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# RUSSIA'S 2022 INVASION OF UKRAINE: IT'S MEANING FOR TAIWAN AND SINGAPORE

*Bilveer Singh*

## INTRODUCTION

By definition, small states are defined by their perpetual vulnerability. According to a *Commonwealth Report*, small states are vulnerable due to their geographical positioning, strong dependence on international trade, limited access to development finance and disproportionate impact of natural disasters and climate change. While what constitutes a small state remains contested, be it based on population or geographical size, equally important is how a state itself and others perceive that particular state. Thirty-two out of the forty-two Commonwealth members are defined as small states.<sup>1</sup> There are also many small states outside the Commonwealth as is evident in a United Nations organization, the Forum of Small States that is made up of 108 members. Hence, the majority of states in the world can be defined as 'small'.<sup>2</sup>

On a continuous basis, large states such as the United States, European Union, China and Russia also have the propensity to pressure smaller states to enter into one kind of treaty arrangement or another where these small states' sovereignty is often undermined. New issues, developments and threats such as money laundering, drug trafficking and terrorism have also made these states more vulnerable than the past. Any issue, be it political, economic or social within a small state, or a political, economic or military threat from without, can quickly be transformed into an existential threat



<sup>1</sup> "Small States", Commonwealth. See <https://thecommonwealth.org/our-work/small-states#:~:text=The%20Commonwealth%20defines%20small%20states,Namibia%2C%20and%20Papua%20New%20Guinea>.

<sup>2</sup> "Small States", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore. See [https://www.mfa.gov.sg/SINGAPORES-FOREIGN-POLICY/International-Issues/Small-States#:~:text=Small%20states%2C%20by%20their%20very,the%20United%20Nations%20\(UN\)](https://www.mfa.gov.sg/SINGAPORES-FOREIGN-POLICY/International-Issues/Small-States#:~:text=Small%20states%2C%20by%20their%20very,the%20United%20Nations%20(UN)).

for any small state. It is against this backdrop, how the February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine has impacted upon Taiwan and Singapore, two examples par excellence of small states in the international system, will be addressed. How the Russian invasion of Ukraine, essentially a large state’s invasion of a small one, has impacted upon Taiwan and Singapore is studied here.

**TAIWAN AND SINGAPORE: STRIVING FOR EXISTENTIAL SURVIVAL**

What makes both Taiwan and Singapore particularly unique is their realization that they will be permanently defined and perceived as small states, and even more important, both Taipei and Singapore also operate from the premise that they are small states in the international system and hence, under perpetual threat.<sup>3</sup> Taiwan, with a population of about 23.5 million (2021), has a land area of 36,188 square kilometers. It is located about 180 kilometers across the Taiwan Straits from southeastern China. Geographically, Taiwan lies astride the East and South China Seas in the north-western Pacific Ocean bordering China in the northwest, Japan to the northeast and the Philippines to the south. Demographically, Taiwan has a largely Han Chinese majority, between 95 to 97 percent of the total population. Singapore, like Taiwan is an island state with a population of about 5.8 million (2021). It lies between Malaysia and Indonesia, being on the southern end of the Malay Peninsula, bordering the Straits of Malacca to the west. Singapore has a population of about 76 percent Chinese, 14 percent Malay, 8 percent Indians and the balance 2 percent being ‘others’. While comparatively Singapore is much smaller than Taiwan, still, in academic discussions, Taiwan is seen as a small state, especially when discussed as an entity separate from China.<sup>4</sup>

Against this backdrop, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is significant for both Taiwan and Singapore as the existential threat posed by great powers is always a fact of life. Hence, this paper will look at what the Russian invasion of Ukraine mean for these



<sup>3</sup> While many works exist on Singapore as a small state, two works on Taiwan as a small includes Hu Shaohua, “Small State Foreign Policy: the diplomatic recognition of Taiwan”, *China: An International Journal*, Vol; 13, No. 2, August 2015, pp. 1-23; Andrew T.H. Tan, “The Taiwan issue and small state survival”, in Benjamin Schreer and Andrew T.H. Tan (eds.), *The Taiwan Issue: Problems and Prospects*, (London: Routledge, 2019).  
<sup>4</sup> Wu Shang-Su, *The Defence Capabilities of Small States: Singapore and Taiwan’s Responses to Strategic Desperation*, (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Brian Hoe, *Why is Taiwan Thought of as a Small Country?* (New York: Bloom, 2016).

two small states even though they are different in many sense, politically, economically, demographically and even in terms of geopolitics.

