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A Ukrainian soldier keeping watch  
over Russian forces from a trench in  
Donetsk Oblast on March 7, 2024  
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# Introduction

War with New and Old Characteristics

## Trends in the Russo-Ukrainian War Literature

In February 2022, the Russian military launched a military invasion of Ukraine, which Moscow labeled as a “special military operation.” This so-called “Russo-Ukrainian War” has entered its fourth year as of this book’s publication.

The Russo-Ukrainian War is the first full-scale, major war in Europe since World War II. Its outbreak came as an enormous shock particularly for European countries, and the conflict has since taken on the character of an “European war” involving many states indirectly.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the post-Cold War conflicts to which the United States was a party (e.g., the Gulf War, the Afghanistan War, and the Iraq War), the warring parties in the Russo-Ukrainian War have no vast imbalance in military power. Certainly, there is a significant disparity in capabilities between Ukraine and Russia. However, both are industrialized nations that possess modern systems capable of striking with modern weaponry, including military unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and conducting cyberattacks.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the Russo-Ukrainian conflict is a war in which Russia, a nuclear-armed state, has openly mentioned the potential use of nuclear weapons. After the Cold War ended, nuclear weapons were at times viewed as relics of the past. But, in the Russo-Ukrainian War, repeated nuclear threats from senior Russian officials, including President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin himself, have brought renewed focus to nuclear weapons.<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, this war has become a historically significant event that has drawn attention in many respects. Therefore, numerous studies have already been published about the war, both inside and outside Japan. This

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- 1) For a study that discusses the Russo-Ukrainian War as a “European war,” see Tsuruoka Michito, *Oshu senso to shite no Ukuraina shinko* [The invasion of Ukraine as a European war] (Shinchosha, 2023).
  - 2) Takahashi Sugio, ed., *Ukuraina senso wa naze owaranai no ka: dejitaru jidai no soryokusen* [Why the Russo-Ukrainian War does not end: Total war in the digital age] (Bungei Shunju, 2023), 1–21; Lawrence Freedman, *Modern Warfare: Lessons from Ukraine A Lowy Institute Paper* (Sydney: Penguin Random House Australia, 2023), 1–8.
  - 3) For a study that discusses the transitions of the “nuclear age,” from the era of “nuclear forgetting” to the era of the “long shadow of nuclear weapons,” including the threat of nuclear terrorism, and ultimately to the “revival of nuclear weapons” amid great power competition, see Ichimasa Sukeyuki, ed., *New Horizons of the Nuclear Age*, English edition (Tokyo: NIDS, 2024).

book can be described as cutting across the following two types of previous literature.<sup>4</sup>

The first type of research analyzes how the Russo-Ukrainian War might influence the future international order from an international relations and security studies perspective. This research analyzes the impact of the Russo-Ukrainian War on a global scale, extending beyond Europe to include the Indo-Pacific region. The studies focus on how the war's outcome might affect U.S.-China relations, the most critical great power relationship at present, and especially the Taiwan issue at the forefront of the U.S.-China confrontation.<sup>5</sup>

The second type of research analyzes the Russo-Ukrainian War from a strategic studies perspective. The Russo-Ukrainian War has exhibited aspects of a “new type of warfare” that are different from previous conflicts. The aspects include active use of military and commercial UAVs by both sides, the utilization of commercial services for military use in the space domain and countermeasures against it, and battles in cyberspace and the cognitive domain. At the same time, the Russo-Ukrainian War has manifested aspects of “traditional warfare” reminiscent of World War II, such as intense urban combat involving civilians, missile strikes targeting cities and civilian infrastructure, trench stalemate, and the importance of war sustainability including the development of a defense industry capable

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- 4) There is a lot of literature that analyzes the origins and causes of the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War, focusing on the process that led to Russia's decision to invade Ukraine or the historical context of Ukraine and Russia. However, this book is not intended to elucidate the Russo-Ukrainian War itself, and therefore, does not examine these studies.
  - 5) For studies that analyze how the Russo-Ukrainian War may impact the future international order, see Masuda Masayuki, ed., *Ukuraina senso no shogeki (bessatsu higashi ajia senryaku gaikan)* [The impact of the Russo-Ukrainian War (a supplementary volume to East Asian Strategic Review)] (Tokyo: NIDS, 2022); Ikeuchi Satoshi, Uyama Tomohiko, Kawashima Shin, Koizumi Yu, Suzuki Kazuto, Tsuruoka Michito, and Mori Satoru, *Ukuraina senso to sekai no yukue* [War in Ukraine and its global consequences] (Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 2022).

