggression openly, and calls for an immediate cessation of hostilities and resolution of the conflict via diplomatic

means. On the other hand, India avoids open criticism of Russia's actions, and refuses to join Western sanctions or to impose its own. Such a neutral position provoked a negative reaction from the West.

New Delhi has been carefully using the language of 'national interest', to offset criticism. India's foreign minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar stated in Parliament that "India's approach should be guided by our national beliefs and values, by our national interest and by a national strategy", and that India's actions are driven by "legitimate pursuits of national interest"¹.

India's foreign policy is based on the idea of "strategic autonomy". From the first days of independence from the British Empire, India has managed to maintain an independent foreign policy course, in fact, playing the role of a "swing power". It is important for India to maintain this policy, the essence of which is in preventing the monopolisation of global

1 External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar's statement during reply on discussion under Rule 193 on the Situation in Ukraine in the Parliament, Ministry of External Affairs of India, 6 April 2022 [https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/35159/External_Affairs_Minister_Dr_S_Jaishankars_statement_during_reply_on_discussion_under_Rule_193_on_the_Situation_in_Ukraine_in_the_Parliament]

political and economic influence by one actor, including in multilateral institutions. This policy is key for India, both in the regional context (preventing the excessive strengthening of China, the development of a multipolar Asia, the policy of balancing between major powers), and in the global context (creating a multipolar world order with a fairer and more equal distribution of influence among the actors).

India's position on Ukraine is also a product of global balance of power considerations. The Russian-Ukrainian war led to an escalation of the confrontation between the US and China, which threatens India's "strategic autonomy." Such autonomy is not just a way to assert its own freedom of choice in foreign policy, but also a means of avoiding an asymmetric alliance with the United States. Reluctance to follow the role of a "minor partner" of the US, drawn into a global confrontation, is also one of the motives for India's neutrality, which New Delhi will continue to maintain. In addition, India, like many other countries in Asia, is preparing for the inevitable transition from a unipolar American world order to a multipolar, post-American and mainly "Asian" one, especially after the US has taken a course to reduce gradually its global involvement in some regional affairs, to concentrate on internal problems, specifically after their strategic withdrawal from Afghanistan. That will possibly lead to the potential rise of a China-led regional order in Asia, which does not correspond to India's geopolitical ambitions.

Therefore, India cannot support the West, since it wants to avoid a major conflict with China due to political and ideological polarisation. For New Delhi, the rapid escalation that can occur as a result of an unprecedented increase in international tension (which is exactly what is happening, in their opinion, against the background of the war in Ukraine) does not meet their interests, given the asymmetry in the balance of power between India and China

in favour of Beijing. Moreover, a potential diplomatic conflict with China would increase the risk of an armed escalation in the disputed border areas of Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh.

Considering the "Kashmiri" issue, the Russian-Ukrainian war creates a potentially dangerous precedent for India. The declaration of independence of the separatist pseudo-republics of "DPR" and "LPR", its recognition by Russia and the full-scale invasion in February 2022 set a negative example for India, which has territorial disputes with neighbouring countries. Particularly, Pakistan actively supports anti-Indian separatists within India-controlled Kashmir, which could potentially lead to an outbreak of anti-government protests.



India's position on Ukraine is also a product of global balance of power considerations. The Russian-Ukrainian war led to an escalation of the confrontation between the US and China, which threatens India's "strategic autonomy"

For all the above-mentioned reasons, India will maintain the regional status quo and balance of power in South Asia. It also claims to be one of the great powers with its sphere of influence. Therefore, it consistently supports the idea of a multipolar world order, where China and India are commensurate powers. In this regard, the main goal of New Delhi is Beijing's recognition of India as one of the poles of power in Asia, having an exclusive sphere of interest in the Indian Ocean and South and Southeast Asia.

India will continue its cooperation with Russia, dismissing all the criticism. Firstly, there is a political reason for that. Russia keeps on weakening and deteriorating.

