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Introduction

By Sarah Černíková

This issue of our regular newsletter is dedicated to the themes connected to the Indo-Pacific region. In our analysis, you can go deeper into the topic of the Russia-Ukraine war through the perspective of China, how China sees the reaction of the US and the United West to the conflict, or how important this conflict is for the Chinese-Tchaj Wan question. The experience of the Russia-Ukraine war is not significant just for Europe; it might have a broader meaning for the future Chinese steps.

Our regular interview with special guests must be attended. For the April issue, we talked to Takashi Hosoda, PhD, who works as assistant professor at University of West Bohemia in Pilsen and also as an assistant professor at Institute of Intelligence Studies, University of Defence (Czech Republic). In his research, he is focused on maritime security, nuclear security, hybrid warfare including cognitive warfare, and security cooperation between Japan and European countries. Together, we discussed the current situation in the Indo-Pacific region, its most significant challenges and Australia's new national defence strategy.

We would also like to highlight the news from the CSC world. Members of our team were part of significant events such as the conference on the topic "Transfer of experiences: Czech-Polish perspective on international security problems" in Prague where CSC CEO Tomáš Kolomazník and Zdeněk Rod together with Sarah Černíková spoke with their contributions.

OPINION. Chinese perspective: What can China take from the Ukraine battlefield?

By Sarah Černíková

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was supposed to be the beginning of a quick war when the unprepared Ukrainian army would not be able to face a Russian attack. The number one target of the Russian leadership in Ukraine was undoubtedly Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyi, whose removal was supposed to lead to destabilization and demoralization of Ukrainian society. This was supposed to contribute to the rapid success of the Russian army on Ukrainian territory. However, such a quick advance and easy victory, expected in Russia, could not be achieved. A firmly united West played a very fundamental role in this unexpected development. At the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war, which in the end turned out not to be as clear-cut as it seemed at the beginning in Russia, it was not expected that the West would be capable of such a quick, coordinated response. Ultimately, it does not depend on what type of aid we are talking about, be it military-technical, financial or social, so that we can talk about a significant step that, at least in this dimension, Russia did not expect. This can be evidenced by the transformation of German foreign policy and the attitude towards the supply of weapons, which Germany has held for a long time and only changed due to the influence of the events in Ukraine.

The importance of Western aid to Ukraine and Russia is one thing, but collective behaviour has its importance far beyond the borders of this conflict. The People's Republic of China, as an officially uninvolved actor between Russia and the West in the context of the events in Ukraine, has been carefully following the development of the situation since the beginning of the invasion, especially regarding the reaction of the United States of America and Europe. The logic here is quite apparent. Taiwan and its forcible annexation to the People's Republic of China under the One China policy is not a question of whether it will happen but when. Therefore, if we consider the fact that Taiwan has official security protection from the United States of America, it is essential for Beijing how the West, led by the

United States, reacts to attacks motivated by territorial claims and goals such as the end of the given state as a sovereign actor in the international system. The reason why the events in Ukraine are often compared with the likely escalation of aggression by China against Taiwan is, among other things, the imposed sanctions. While Russia's initial economic position is not as strong as China's, on the other hand, Russia is not involved in global chains and global trade to such an extent. From this point of view, the Chinese economy is far more susceptible to economic fluctuations than Russia's. Suppose we place the importance of the economy in the context of China and its global power position, which it is building mainly on its economic performance. In that case, it is clear how important the current experience of Ukraine is for China.

When we witness China's increasing activity and assertive behaviour in the Indo-Pacific region, we can observe that this has not escaped the attention of the United States of America and the European Union. The United States is once again more significantly involved in Taiwan, especially since the administration of President Trump, who has returned to more massive cooperation. President Biden is even more ambitious in the context of supporting Taiwan and establishing strategic partnerships in the region. From 2021, we see the establishment of closer relations with Japan and South Korea and the strengthening of the presence through the AUKUS military pact. Among other things, AUKUS is strategically important and very sensitive for China, mainly due to cooperation in cyber security and AI, which, when we put it again in the context of the Ukraine experience, is a crucial area. Since cyberspace is clearly one of the areas of modern warfare, and even in the event of a Chinese attack on Taiwan, it would play a significant role, and it is therefore not surprising that the emergence of this military cooperation in China's immediate vicinity provoked adverse reactions in Beijing in 2021.