of securing firepower and mobility for overwhelming the adversary.<sup>6</sup> This type of research examines facets of a “war with new and old characteristics”<sup>7</sup> in the 21st century, as informed by the new and traditional aspects of the Russo-Ukrainian War.<sup>8</sup>

We note that the above classifications are used only for convenience. We recognize that some research with an international relations and security studies focus mention military aspects, while some studies with a military focus address the impact on the international order.<sup>9</sup> As many previous studies have indicated, the Russo-Ukrainian War is ongoing, and therefore, an analysis of this war is provisional at best. The analyses in this book reflect the war situation as of December 2024, when the manuscript was completed.

## **This Book’s Approach**

The aforementioned studies are also referenced in the chapters of this book. Building on the findings of previous studies, this book conducts a review of the facets of a “war with new and old characteristics” from a military perspective. Specifically, it undertakes an analysis of the impact of the Russo-Ukrainian War on the U.S.-China confrontation in the Indo-Pacific

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- 6) For studies that conduct military analyses of the Russo-Ukrainian War, see Koizumi Yu, *Ukuraina senso* [The Russo-Ukrainian War] (Chikuma Shobo, 2022); Takahashi, ed., *Ukuraina senso wa naze owaranai no ka*; Mykhaylo Zabrodskyi, Jack Watling, Oleksandr V. Danylyuk and Nick Reynolds, *Preliminary Lessons in Conventional Warfighting from Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine: February–July 2022* (London: RUSI, 2022); Jeffrey Mankoff, ed., *Lessons and Legacies of the War in Ukraine: Conference Report*, Strategic Perspectives 43 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, 2024); Jack Watling, Oleksandr V. Danylyuk, and Nick Reynolds, *Preliminary Lessons from Ukraine’s Offensive Operations, 2022–23* (London: RUSI, 2024).
  - 7) In this book, aspects that did not exist before or are different from those that had existed previously, such as UAV employment and combat in cyberspace and the cognitive domain, are referred to as “new type of warfare.” A war that exhibits aspects of both “new type of warfare” and “traditional warfare” is described as a “war with new and old characteristics.”
  - 8) For a history that puts recent wars to future warfare into perspective, see Lawrence Freedman, *The Future of War: A History* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2017).
  - 9) For studies that address both of the above perspectives, see, for example, Hal Brands, ed., *War in Ukraine: Conflict, Strategy, and the Return of a Fractured World* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2024).

region, with particular reference to the Taiwan issue, which is of the greatest importance.

Several studies have already been published on what military implications the Russo-Ukrainian War might have for U.S.-China relations and the outcome of a potential Taiwan contingency.<sup>10</sup> While referring to this body of literature, this book places emphasis on the following three approaches that have not been sufficiently examined or addressed in existing research.

First, this book carefully reviews the military strategies, doctrines, operational concepts, and defense buildup policies that China, Taiwan, and the United States have had before the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian War, and sheds light on how the war has influenced them. This approach allows us to analyze some aspects that have tended to be overlooked in previous studies, such as how much has changed in Chinese, Taiwanese, and U.S. military thinking before and after the war's outbreak, and what modifications and adjustments have been made after the war's onset.

Second, to conduct an empirical analysis of the military strategies, doctrines, operational concepts, and defense buildup policies of China, Taiwan, and the United States, this book draws extensively on primary sources for understanding the perspectives of military and policy authorities as much as possible. The sources include open source government and military documents, statements by government and military officials, and military textbooks. It is thought that such empirical analysis will help shed