Increasing sanctions pressure, and isolation by Western countries is pushing Moscow closer to China. Russia risks becoming a Chinese asset in its confrontation with the West, and risks deepening its dependence on Beijing. Russia becoming China's "junior partner" is not in line with New Delhi's geostrategic calculations. Moreover, this will likely entail the geopolitical axis "Moscow-Beijing-Islamabad". Both China and Pakistan want closer ties with Russia. China and Pakistan are considered immediate and enduring threats. Preserving friendly relations with Moscow will help to prevent deepening Russian ties with China, and to limit the Russian temptation to build new strategic ties with Pakistan.

The Russian-Ukrainian war intensifies militarisation within the Indo-Pacific, which concerns India as well. In 2017-2021, India was one of the world's largest weapons importers, accounting for 11% of the global market, on a par with Saudi Arabia². However, much of India's military equipment is still Soviet- or Russian-made. India accounts for almost a third of all Russian arms exports. In 2016-2020, Russia supplied India with arms worth a total of USD 6.6 billion³.

Due to the war in Ukraine, the military cooperation between India and Russia is at risk. In particular, India expects delivery of Russian C-400 air defence systems for their further deployment along the "Line of Actual Control" with China. However, due to logistical problems and Western sanctions, the agreement about weapons supply has come under question.

On the other hand, this situation also provides opportunities for India. The

war and Western sanctions give the Indian authorities the chance not only to partially refocus on other partners, thus to strengthen regional cooperation, but also to invest more resources in their own arms industry, especially since this idea can now be supported by the United States. In particular, Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said⁴ that he offered the American investors the chance to support "Make in India", and to expand joint production of defence products.



Considering the "Kashmiri" issue, the Russian-Ukrainian war creates a potentially dangerous precedent for India. The declaration of independence of the separatist pseudo-republics of "DPR" and "LPR", its recognition by Russia and the full-scale invasion in February 2022 set a negative example for India, which has territorial disputes with neighbouring countries

The war in Ukraine and Western sanctions have made energy import problematic. The share of Russian oil in India's imports used to be small – only 2-3%. The largest suppliers of oil to India are the countries of the Middle East and the USA. Western sanctions compelled Russia to increase the sale of energy to Asian markets with a significant discount, and that is what India, which is 80% dependent on energy import, is interested in. At the same time, this situation allowed the Indian government to launch national projects aimed at increasing

2 SIPRI Yearbook 2022, SIPRI [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/yb22_summary_en_v3.pdf]

3 Ibid

4 Rajnath invites US defence companies to carry out joint R&D, manufacturing & maintenance in India, "New India Express", 21 April 2022 [<https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2022/apr/21/rajnath-invites-us-defence-companies-to-carry-out-joint-rd-manufacturing--maintenance-in-india-2444758.html>]

its own production, including through attracting Western capital. Taking advantage of the world crisis and the desire of the USA to drag India to its side, New Delhi offers the West assistance in finding alternative (preferably inexpensive) options.

In the medium-to-long term, Russia's war on Ukraine deepens the division between the West and the East, both politically and ideologically, as well as concerning the future of the world financial system. Sanctions introduced against Russia triggered discussions about the gradual "de-dollarisation", the development of alternative payment systems, better protected from the monopoly of specific states, with a more active role for non-Western countries and institutions. India, as an active member of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, can enhance its role in reforming the international financial and economic system based on the Bretton Woods agreement. The key goal in this regard will be establishing a system of reserve currencies, increasing the role of national currencies, and the creation of parallel non-western financial institutions. Russia has already offered India the opportunity to use a payment system alternative to SWIFT.

India-China relations are going to be the key dilemma for the future of Asian geopolitics. On 25 March, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited India, for the first time in two years, after skirmishes at the Sino-Indian border in 2020. During the negotiations with his Indian counterpart, the Chinese minister emphasised that China and India are the two oldest world civilizations, the two centres of power, which promote multipolarity as the basis for world order, economic globalisation, civilizational diversity and the democratisation of international relations. Wang Yi called for the strengthening of bilateral communication and coordinating

positions, to protect the interests of both sides. Importantly, he also called for a resolution of the border dispute "which should not affect the overall development of bilateral relations". China seems to have seen India's neutral stance on the Russian-Ukrainian war as evidence of differences between India and the West (USA) and probably saw this as an opportunity to win over India to its side. In New Delhi, this visit was considered as an opportunity to maintain communication.

