**The Xi-Putin summit**

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The Ukraine war has reinforced the great power contention, making the geopolitical rift between the United States and China even more explicit.

After enjoying a rare success by successfully brokering the peace deal between the two archrivals of the Middle East, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, the People’s Republic of China now seems to consolidate its alignment with Russia, which might also facilitate a breakthrough in the Russia-Ukraine war.

Since President Xi successfully secured the third unprecedented term of the presidential office, he seems to pursue a greater and more proactive role for Beijing on the global stage. The three-day state visit of President Xi to the Kremlin on March 20 has raised hopes for the successful mediation of the Ukraine crisis which has now entered its second year.

The Ukraine war, one of the worst humanitarian crises of the recent decade has cost tens of thousands of lives, forced millions out of their homes, and triggered a widespread economic recession, by disrupting global supply chains.

[Imran Khan is heir of General Zia's political ideology: Fatima Bhutto](https://www.nation.com.pk/09-Apr-2023/imran-khan-is-heir-of-general-zia-s-political-ideology-fatima-bhutto)

Recently, China has repeatedly attempted to portray itself as a global mediator of peace, reiterating ceasefire calls in its ambiguous position paper that was released last month amid Russia’s ongoing blitz in Ukraine.

The hopes for a peace truce between Russia and Ukraine have been relit not only by Beijing’s proactive role as a mediator behind the Saudi-Iran rapprochement but also due to its proposal for dialogue between Moscow and Kyiv, as President Xi intends to meet Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy, virtually after his Moscow trip, the first time since the Ukraine crisis last year.

While some experts view Beijing’s yearning to be recognized as a reliable third force in international politics, and Beijing’s leverage on Russia as pressing Putin for taking “small steps” towards a truce and dialog in Ukraine, the critics, on the other hand, are of the view that Xi’s state visit to Russia is more about bolstering the “no-limits” partnership that the Chinese leader announced with Putin last year, rather than brokering peace in Ukraine.

[One solider martryed, two terrorists killed in separate attacks: ISPR](https://www.nation.com.pk/09-Apr-2023/one-solider-martryed-two-terrorists-killed-in-separate-attacks-ispr)

For such critics, none of the two warring states is willing to terminate the war. In the West, Beijing’s proposal for a ceasefire in Ukraine is perceived as merely catering to Russia’s intentions to recuperate before launching a comeback.

US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken after Xi’s visit to Moscow stated that “elements” of the Chinese peace proposal for the Ukraine war were following Washington’s efforts. According to Blinken, “China’s proposal includes elements that we have long supported, including ensuring nuclear safety, resolving the humanitarian crisis, protecting civilians, and, indeed, the first element calls for upholding sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of all counties.”

However, he further said that any ceasefire call “that does not include the removal of Russian forces from Ukrainian territory would effectively be supporting the ratification of Russian conquest” as it would “allow President Putin to rest and refit his troops, and then restart the war at a time more advantageous to Russia.” NATO’s chief also said that the Sino-Russia alliance displays “some signs” that Moscow is compelling Beijing for provision of lethal aid.

[Asad Amanat Ali Khan: the prince charming of Patiala Gharana remembered on 16th death anniversary](https://www.nation.com.pk/09-Apr-2023/asad-amanat-ali-khan-the-prince-charming-of-patiala-gharana-remembered-on-16th-death-anniversary)

There is a rife skepticism that in face of growing contention with the United States, China needs Russia and is also preparing for an alternate energy supply route, lest the seaborne trade from the Middle East is congested in any clash with the US over the Taiwan dispute. Moreover, China’s economic downturn in face of the strict zero-COVID policies has made it prioritize its economic ties with Russia.

It is interesting to note that while Russia faces hard sanctions from the US and Europe, Sino-Russia trade has jumped from 34.3 pc last year to a record $186bn (RMB 1.28tn), while the natural gas imports from Russia are expected to rise three times this year.

Therefore, it cannot be denied that Beijing’s trade with Moscow has provided it with an economic lifeline, compensating for the loss it experienced in the export of oil supplies to Europe. China has also supplied substitutes for crucial western-made products to Russia such as 5G supplies, industrial machinery, and microchips.

[Factory worker shot dead by robbers over resistance in Mian Channu](https://www.nation.com.pk/09-Apr-2023/factory-worker-shot-dead-by-robbers-over-resistance-in-mian-channu)

The Ukraine conflict, at present, is seen by many as a proxy skirmish by Beijing lurching Russia against the US and NATO. For China, Russia is an expedient partner, pushing back against the hegemony of the United States. As a response to the warning from the US, Beijing has greatly condemned the West and US specifically, as fueling the Ukraine war by supplying arms to Ukraine.

Earlier this week, the United States proclaimed a $350 million military aid to Ukraine. China, in retrospect, held that it has not provided any ammunition to any warring party, and wants a peaceful resolution of the crisis.

Amid a push from Beijing to act as a key proponent for the peaceful resolution of the Ukraine war, China has largely presented the state visit as a “journey of friendship, cooperation, and peace.” In some Western capitals, Xi’s visit has largely been observed as a buzzing commendation of the Russian President, given the widespread condemnation of his war against Ukraine in the international community.

[Head constable injured in police operation against dacoits in Rahim Yar Khan](https://www.nation.com.pk/09-Apr-2023/head-constable-injured-in-police-operation-against-dacoits-in-rahim-yar-khan)

Nonetheless, an endgame to the Ukraine war totally suits China, as Chinese scholars and high-ranking government officials can picture the Western unity ending sooner or later, as their sanctions against Russia not only failed to break it but also triggered a prevalent energy crisis across the globe.

Therefore, according to them, the Ukraine war will only accelerate the crumbling of the US and its alliances and make way for its slow retreat from the Asian continent.

Interestingly, the containment, and encirclement policies by the US, have contributed to bringing Beijing, and Moscow, even closer. After this summit, both Russia and China present a united front against the US and its allies.

Although Xi’s proposal for a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine war will be fruitful seems uncertain, however, it cannot be denied that Beijing has been striving to depict itself as a potential peacemaker in Ukraine, which in the long run will not only add to its global standing but will also cause great concern for American-led alliances.