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- 10) Yamaguchi Shinji, “Roshia Ukuraina senso ga Chugoku no Taiwan shinko shinario ni ataeru eikyo (jo)” [The impact of the Russo-Ukrainian War on China's Taiwan invasion scenario (Part 1)], *Foresight* (May 13, 2022); Yamaguchi Shinji, “Roshia Ukuraina senso ga Chugoku no Taiwan shinko shinario ni ataeru eikyo (ge)” [The impact of the Russo-Ukrainian War on China's Taiwan invasion scenario (Part 2)], *Foresight* (May 13, 2022); Joel Wuthnow, “Rightsizing Chinese Military Lessons from Ukraine,” *Strategic Forum* (National Defense University) No. 331 (September 2022); “俄乌戰爭對共軍的啟示與調整” [The enlightenment and adjustment of the Russo-Ukrainian War to the People's Liberation Army], *中共研究* [Studies on Chinese Communism] 57, no. 3 (September 2023): 87–152; Tsuchiya Motohiro, Kawaguchi Takahisa, Sasaki Takahiro, Yatsuzuka Masaaki, and Yamamoto Tatsuya, “Ukuraina kara higashi Ajia e: shin ryoiki ni okeru tatakai to sono kyokun” [From Ukraine to East Asia: Warfare in the new domains and its implications], KCS Report no. 1, Center for Strategy, Keio University Global Research Institute (2024); Matsuda Yasuhiro, Fukuda Madoka, and Kawakami Yasuhiro, eds., “Taiwan yuji” wa yokushi dekiruka: *Nihon ga torubeki senryaku to wa* [Can a “Taiwan contingency” be deterred?: What strategy Japan should adopt] (Keiso Shobo, 2024).

light on Chinese, Taiwanese, and U.S. initiatives and responses, which are not necessarily the same as what is commonly understood.

Third, this book applies political science theories to analyze the prospects of the U.S.-China confrontation over Taiwan. It theoretically examines nuclear deterrence dynamics by applying the “stability-instability paradox,” and examines the U.S. military aid policy in the event of a Taiwan contingency by applying the “indirect intervention model” observed in the Russo-Ukrainian War. By employing a theoretical approach, we can learn from current efforts and gain some foresight into future events.

Through these approaches, this book aims to provide an outlook on the future U.S.-China confrontation as informed by the impact of the Russo-Ukrainian War. It examines mainly the following questions. (1) What efforts are currently considered important by China, Taiwan, and the United States in view of a Taiwan contingency, and to what extent has the Russo-Ukrainian War influenced these efforts? (2) What factors should be monitored to assess the probability of a Taiwan contingency? (3) In view of a Taiwan contingency, which domains and means will be critical in determining the outcome of a “war with new and old characteristics”? Yielding such foresight is essential for surveying the prospects of the overall security environment in the Indo-Pacific and will be beneficial in considering the security policy of Japan.

## **Summary of Each Chapter**

This book consists of six papers based on the concerns mentioned above. The summary of each chapter is as follows.

Chapter 1 (by SUGIURA Yasuyuki) analyzes the lessons the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) learned from the Russo-Ukrainian War focusing on (1) the impact on the PLA’s current and future military doctrines, operational concepts, and force management policies, (2) the impact at the strategic and policy levels, and (3) the impact at the operational level. Through this analysis, this chapter reveals that the PLA’s military doctrines and operational concepts have changed little before and after the war. On the other hand, however, that does not mean that this conflict had no impact on the PLA. This chapter shows that the trends of the Russo-Ukrainian War are requiring major adjustments to the PLA’s military activities, not only at

the high level of strategies and policies by the Chinese Communist Party and the military leadership, but also at the operational level by PLA forces.

Through this comprehensive analysis, this chapter examines how the PLA's lessons from the Russo-Ukrainian War will influence a potential Taiwan contingency in the future. As the challenges illuminated through the analysis in this chapter are not easily surmountable, the probability of the PLA launching a Taiwan invasion in the short term, such as by 2027, is low. In the medium to long term, however, should these challenges be overcome, the probability of the PLA initiating an invasion will likely increase. This chapter concludes that the risk of a Taiwan contingency will rise even further, particularly in the case where the United States, its allies, and Taiwan fail to sufficiently strengthen their defense capabilities, if the PLA perceives that it has achieved nuclear parity with the United States by increasing the number of nuclear warheads in the 2030s, and if the PLA succeeds in reinforcing “new quality combat capabilities,” such as UAVs, AI, and quantum computer technology in addition to the traditional Army, Navy, Air Force, and Rocket Force capabilities.

Chapter 2 (by AITA Moriki) explores how the development of air battles in the Russo-Ukrainian War is perceived by experts from the PLA and how such views will be reflected in China's future air battles. The core questions of this chapter are: what has the PLA learned from these air battles and how will the lessons influence the long-held air force strategy of “integrating air and space capabilities as well as coordinating offensive and defensive operations” [空天一体, 攻防兼备]? While the PLA's official newspaper, the *PLA Daily*, provides little explicit coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War, this chapter conducts an analysis drawing on a variety of Chinese primary sources, and suggests that PLA experts have a profound understanding of the complexities of modern air battles and the importance of air operations planning. Additionally, it details how experts in the PLA recognize the utility of stand-off weapons that can strike from a distance as military technology advances, and understand that drone strikes will be a mainstream part of future air battles.