India is seeking to establish strategic relations with many countries in the Indo-Pacific region, which are also alarmed by China's rise. Particularly, the USA, Japan, Australia, and Singapore. It is betting on the regional "maritime democracies". India's relations with these states can be described as a "soft balancing" strategy. It implies that these relations are not aimed at creating an anti-Chinese (military) union, but at finding political allies. At the same time, India is increasing its presence in the Indo-Pacific, and is designing comprehensive security architecture in the region.

For India, the Russian-Ukrainian war is an opportunity to display leadership, while maintaining "strategic autonomy" in its foreign policy. This significantly increases the prestige of New Delhi among minor neighbouring countries. In addition, the war has had a significant impact on the economy, energy and food security of Asian countries, including India. Finally, the crisis in Sri Lanka was aggravated by the Russian-Ukrainian war, because of fuel price increases, although in fact, a complex series of factors caused the Sri Lankan crisis. India is quite actively involved in the settlement of the crisis, supplying Colombo with financial and humanitarian assistance. This will also positively influence the significance of Delhi as a regional leader.


China's Antagonism

The Russian-Ukrainian war has produced both negative and positive effects for China's international stance. Firstly, it created an extremely toxic situation that has threatened Beijing's reputation and economic stability. Secondly, Western sanctions and Russia's isolation have had an impact on China's grand project "One Belt, One Road", in which Beijing has already invested more than USD 4 trillion and received USD 2 trillion in 2021⁵. Many transportation routes that ran through Russian territory are no longer in use. Because of the breakdown in logistics chains, China is forced to invest more in alternative routes, such as those through Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey. Alternative routes and reorientation to maritime trade, which is more dependent on other countries, including America's partners, and is also partially dependent on Russian seaports, are not easy options.

The war has enabled the United States, China's main rival, to consolidate alliances in Europe and Asia. The US has also increased its influence on pro-American elite groups in various countries, and attempted to win over those states Washington requires in its efforts to assemble a new global anti-China coalition, but which tried to maintain balance and neutrality. This is especially true of states such as Germany, France, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Israel, Singapore, and Pakistan. Singapore became the first Southeast Asian country to join Western sanctions against Russia. In Pakistan, the conflict between pro-Western and pro-Chinese elites heated up, resulting in a severe political crisis that ended on 10 April with the resignation of pro-Chinese Prime Minister Imran Khan.

One of the examples of the impact on industries is neon. The war hampered the export from Ukraine of neon, which is an

important component in the production of semiconductors, a huge industry in China. As a result, long-term disruptions in supplies of neon, which was previously delivered by sea, may have an impact on the Chinese semiconductor manufacturing sector's competitiveness.



However, the war in Ukraine has also created significant opportunities for China. Firstly, the weakening of Russia brings it closer to the status of China's "junior partner" in regional and world affairs, which has long been a preferred format for Beijing, rather than the emergence of a powerful regional state capable of challenging not only the West, but also the Celestial Empire

The Russian-Ukrainian war is causing major problems for China's food security. Although Beijing has increased its strategic reserves in recent years, Russia's invasion of Ukraine poses serious challenges for China in this regard in the medium to long term. It is currently difficult to find alternative delivery routes. The reorientation of grain imports only to Russia is not in China's plans, which were aimed at diversifying supplies, rather than them being monopolised by one actor. Other major suppliers of food are mostly the USA and its allies (Australia, France, Canada, Germany, and Poland), on whom Beijing does not want to become dependent in such a critical issue. The neutral players such as Argentina and Kazakhstan also remain an option, but their capabilities are limited, and they will not be able to replace completely the loss of Ukrainian and Russian imports. Therefore, it is very important for China that the war be resolved as soon as possible, preferably

5 *The Belt and Road Initiative* [<https://www.silkroadbriefing.com/the-belt-and-road-initiative.html>]

with the opening of the Black Sea ports and the restoration of grain supplies within the next 1-2 years.

