

Crimean Crisis and Military Balance in Asia

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Abstract

As the Crimean Crisis goes on, many analysis have been focusing on the dynamics among parties of Ukraine, the EU, the US and Russia. Very few noticed another important strategic impact the Crisis may cause: the Chinese military rebalancing in East Asia. China has been increasingly confident in assuming both political and military power in the East Asian region. The confidence resulted in the South China Sea disputes with ASEAN countries, “Anti-Secession Law” against Taiwan, and the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands Dispute with Japan. Behind such confidence of China, the EU has consistently been exporting defence products to China since the end of the Cold War; Ukraine, although sometimes reluctantly, has also been backing China along the process of building up a stronger navy as well as other defense industry construction; Russia has traditionally been supplying China with a wide range of military hardware. It can be noticed that the Crimean Crisis involved three out of four countries and region that have been behind China’s rise. How will the Crimean Crisis influence China’s rebalance in East Asia then? The answers stay opaque. This paper will attempt to answer the questions.

Keywords: *China, Japan, Ukraine, the EU, Russia, arms trade, regional rebalancing*

JEL classification: *F51, F52, F59, H56*

1. The Rise of China and the Logic behind It

This paper focuses on tackling the following questions: how China has been rising in Asia, what contributed to the rise of China, and how the Crimean Crisis may cause rebalancing in Asia.

China has been importing defence products from Israel, Russia, the European Union (EU) and Ukraine; three out of the above four are currently closely entangled in the Crimean Crisis, which is the reason why the Crimean Crisis' impacts on China should be noted. In this paper it is argued that Ukraine's support to China's military rise was significant but unnoticed; the EU's impact has been somehow visible especially since the 2003 EU's attempt to lift the arms embargo on China; as a chain effect, Russia may strengthen its tie with China to balance the impact from its western side. As the Crimean Crisis goes on, it may be beneficial to the EU, Ukraine and Russia to strengthen their cooperation with China; by then the military balance in Asia will be tipped to the favorable position for China.

When did China have the clear will to rise? By the end of the 1990s especially after the Taiwan Strait Crisis, when China felt its sovereignty was at stake, China has demonstrated a clear will for rise in the region. It was considered necessary to rival against Japan for the past war and Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, Taiwan for its will for independence, ASEAN for their claim for South China Sea.¹ As countermeasures, some scholar suggested fostering multilateralism in the region to reduce the US' burden to balance China.² Nevertheless multilateralism worked poorly in

the political environment of East Asia, as China viewed multilateralism with great suspicion, for it does little to solve China's problems and it might compromise China's deterrence to rivals.³ To rise alone and enhance its overall power of deterrence was considered a more feasible strategy by the Chinese leadership.

In the early 1990s, China was considered a rising power, but containing it was not an urgent matter. Discussions have been on how to construct balance in Asia to either contain China or at least slow down the rise of China.⁴ By the time Japan was still ahead of China in terms of economy and many other figures, therefore some discussion was on whether China should be considered as a challenge to Asia instead of Japan, and whether Japan alone was enough to keep China at bay.⁵ For many scholars, China has been identified as a problem partially because of its history but majorly because it was trying to challenge the regional order and even the international order at the time. Examples are that China was trying to change the World Trade Organization (WTO) mechanism at the time rather than complying with it; China was claiming for the sovereignty of South China Sea; China was trying to manipulate Japan over Japan's attitude towards Taiwan, etc. Actually, although there was no clear articulation for military rise, as soon as the Cold War ended, China was sensing great crisis for its legitimacy and survival, therefore tried to foster its military power by cooperation with Ukraine and the EU. This will be discussed in later sections.

As to the political and security environment in Asia for effective countermeasures to the rise of China, difficulties were identified, though with some limits. The fragmentation of East Asian countries prevented any effective containment policy; there has been a lack of effective regional institutions, unlike the EU in Europe. The interdependence between some countries and China also has rendered many countries reluctant to go against China; Thailand has been very reluctant to