Based on these observations, this chapter predicts that, in future air battles, China will deploy stand-off weapons, stealth fighter jets, and accompanying stealth drones that are fast, difficult to intercept, and supported by China's “System of systems” in order to break through enemy air defense systems. This chapter concludes that the prevailing air force strategy, “integrating

air and space capabilities as well as coordinating offensive and defensive operations,” will be left untouched by the air battles in Ukraine. Rather, the theory will be further reinforced through the incorporation of new areas, such as drones and satellite constellation communications.

Chapter 3 (by IGARASHI Takayuki) explores how the Taiwanese government and troops have seen the reality of international politics, where Russia has decided to change the status quo and deterrence has broken down, have learned lessons from Ukraine, which shares a similar asymmetry in power, and have reflected them in their defense buildup and mobilization structure. This chapter addresses the central questions of what lessons Taiwan has drawn from the Russo-Ukrainian War and what implications they have for Taiwan’s military strategy based on deterrence since 1991. In recent years, numerous opinion pieces have been published which suggest that a specific year will see the commencement of China’s invasion of Taiwan. In this chapter, however, the author begins by identifying the conditions under which China might decide to invade Taiwan, surveying literature such as white papers issued by the Chinese government. Building on that analysis, the author then traces the evolution of Taiwan’s military strategy that underpins its defense operations. It highlights how the Taiwanese government and military, drawing lessons from the Russo-Ukrainian War and backed by the United States, have placed “resilience” at the heart of their military strategy.

Having long endured harsh international circumstances, Taiwan has traditionally emphasized the importance of strengthening its independent weapons production capacities and mobilization capabilities. The author argues that the lessons from the Russo-Ukrainian War allowed Taiwan to confirm that its prevailing approach had not been misguided. At the same time, the author concludes that since Taiwan has not experienced actual warfare in a long time, it will likely apply the lessons learned from Ukraine to its combat style, such as “asymmetric operations,” and take steps to enhance its overall national strength, including its economy and foreign relations.

Chapter 4 (by MAEDA Yuji) examines the role of nuclear weapons in the Russo-Ukrainian War and the implications for a Taiwan contingency. First, this chapter shows that, while the Russo-Ukrainian War is fought with conventional forces, Russia’s nuclear threats have functioned mainly as a “shield” against direct intervention by the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This is an outcome of the stability-



instability paradox. Namely, Russia leverages stability at the strategic level provided by nuclear deterrence to reduce external risks, allowing it to pursue localized aggression through conventional forces. However, the possession of nuclear weapons does not guarantee their function as a shield against external intervention. Some key variables influence its effectiveness. This chapter focuses particularly on three key variables related to capabilities: (1) the balance of nuclear forces, (2) the balance of conventional forces, and (3) the sustainability of indirect assistance.

Using the three-variable framework to analyze a Taiwan contingency reveals differences from the Russo-Ukrainian War. In a scenario where China resorts to the use of force to seize control of Taiwan, the values for these three variables will be significantly different from those in the Ukrainian scenario. China is rapidly building up and modernizing nuclear forces, but it has not reached parity with the United States. China is also developing conventional forces that can effectively counter U.S. intervention without relying on nuclear weapons. While Taiwan is developing asymmetric denial capabilities, its ability to resist the PLA in a protracted conflict without outside support is highly doubtful. China is likely to impose a blockade of some kind in the event of a Taiwan contingency, which will make it difficult for external actors to provide stable assistance to Taiwan without accepting the risk of a direct clash with the PLA.

Comparatively, these factors might make the U.S. incentive for direct intervention stronger for a Taiwan contingency than for the Russo-Ukrainian War. Contrary to the consistent U.S. policy of non-intervention in Ukraine, a Taiwan contingency will likely press a decision on direct intervention with greater urgency. That would create a more unpredictable and riskier situation from China's perspective, making its nuclear shield relatively ineffective.