However, the war in Ukraine has also created significant opportunities for China. Firstly, the weakening of Russia brings it closer to the status of China's "junior partner" in regional and world affairs, which has long been a preferred format for Beijing, rather than the emergence of a powerful regional state capable of challenging not only the West, but also the Celestial Empire. Therefore, China needs a Russia that will be sufficiently amenable to Beijing's external influence. Russia not as a global power, but as a regional player, a supplier of raw materials and a situational partner on regional security (Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Black Sea, the Middle East and North Africa).



sanctions against the Russian defence complex give China the opportunity to replace Russia as a major arms exporter in the world market

Secondly, the war forced the West to react, and thus revealed the tools of their pressure and influence, including in trade, economic, financial and technological spheres. Western sanctions showed China what it should prepare for in case of a further confrontation with the US. China is likely to use the experience of Russia's war in Ukraine as an opportunity to improve its planning for a possible conflict over Taiwan.

Western sanctions against Russia have also allowed assessment of the level and depth of Washington's and their allies' control over the international financial system. The sanctions, although justified by many states, demonstrated the vulnerability of most countries to a US-dominated dollar system,

especially with the arrest of the Central Bank of Russia dollar reserves. The same applies to foreign trade. China will use the current crisis to push the issue of creating protected bilateral trade systems, converting this into national currencies, persuading other countries to increase the share of their gold and foreign exchange reserves in yuan, as Russia has done in the past few years.

The war in Ukraine potentially aggravates the socio-economic situation in different regions due to rising inflation, as well as increasing prices for essential goods, food and energy. Sanctions exacerbate these problems, therefore creating opportunities for China to increase its influence, and even give more room for manoeuvre, since the countries that have joined the sanctions will not want to enter into a confrontation with China as well.

Fourthly, the war has deepened the split between the West and all other countries, especially those that are tired of Western institutions' dominance in the world order. For China, it is a chance to consolidate their influence over countries not under pressure exerted by Washington, or those which do not want to follow the path of the West, such as the countries of the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia.

Finally, sanctions against the Russian defence complex give China the opportunity to replace Russia as a major arms exporter in the world market. China benefits from a slight weakening of Russia, which will give it the opportunity to expand its sales due to the Western isolation of Russia, as well as to strengthen its economic presence in Russia (e.g., replace Visa and Mastercard with UnionPay), and make Moscow more dependent on Beijing.

The US is still going to be China's main global rival for decades to come, but Beijing is not yet ready for a head-on confrontation with Washington, and intends to strike a balance

between cooperation and rivalry in the future. This was demonstrated by Xi Jinping's actual proposal during the negotiations with Joe Biden to take a break and reach interim agreements regarding a bipolar American-Chinese world order. China views the war in Ukraine as a part of the global confrontation between the conventional "West" (Europe, North America, and Oceania) and "East" (the Greater Middle East and Asia). For China, this process is more an element of inevitable global developments that should cause a collision between the interests of the West, which is losing unconditional initiative on the world stage, and the Global South (not only Asia and Oceania, but Latin America and Africa), which wants to play a more active role in the international system.



a tough anti-Russian stance should first confirm Japan's reputation as a champion of liberal values, such as democracy, human rights, and a market economy. In addition, the move was to demonstrate that Japan is ready to cooperate actively in the international arena, independently choosing which side of the conflict to join

The war has also heightened tensions between China and some of its neighbours. As the rivalry between Washington and Beijing has intensified, many East Asian nations have adopted hedging strategies, to balance ties to both powers. But the conflict in Ukraine has driven some of these countries to lean more heavily towards the United States⁶. China's attempts to consolidate its relations with friendly countries and expand its influence

over small states – as demonstrated by Foreign Minister Wang Yi's Pacific Islands tour – have not been successful. This creates a major problem for China in a geopolitical confrontation with the United States. Thus, Beijing, in its effort to reshape the international relations system will have to resort to reconciliation with the US.

Japan's Bifurcation

Japan has taken a more unequivocal position than India and China regarding the Russian-Ukrainian war. Tokyo stood shoulder to shoulder with the G7 and joined Western sanctions against Russia. It can be mistakenly assumed that Japan stood up for Ukraine as a sign of its solidarity with the West, because it does not betray its foreign policy traditions and follows in the wake of its partner, the USA. However, in reality, a tough anti-Russian stance should first confirm Japan's reputation as a champion of liberal values, such as democracy, human rights, and a market economy. In addition, the move was to demonstrate that Japan is ready to cooperate actively in the international arena, independently choosing which side of the conflict to join.