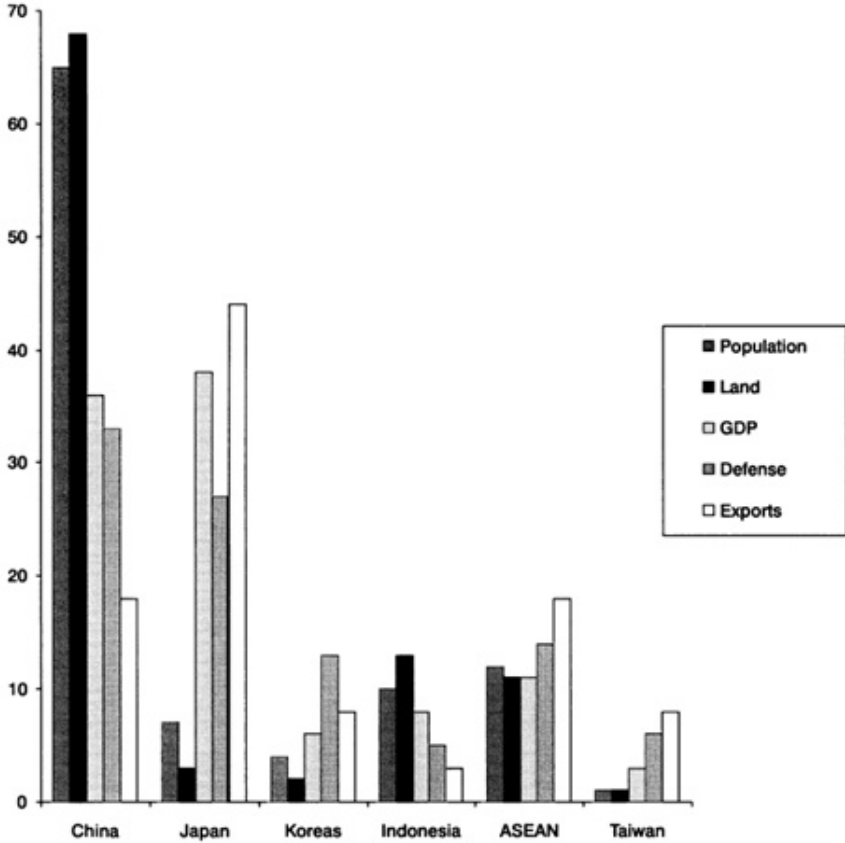
contain China but Vietnam and the Philippine have been very active on this matter. The unforeseeable depth of entanglement was also stopping international power to get involved; the United States (US) has only limited commitment to Taiwan, and the EU has refused to give specific comment and position on the security environment in Asia.⁶ As a matter of fact, the EU has been boosting China for its military rise, though very little literature was dedicated to such EU policy.

How could China be balanced? As shown in the Figure 1, in the 1990s it has been recognized that, given the size and the sophistication of the political system of China, China cannot be simply engaged or contained with one policy. A combined policy of engagement and containment was offered – in other word, to hedge the rise of China. Another factor, the US influence, was also repeatedly introduced to balance China in the region. To keep the US in Asia was argued to be an effective containment of China, though the willingness of the US was in doubt:

American power is the linchpin that holds Japan in place. By so doing, it delays the full transition to an independent Asian sub-system and allows time for forces that can mitigate the effects of multipolarity to gain in strength. U.S. pique over unresolved economic issues with Japan, a domestic desire for even deeper defense cuts, and the more obvious immediacy of post-Communist crises in eastern Europe could combine to cause the United States to pull back more sharply from Asia than it is currently doing. The fact that such a course of action would be mistaken and dangerous affords no guarantee that it will not be followed.

(Friedberg, 1994: 32)⁷

Figure 1 China in Comparison with Other Major Countries and Regions in Asia



Note: All figures are for 1994, except exports (1993). ASEAN figures do not include Indonesia; China figures include Hong Kong.

Source: Gerald Segal (1996). East Asia and the ‘constraint’ of China. *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 4, Spring, p. 109.

Entering 2000s, the academic trend of discussion on China shifted to how to cope with the reality of a rising China: should balancing still be an option, or the rise of China is unstoppable and bandwagoning should be considered. The reality was that countries were bandwagoning China economically and balancing China politically; the question was that how long this situation could continue and what was the solution for the future.⁸ Some scholars start to argue that weak China was the reason why Asia was unstable and a strong China plays a positive role in every way in stabilizing Asia.⁹ Some others supported constructive engagement of China and cooperation with China's neighbours for multilateral containment of China.¹⁰ For this strategy, regionalism and multilateralism were argued to be the key, though the actors were still limited to Asian countries.¹¹

Throughout previous studies, several pieces of key information can be distilled: China's rise was not considered a great problem until the second half of 1990s; to contain or to hedge China's rise, collective efforts of China's neighbours were lacking; the US presence is key to keep China at bay. These arguments are nothing but true, however they missed half of the picture at the time: China planned the rise both economically and militarily since the end of the Cold War; the Crisis in the second half of 1990s was nothing but a manifesto of China's attempt at military rise; more external actors should be introduced to keep China's ambition at bay. The evidence for such argument is that after the Cold War China had begun some major cooperation in the military field with Ukraine on one hand, and resumed military and economic cooperation with the EU on the other. Previous studies ignored China's effort in the first half of 1990s. Moreover, to either contain or slow down the rise of China, efforts of Asian countries as well as the US were key but not enough. To put many other players into the multilateral structure in Asia was important, especially the EU and Ukraine. Previous studies

treated the rise of China as if China gained no external help and made the rise alone.