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Even more than two years after the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it is still a topic that has a lot to offer us. What is happening in Ukraine from 2022 is not only an important experience that says that a war of this scale is still possible, not only for Europe and the democratic world but also for states like China, which at first glance may seem that they are not involved in the events in Ukraine. However, these “observer” states draw valuable experience from the conflict, which can help them fulfil their own foreign-political and geostrategic interests.



China's navy has been making rapid progress, inaugurating its first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, in 2012 © Reuters

INTERVIEW WITH...

Takashi Hosoda: Japanese international political scientist and security studies scholar in the Czech Republic.



How would you describe current situations in the Indo-Pacific region and the biggest challenge in the region?

In the Indo-Pacific, states that want to challenge the current post-World War II global order are attempting to undermine the order (U.S. lead hegemony) by spreading cognition of “the U.S. hegemony has been weakening.” Tensions in the region are raised due to China’s rapid military buildup, expansion area and increase frequency of Chinese naval and maritime law enforcement activities, deepening the Sino-Russian strategic partnership, North Korea’s nuclear and missile development, and (possible) strengthening Russo-DPRK military cooperation. Challenges by authoritarian regimes are expanding their influence and strengthening their control not only in the traditional security domain (land, sea, and air), but also in new domains such as cyber, space, electromagnetic domains, and cognitive one.

In addition, Obama’s tendency of postponing problem solving and Trump’s “America First” approach have worsened reputation of the United States as a hegemonic power. As a result, Moscow, which did not meet strong reaction from Washington when it annexed Crimea, invades Ukraine and actually implements a “changing status quo by force” approach.

Asian countries fear the most that Beijing will apply Russian approach to Taiwan issue. Of course, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that Russia, which is overconfident in its military power, and China, which tends to pursue economic interests, perceive their national interests differently.

Complicating matters further is, at the same time, many Asian countries have been increasing economic dependency on Chinese economy. Therefore, Asian countries face the dilemma of economic rationality with China or the security guarantees from the United States. Hence, the current situation in the region should not be viewed as a simple power competition between the U.S. and China.

It is important to keep in mind, not only Japan, Australia, but even the United States are aware that the military balance in the Western Pacific is beginning to tilt in favor of China, especially China’s multilayered A2/AD (Ant-Access, Area-Denial) missile capabilities. We also need to prepare for the uncertainties due to the U.S. presidential election. That is why many countries start strengthening bilateral and multilateral security cooperation, institutionalizing cooperation mechanism, and enhancing its own defense capabilities in anticipation of a weakening of U.S. commitment.

INTERVIEW

How significant is the trilateral cooperation between the US, Japan, and South Korea in connection to Chinese activities in the region, and how important is it for regional security?

Since the announcement of the “spirit of Camp David” in August 2023, the three countries have been strengthening trilateral security cooperation. The primary objective is to address North Korea’s nuclear and missile development. For example, the three countries have shared information on North Korean missile launches and conducted joint missile defense exercises. On April 11 and 12, 2024, they also conducted anti-submarine operations exercise in the East China Sea, as well as maritime interdiction drills. I recognize these drills might include the assumption that the three navies will support seamless deployment of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) to Okinawa and Taiwan in the event of Taiwan contingency.

For Biden administration, reconciling and improving bilateral relations between Japan and South Korea, and strengthening security cooperation among the U.S., Japan, and South Korea, are strategically important in order to enhance integrated deterrence. Thanks to South Korean Yoon administration, which is positive to improve relations with Japan, Japanese Kishida administration moves forward to strengthen practical security cooperation with ROK as well, although Victor Cha points out they can be only “quasi alliance” instead of real ally due to strong rivalry over the U.S. commitment.

The Yoon administration advocates a “Global Pivotal State,” aiming to expand the regional role of the ROK, which has become an economic power. This is in line with the direction of the Kishida administration of Japan, which is promoting cooperation with other countries to maintain current rules-based global order.

However, the outcome of April general election in South Korea which the opposition parties which tend to sympathize with North Korea and China increased their seats in the house, indicates to remain President Yoon difficult to keep political initiative. Therefore, there is a need to establish an institutionalized trilateral security cooperation framework that is not influenced by politics.