Russia is added to the list of countries that pose a threat to Japan's national security. A clear anti-Russian position eliminates the vague prospect of the conclusion of a peace agreement between the two countries following the outcome of World War II. The former Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe planned to resolve the issue of the status and affiliation of the Kuril Islands through this agreement. Prime Minister Kishida said that Abe's conciliatory position towards the Russian president has not yielded results for Japan. Later, during the parliamentary debate, speaking about the status of the Kuril Islands, Japanese Foreign Minister

6 Y. Xuetong, *China's Ukraine Conundrum*, "Foreign Affairs", 2 May 2022
[<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2022-05-02/chinas-ukraine-conundrum>]

Yoshimasa Hayashi called the southern part of the islands (Kunashir, Iturup, Hamobai, and Shikotan) an “integral part of Japan”⁷. Later, the director of the European Affairs Department of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hideki Uyama directly said that the Southern Kuriles are occupied by Russia⁸. On 21 March, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation published a statement, proclaiming its refusal to negotiate over the Kuril Islands and conclude a peace agreement⁹. However, Moscow placed all the blame for the rapid deterioration of bilateral relations on Tokyo. Therefore, since the Russian side has frozen the negotiations, Japan and Russia are formally at war again. As a result, the Russian-Ukrainian war clearly led to the deterioration of Russian-Japanese relations, making Russia a potential threat to Japanese national security.

At the same time, Japan does not reject bilateral cooperation completely. Energy and fisheries will remain fully functioning spheres of agreement between Japan and Russia. Dependence on Middle Eastern energy suppliers (almost 90% of Japanese energy imports come from the Persian Gulf countries) is a major concern for Tokyo, as the shipping route runs through the South China Sea. Beijing’s control over the South China Sea will mean further expansion of its political and economic influence, as well as increased energy independence, which will further strengthen China’s influence over neighbouring countries. Because of this, the security of energy supplies to Japan, and

consequently, the energy security of Japan will be under serious threat. For this reason, Tokyo is trying to reduce their dependence on Middle Eastern countries and diversify their sources of supply. One of the alternative options is Russia. The Japanese government is striving to maintain the share of Japanese companies in the Sakhalin-2 project. Thus, if in the field of economic cooperation, one should expect a significant worsening of relations, the development of energy cooperation fully coincides with the national interests of Japan.

In the short term, the loss of the Russian market will have a negative, but not critical, effect on the Japanese economy. Most importantly, the aggravation of relations with Russia will provide a strong incentive for the final review of Japan’s role both in the region and in the world, as well as for changing its defence system. Japan will more confidently follow the path of regaining its status as a fully sovereign state with a full-fledged army. Prime Minister of Japan Fumio Kishida has already made several important statements, namely concerning the need to strengthen significantly the country’s defence capabilities¹⁰. Before that, Tokyo used the North Korean nuclear missile program as well as China’s active activities in the East and South China Seas, as a justification for increasing and strengthening its defence potential.

In the face of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and an increasingly tense situation in Asia with missile tests from North Korea and a

7 Япония назвала южные Курильские острова “незаконно оккупированными” (Japan called the southern Kuril Islands “illegally occupied”), “Voice of America”, 22 April 2022 [https://www.golosameriki.com/a/japan-russia-islands/6540456.html]

8 I. Reynolds, *How Ukraine War Fuels Japan’s Island Feud With Russia*, Bloomberg, 03 March 2022 [https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-03/how-ukraine-war-fuels-japan-s-island-feud-with-russia-quicktake]

9 Заявление МИД России об ответных мерах на решения Правительства Японии (Foreign Ministry statement on measures in response to the decisions of the Government of Japan), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 21 March 2022 [https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1805541/]

10 Kishida Vows to Strengthen Defense Capabilities, “Nippon”, 26 May 2022 [https://www.nippon.com/en/news/yjj2022052600142/]

more assertive China, the Liberal Democratic Party recently proposed raising the defence budget, which has long hovered around 1% of gross domestic product, to around 2% of GDP within five years. Spending proposals include funding for weapons to destroy enemy missile bases and their command-and-control centres if an attack on Japan appears imminent. A budget plan for next year and a new national security strategy are due later this year. The push for 2% conforms to NATO's defence spending goals, and is undoubtedly part of Kishida's larger vision of a bolstered Japan-NATO relationship. There is also an intensifying debate among Japanese lawmakers on whether Japan should acquire weapons capable of striking missile launch sites in enemy territory. The moves demonstrate Japan's recognition that it must bolster its own deterrent power, rather than simply rely on its alliance with the United States, to protect it or its interests in Asia.