Chapter 5 (by KIRIDORI Ryo) focuses on the United States' approach of indirectly intervening in regional conflicts, with U.S. military assistance to Ukraine in the Russo-Ukrainian War serving as a point of reference. While there is already substantial literature on indirect intervention and proxy wars, few studies have analyzed indirect intervention from the perspective of U.S. global engagement or examined specific cases of U.S. global engagement as a form of intervention in interstate conflicts. Therefore, this chapter identifies the U.S. military aid to Ukraine as a typical approach to

“indirect intervention” and examines its effectiveness in the context of great power competition between the United States and China.

This chapter applies proxy war theory from conflict studies to highlight the characteristics of U.S. military aid to Ukraine. It addresses two questions. First, what military impact is the indirect intervention model having on the U.S. deterrence posture against China in the Western Pacific? Second, to what extent can the model be applied to a potential Taiwan contingency. With regard to the first question, since some view that the U.S. aid for Ukraine is consuming strategic resources needed for the U.S. competition with China, it will be useful to assess the effectiveness of the indirect intervention approach by focusing on specific budget items and initiatives of the U.S. Department of Defense. As regards the second question, the model’s applicability has not been sufficiently addressed in previous literature. This chapter posits that, if the U.S. society seeks indirect intervention in a potential Taiwan contingency to avoid the high costs and risks of direct intervention, the effectiveness of indirect intervention will become a crucial point of contention.

This chapter first describes how the U.S. indirect intervention in Ukraine has not had an impact large enough to alter existing U.S. budget and program trends for its deterrence posture toward China. The same can be said about the delays in the delivery of U.S. weapons exports to Taiwan, which are often blamed on U.S. weapons supplies to Taiwan. Delays in Taiwan’s arms procurement had become the norm even before the Russo-Ukrainian War, casting doubt on any causal link between those delays and U.S. military aid to Ukraine. The war has, rather, revitalized the stagnating or contracting defense industrial bases in and outside the United States. In this regard, indirect intervention in Ukraine could contribute to strengthening arms and ammunition stockpiles of the Taiwanese, U.S., and other militaries in the medium to long term.

Conversely, this chapter also indicates that the indirect intervention model, as seen in Ukraine, would have minimal effectiveness in a potential Taiwan contingency. Should a Chinese invasion of Taiwan involve a maritime and aerial blockade around the island, it would become extremely difficult for the United States to provide Ukraine-style military aid to Taiwan from the perspectives of Taiwan’s geographic conditions, the escalation structure between the United States and China, and the feasibility of transportation operations. Therefore, this chapter argues that military aid during peacetime rather than a contingency is critical particularly for Taiwan’s defense.

Chapter 6 (by KIKUCHI Shigeo) examines how the lessons learned from the Russo-Ukrainian War inform the way in which the U.S. military is changing the way it fights in the Western Pacific, looking at changes in U.S. operational concepts, exercises, and force posture. Unlike counterinsurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. military would be required to be able to withstand and continue to operate under enemy attack and disruption—often referred to as “contested environments” in U.S. Department of Defense documents—in the event of armed conflict with major powers such as China and Russia. Therefore, each of the services of the U.S. military has been geared toward distributed operations based on the premise of having to fight in contested environments, a scenario that has not been envisioned since the end of the Cold War.

“Distributed Operations in the Western Pacific” explores how these operational concepts are applied in the Western Pacific and the challenges in their application. It highlights the importance of securing land in maritime theaters. It notes that the Marine Corps’ Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) and Stand-in Forces (SIF), the Army’s introduction of long-range firepower, and the Air Force’s Agile Combat Employment (ACE), which operates from austere runways while avoiding enemy attack, all aim to deliver effects from land bases in maritime theaters of the Western Pacific. “Campaigning’ in Strategic Competition” discusses “campaigning” as a sustained means of creating advantageous situations for the United States against China, with whom it is engaged in long-term strategic competition. The key in this regard is strengthening relations with allies and partners, and this section analyzes efforts to strengthen force posture and joint exercises in the Western Pacific from this standpoint.

This chapter yields three conclusions. First, the U.S. response to aggressions by China and Russia, as outlined in the national defense strategy, rests on a denial strategy, placing emphasis on conducting operations within areas where the United States will face potential attacks by China and Russia. Second, it is important to support allies that are directly subject to Chinese pressure. To maintain a presence in the region, it is essential for the U.S. military to strengthen its distributed operations capabilities and demonstrate its commitment through joint exercises. Third, all of these efforts are fundamentally grounded in U.S. relationships with allies and partners.