## **TAIWAN AND SINGAPORE – LIVING IN THE SHADOWS OF A GREAT POWER**

Both Taiwan and Singapore have had to face the reality that not only are they small states but even more poignant is the fact that they are living in the shadows of a great power, with Taiwan and Singapore being dwarfed by China and Indonesia respectively, just as Ukraine has been living in the shadows of Russia since 1991 (see comparative statistics in Table 1, 2 and 3 below). Hence, from almost every angle of the elements and sinews of power, small states such as Ukraine, Taiwan and Singapore have had to operate from a position of clear asymmetry, and from this perspective of inferiority, how best to ensure its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

**TABLE 1:** Russia and Ukraine Compared

	<b>Russia</b>	<b>Ukraine</b>
Land Area	17,098,242 KM <sup>2</sup>	603,550 KM <sup>2</sup>
Coastline	37,653 KM	2,782 KM
Population	142.3M	43.7M
Annual GDP	\$1709B USD	\$164.5B USD
GPD Per Capita	\$11,000 USD	\$3,100 USD
Military Personnel	850,000	200,000
Tanks	12,420	2600
Armoured Vehicles	30,200	12,300
Self-Propelled Artillery	6575	1067
Towed Artillery	7570	2040
Rocket Projectors	490	3390
Total Aircrafts	775	320
Fighters	775	70
Dedicated Fighters	740	30
Transport planes	450	30
Helicopters	1550	110

Attack Helicopters	550	35
Naval Fleet	605	38
Aircraft Carriers	1	0
Submarines	70	0
Destroyers	15	0
Frigates	11	0
Corvettes	90	1
Patrol Crafts	60	1
Nuclear Warheads	6260	0

**SOURCES:**

[https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country\\_id=Russia](https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=Russia)  
[https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country\\_id=ukraine](https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=ukraine)

**TABLE 2: China and Taiwan Compared**

	China	Taiwan
Land Area	9,600,013 KM <sup>2</sup>	35,980 KM <sup>2</sup>
Population	1,414,350,000	23,561,000
Coastline	14,500 km	1566 km
Annual GDP	\$14,866,740M USD	\$668,156M USD
GDP Per Capita	\$10,511 USD	\$28,358 USD
Military Personnel	2,000,000	170,000
Para-Military Forces	625,000	11,500
Defence Budget	\$250,240,000,000 USD	\$16,800,000,000 USD
Total Aircraft	3285	740
Fighter Aircraft	1200	290
Dedicated Attack Aircraft	370	0
Transport Aircraft	285	20
Special Mission Aircraft	115	20
Helicopters	915	215
Attack Helicopters	280	90

Tanks	5250	1110
Armoured Vehicles	35,000	3475
Self-Propelled Artillery	4120	260
Towed Artillery	1735	1410
Mobile Rocket Projectors	3160	115
Naval Ships	777	117
Aircraft Carriers	2	0
Heli-Carriers	1	0
Submarines	80	4
Destroyers	40	4
Frigates	50	22
<b>SOURCES:</b> <a href="https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=china">https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=china</a> <a href="https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=taiwan">https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=taiwan</a>		

**TABLE 3: Indonesia and Singapore Compared**

	Indonesia	Singapore
Population	275.5 million	5.7 million
Coastline	54,716 km	193 km
Defence Budget	\$11.5B USD	\$9.3B USD
Gross Domestic Product	\$1150B USD	\$390B USD
Gross Domestic Per Capita	\$3920 USD	\$59,500 USD
Military Manpower	400,000	60,000
Tanks	170	315
Armoured Fighting Vehicles	3500	1440
Artillery	205	360
Self-propelled Artillery	77	400
Rocket Artillery	25	60
Air Force Aircrafts	245	445
Fighter Aircraft	100	40

Transport Planes	10	66
Special Mission Planes	10	17
Multirole Fighters	100	65
Attack Aircrafts	18	15
Helicopters	85	170
Attack Drones	0	10
Navy Ships	45	300
Frigates	6	7
Corvettes	6	25
Submarines	5	5
Patrol Vessels	15	180

**SOURCES:**

[https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country\\_id=indonesia](https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=indonesia)  
[https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country\\_id=singapore](https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=singapore)

## **THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR TAIWAN AND SINGAPORE?**

Vladimir Putin's Russia has been threatening Ukraine for quite some time, especially when the West succeeded in weaning away Ukraine from Moscow politically since 2005. This was following the 2004 election when the pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich won the election but was strongly protested against for alleged rigging, in what is known as the 'Orange Revolution'. In the re-run, the pro-Western candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, won, promising to bring Ukraine into the EU and NATO. For Moscow, Kiev's leaning towards the West, especially through its closer economic ties with the European Union, its preparedness to join NATO and its increasingly oppositionist attitude towards Moscow, was interpreted as acts of hostility by Moscow.