The Russian-Ukrainian war has changed public opinion in Japan regarding security issues. Now that the majority of lawmakers in the Japanese Diet are in favour of constitutional reform, which will imply the abolition of the 9th "pacifist" article

This will contribute to Japan's more confident cooperation with "like-minded" nations, gradually moving away from the asymmetrical alliance with the US, although officially recognising it as a key player for stability and security in the Indo-Pacific region. Moreover, Japan will do so with

the states which are geopolitically on the same level as Japan, among the US allies: Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and the UK. For example, in May 2022, a meeting between Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and his British counterpart Boris Johnson took place in London. During the visit, the parties reached an "agreement in principle" on a bilateral defence pact. In particular, it concerns conducting joint exercises between the Royal Armed Forces and the Japan Self-Defence Forces, as well as the Future Combat Air System Program and military-technical cooperation¹¹.

The Russian-Ukrainian war will definitely contribute to more active work by Japan in strengthening its international status. This is also confirmed by Kishida's proposal during the congress of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party of Japan to join the process of reforming the UN Security Council, due to Russia's aggressive actions, implying, in addition to limiting the right of veto, that Japan should take the place of one of the permanent members of the Security Council.

The Russian-Ukrainian war has changed public opinion in Japan regarding security issues. Now that the majority of lawmakers in the Japanese Diet are in favour of constitutional reform, which will imply the abolition of the 9th "pacifist" article, the likelihood of success of this reform is increasing. That means that Japan will begin to develop a full-fledged offensive potential in a relatively short time. This confluence of events gives Kishida a challenge – and an opportunity – to connect the public's concerns about potential conflicts nearby and support for increased spending in the aggregate, to more specific policies that would give Japan a broader set of tools to

11 *Japan and U.K. agree on defense pact amid China's rise in Indo-Pacific*, "Japan Times", 06 May 2022
[<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/05/06/national/uk-japan-defense/>]

ensure its security in the future¹². If he succeeds, it will truly mark a new era for Japanese defence and security policy.

Conclusion

Overall, Russia's attack on Ukraine has launched the process of reorganisation of the geopolitical situation in Asia.

Japan will continue to build up its defence capabilities. Given the new policy towards South Korea, which is aimed at ameliorating bilateral relations, the process of strengthening the Japanese defence potential will be progressive, so as not to risk facing criticism from the South Korean authorities. However, criticism will inevitably follow from China, which will perceive such actions by Japan as revanchist, and as an attempt to revive militarism.

Japan and China are on opposing sides. Japan openly supports the West and the United States, China's main geopolitical rival. It can be assumed that relations between China and Japan will deteriorate as Japan fulfils its geopolitical ambitions. The territorial dispute in the East China Sea and the ongoing Japan-Taiwan interaction will be additional reasons for that.

Japan will also become stronger politically, thanks to allies who are united by a common goal – to contain the growing power of the Celestial Empire. One of these is India. India, as well as Japan, will seek

to further strengthen its political potential and influence, not least through the strengthening of the armed forces. Potential negotiations to resolve the border dispute should not give false hopes for a thaw in India-China relations. Since the border war in 1962, little has changed in New Delhi's perception of Beijing: India continues to be highly suspicious and distrustful of China.

Recently, China has been extremely active in trying to rally potential allies around itself, both in Southeast Asia and in Oceania, to consolidate the countries of the Global South and create a kind of counterbalance to Western alliances and blocs, such as QUAD. However, due to the specific foreign policy caused by the equidistance of other countries, no one or few people are ready for a sincere alliance with China. Instead, less influential states on the international stage prefer to have stable relations with both China and the West. This chain of events somewhat weakens China as a major power.

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12 C. Kafura, *Does the Russia-Ukraine War Herald a New Era for Japan's Security Policy?* "The Diplomat", 16 May 2022 [<https://thediplomat.com/2022/05/does-the-russia-ukraine-war-herald-a-new-era-for-japans-security-policy/>]

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