What is your position towards Australia’s new 2024 National Defence Strategy dedicated to the Asia-Pacific region?

Recognition of Australian government is summed up in Defense Minister Richard Marles’s explanation that “optimistic assumptions of the post-Cold War era were long gone.”

I assume Australia’s reaction is the result of China’s “Wolf warrior diplomacy” because Australia and China had previously maintained relatively positive bilateral relations, but when Canberra proposed a scientific investigation into the origins of COVID-19, Beijing strongly objected and restricted imports of Australian wine (with 218% tax!), lobster, beef, coal, and barley. Canberra’s resolute and unyielding response by Australia to China’s economic coercion ultimately led to elimination of Chinese wine tariffs on March 28, 2024.

Furthermore, China’s attempts to expand its influence over Pacific island countries around Australia, such as Fiji and the Solomon Islands, using economic benefits as bait, also makes Canberra feeling national threat. Australia depends on South Korea, Singapore, and Malaysia for 80% of its crude oil refining, and tensions in the South China Seas pose a directly national threat as well.

In response, Australia decided to introduce attack nuclear submarine technology from the U.S. and U.K. through the AUKUS framework, concluded a Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) with Japan, which strengthens mutual acceptance procedure of troops for training, declaration of strategic partnership with Japan, and increased military exercises in format of bilateral (Australia-Japan, Australia-U.S.), trilateral (Australia-U.S.-Japan), and multilateral (Australia-U.S.-Japan-French or Philippines). Therefore, it is required to increase defence spending as same as Tokyo declared GDP 1% to 2% by 2027 in 2022.



Image Source: Australian Institute of International Affairs

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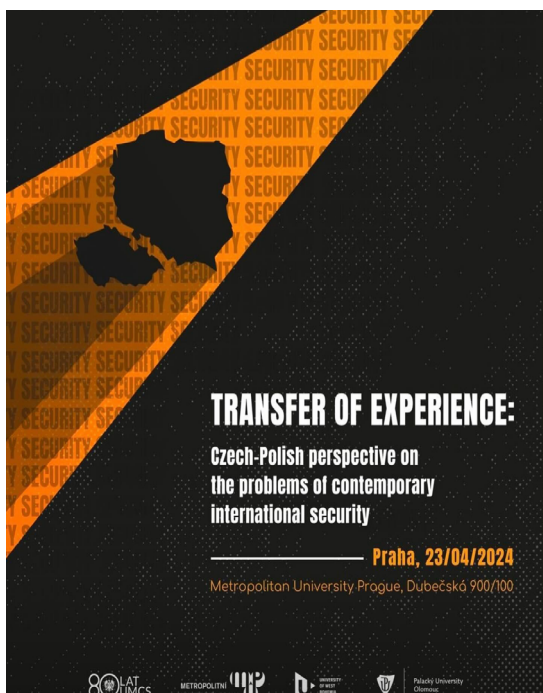
Security Conference in Prague

Tomáš Kolomazník, Zdeněk Rod and Sarah Černíková participated in a conference in Prague, Czech Republic, on the topic ““Transfer of experiences: Czech-Polish perspective on international security problems”. The conference was organized by the Metropolitan University Prague.

🎤 **Tomáš Kolomazník** spoke on the topic: 25 years of Czech membership in NATO: The Alliance as a key organization to ensure our security

🎤 **Zdeněk Rod** had a contribution on the topic: Current Perspectives on Post-Conflict Reconstruction of Ukraine

🎤 **Sarah Černíková** had a contribution on the topic: The awakening Czech army in the light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine



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Publication

CEO Zdenek Rod Co-Authored with colleagues from RAND Europe an [analysis](#) for Defence News. In their analysis they argue EU should buy ammo outside of the bloc to quickly resupply Ukraine.

Opinion | EU should buy ammo outside of the bloc to quickly resupply Ukraine

By James Black, Ondrej Palicka and Zdenek Rod

Wednesday, Apr 24



Ukrainian servicemen prepare to fire toward Russian positions with a 155mm M777 howitzer artillery weapon on the front line near the city of Bakhmut on March 11, 2023. (Aris Messinis/AFP via Getty Images)