In 2010, Yanukovich won the presidential elections. He moves Ukraine away from the West and into a closer relationship with Moscow. This was triggers public protests against him. This reached a climax in 2014 following what is known as the Euromaidan protest movement that toppled the pro-Russian president, Viktor Yanukovich. The largely Western-inspired protest movement began in November 2013 when Ukraine failed to sign the European Union Association Agreement. As a result of the Euro-maidan protest in late February 2014, Yanukovich and many of his cabinet ministers

fled to Moscow, whereby opposition political members and crossovers from Yanukovich party, voted to remove the president, which Moscow interpreted as a 'coup d'état' but where the West recognized the new caretaker government.

As there were many pro-Yanukovich supporters in Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, they opposed the sacking of Yanukovich, leading to calls for separation from Ukraine. Many Russian speakers also lived in eastern Ukraine, including in Crimea and Sevastopol. Following pro-Russian demonstrations in Crimea and Sevastopol, the local government was captured by these separatists, who later conducted a 'referendum' and declared Crimea's independence on 16 March 2014. On 21 March, Russia formally incorporated Crimea and the City of Sevastopol as parts of Russia, escalating its conflict with Ukraine.

Since then, an armed conflict has persisted in eastern Ukraine, in the largely Russian-speaking part of the country bordering with Russia. Two largely Russian-speaking territories in eastern Ukraine that share a border with Russia, namely, the self-declared Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic in a region that is generally referred to as 'Donbas', were recognized as independent states by Russia on 21 February 2022. The situation reached a boiling point when on 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, with the war still ongoing at great cost of lives, damage to property, a massive humanitarian crisis and where the conflict is having a massive international political, economic and security consequences.

## **TAIWAN'S RESPONSE TO THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE**

Taiwan's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine stemmed from its essential security policy of ensuring its independence and territorial integrity. This is because China has continuously maintained irredentist claims over Taiwan since 1950. Even though the Taiwan Strait has provided a degree of physical security, Taiwan has been under siege from its mammoth neighbor and claimant which outsizes her physically, economically, and militarily. 'Liberating' Taiwan has been an article of faith of every Beijing Government and Taipei has had to develop a complex set of policies, both internal and external, to ensure that Beijing is deterred from undertaking such a course of action, especially through military force. While the US's policy of containment since 1947, and especially since 1950, has provided a degree of security, still Taipei has had to ensure that it simply cannot depend on American goodwill for its safety and security, especially in face of the rise of China as a superpower, at least in East Asia, and the relative decline of the US since the late 1980s.

















a lesson many small states can learn. Finally, for both Taiwan and Singapore, living in the shadows of big states mean that they would have to be on the vigil on a 7/24/365 basis as well as ensure that all domestic and foreign policies are undertaken to ensure that the existential survival of the state bar none. This is something that must be socialized to all citizens as well as political leaders, be it in the government or on the opposition bench.

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contractors of BDS in Africa has sent a signal that China’s preparation for future multi-domain operation has integrated satellite-based technologies that can be operated globally. This should be a wake-up call to Washington given that the U.S. private sectors remain a peripheral player in Africa’s overall space program. Since African countries have joined the space race, it is high time for American policymakers to establish rules-based space cooperation with Africa.

**TABLE 1:** The 10 Application Scenarios of BSD in Africa

Scenarios	Application and Solutions	Prime Contactor
Management of Vehicle and Transport	BDS positioning, navigation, warning and data collection services	China Transport Telecommunications & Information Center
Railway Industry	Railway construction and maintenance, time synchronization and manage passenger and freight transportation scheduling and warning system	China Railway Fifth Survey and Design Institute Group
Precision Agriculture	Auto-steering system and unmanned driving, remote maintenance, and big data	China Agricultural University
International Search and Rescue	Satellite alarm system, information transmission, positioning service	China Transport Telecommunications & Information Center
Land Surveying	High-precision positioning service, continuously operating reference stations, city planning, land surveying and mapping, urban and rural construction, environmental monitoring, disaster prevention, traffic monitoring, mine surveying	ComNav Technology
Digital Construction	Scientific control and management of construction process (highway, water conservancy excavation, dam, airport, etc.), multi-level of supervision.	Shanghai Huace Navigation Technology
Intelligent Mining	High-precision positioning, integrated intelligent monitoring platform, personnel security system and asset management system	NORINCO Equipment and NORINCO International

Public Safety	Real-time positioning, dynamic location monitoring, information aggregation, high-definition video recording, data collection and sharing	North Electronics Research Institute and Shenzhen Zhongbing Konka Technology
Wildlife Conservation	High-precision positioning, satellite remote sensing technology, wildlife tracking and monitoring	Chinese Academy of Forestry
Smart City	High-precision space-time common service system, safety monitoring, and green urban management, spatial-temporal related data collection	Qianxun Spatial Intelligence

**SOURCE:**

China Satellite Navigation Office, "10 Application Scenarios of BDS in Africa," Beidou, November 2021, <http://m.beidou.gov.cn/xt/gfzx/202111/P020211105587887134672.pdf>.

## CONCLUSION

In light of the increasing Chinese engagement in the space sector with African countries and prospective Chinese satellite technologies highlighted by the China-Africa space cooperation, this article explores the strategic implication of the case of BDS applied in Africa. The author arrives at the conclusion that the export policy of China's satellite technology to Africa has been driven by a revisionist line, not just seeking to expand China's space tech market share in Africa. In addition to the market, the deployment of BDS in Africa is likely to tip the balance of the U.S. security environment. On the one hand, Washington is currently speculating a second Chinese naval base to be established in Equatorial Guinea. On the other hand, China's satellite technology can enhance its offensive capability, threatening the U.S. homeland, or at least the East coast, from Africa. More intriguingly, the direct contractors of BDS projects in Africa are related to Chinese defense enterprises. This has revealed a revisionist nature of BDS as a strategic instrument after the deployment.

The application of BDS in Africa will render African countries and neighboring regions highly vulnerable given China's state-owned defense enterprise can access sensitive geospatial intelligence and track down the exact position of human activities. All these have clearly indicated a revisionist line of China's export policy of BDS in application to African countries. Given the current limited role of U.S. engagement with Africa's

space sector, the author recommends that it is time for Washington to implement new policies of US-Africa space cooperation. There is a need to be physically present as a stakeholder in the African countries' space programs.

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# THE MULTIVERSE OF DISCOURSE: HOW CHINA CREATES AN ALTER- NATIVE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR

*Tsung-Han Wu*

Since Russia launched its “special military operation” to Ukraine on February 24, international society has paid a great attention to its “rock solid” partner, China, concerning about the role Beijing would play in this war. Although Beijing intended to display a profile of neutrality, calling for calm down and peaceful solution, this is completely not the case from observing its behavior in state-owned media and propaganda networks. Several media reports and analyses uncovered that China coordinated with Russia and helped to disseminate the pro-Russian narratives. Moreover, some of the narratives containing deliberately twisted and misinterpreted scenarios targeting Taiwan.

This essay aims to examine China’s cognitive warfare operations in general and some cases involving Taiwan in particular, after the war breaking out. For the cognitive warfare, this essay defines them as attacks aiming at altering or misleading minds of the target group or society through informational tools and approaches, with a desire supporting an objective and shaping advantageous environment for the operator. Disinformation might strengthen the dynamic of the warfare in the process but is not required.<sup>1</sup> This essay argues that the Russian-Ukrainian war provides China with an op-



<sup>1</sup> Bernard Claverie<sup>1</sup> and François du Cluzel, “The Cognitive Warfare Concept,” *NATO Innovation Hub*, <https://www.innovationhub-act.org/cw-documents-0>; Kathy Cao et al., “Countering cognitive warfare: awareness and resilience,” *NATO Review*, May 20, 2021, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2021/05/20/countering-cognitive-warfare-awareness-and-resilience/index.html>.











Taiwan has against disinformation disturbance for years. Also, the evolving development of war affected the effects of information operation. "Ukraine Today, Taiwan Tomorrow" was originally used to intimidate Taiwan, but now given the Ukrainian successful resistance to the invasion, it is reversed to be an encouragement of fighting spirit in the new context. Even though, Taiwan is still unable to exempt from the multidimensional impacts brought by the war, in particular the supply chain disruption and inflation issues. To view from this aspect, consequently, the potential of manipulating economic crisis narrative exists, and which can be next wave of attack. we should keep eyes on!

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- Co-authorship is allowed.
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