As argued so far, it is of great importance to scrutinize how the EU and Ukraine contributed to the rise of China. In the following section, this topic will be discussed.

2. The Current Boosters for China: the EU and Ukraine

Currently China is still importing arms and dual-use product from the EU and Ukraine. Although the EU, along with the US, Japan, and many other countries from the Capitalist bloc of the Cold War, have arms embargo on China, it is critical to understand that the EU's arms embargo on China is political, non-legally-binding and unspecified. Such features lead to two outcomes: one is that EU member states can interpret the arms embargo by their own understanding and the other is that they can export arms as long as they can justify the arms sales by their interpretations of the embargo. As to Ukraine, the Communist bloc of the Cold War never have such embargoes, but it only started exporting arms to China since the end of the Cold War. In the post-Cold War era, pressure from the US and Russia casts most influence on Ukraine's decision on arms sales to China. This section will look into the data of arms sales to China and demonstrate how the EU and Ukraine have been contributing to the military rise of China.

The EU and the United States installed their arms embargo on China in 1989; the first question is how the embargoes changed the arms transfer to China. From 1950 to 1989, eight countries had exported arms to China, which included Albania, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom (UK), the United States, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).¹² Among these countries, the USSR was responsible for the absolute majority of exports from 1950 to 1968,

which laid the foundation of the USSR-based Chinese military system. The Sino-USSR split at the end of the 1960s led to a decrease of arms export from the USSR to China, which totally ended in 1969 until 1990; meanwhile, there has been evidenced an increase of arms export from the West to China since 1966, from France, Germany, Italy, and the UK. By 1988, arms export from EU regions to China occupied 83% of the total arms export to China; the remaining 17% was the United States. In 1989 and 1990, which were the year of arms embargo installation and the year after, the arms exports to China did not even make a decrease: EU member states increased arms export.

For a more visually direct view, Table 1 may shed some light on how the arms embargo changed the arms transfer to China. As can be acquired from the table, the arms export from EU member states to China did not stop, but even increased after the embargo. The embargo has been merely symbolic, and it was barely effective at controlling arms transfer from EU member states to China.

It can also be observed that Ukraine started exporting arms to China as soon as the Cold War ended. The next set is the military expenditures of related countries. As we can see from the table, until 2013, most of the arms exporters to China suffered from shrinkage of military expenditure, or at most maintained their expenditure at a fixed level. The shrinking budgets have impacted the governmental purchase of the local military industries, and the chain effect would be that the military industries have to look for alternatively available buyers for their products in order to survive. China is the only country that made an almost seven-fold enlargement of its military budget; it will be difficult for EU military industries to restrain their desire to export arms and relevant technologies to China.¹³

Table 1 Arms Transfer to China from 1988 to 1992 (Unit: million US dollars)

Country	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	Total
France	38	80	59	68	46	290
Germany	12	12	12	12	12	60
Israel			28	28	28	83
Italy	9	9	5	5		28
Japan		15	30			45
Russia					1150	1150
UK	10	10				20
Ukraine					18	18
US	14					14
USSR			81	133		214
Total	83	126	215	245	1253	1922

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfer Database, http://www.sipri.org/databases/arms_transfers/armstransfers, accessed 7th February 2015.

Table 2 Military Expenditure of China and Exporters of Arms to China
(Unit: million US dollars)

Country	1992	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2013
France	68753	65123	65470	65691	65037	69426	66251	62272
Germany	64498	57985	54075	53187	52147	50255	50415	51444
Russia	62300	54400	51400	33800	32000	34900	20800	23100
Switzerland	7877	6994	6931	7013	6636	6396	6381	5905
UK	55578	53042	51583	48380	48092	46578	46835	46775
Ukraine	N/A	461	2030	2181	2102	2605	2106	1940
China	25317	71496	83928	96782	106640	128734	136239	171381

Note: N/A – not available.

Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, <http://milexdata.sipri.org/>, accessed 7th February 2015.

Table 3 Arms Transfer to China from 2007 to 2013 (Unit: million US dollars)

Country	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
France	192	221	175	199	219	215	153	1785
Germany	6	3	3	3	3	3	3	44
Russia	1336	1609	1142	636	692	677	1040	12664
Switzerland	65	65	65	65	65	65	65	585
UK	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	390
Ukraine	54	54	28			632	64	1030
Total	1693	1992	1453	943	1019	1632	1365	16498

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfer Database, <http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/armstransfers>, accessed 7th February 2015.

Table 3 shows the arms sales to China in recent years. EU member states basically maintained their arms exports to China, however as to Russia, it is clear that China tried to reduce its arms imports from Russia. The reduction of imports from Russia was because China started developing arms domestically. Another interesting figure is that Ukraine's arms export to China almost equalled Russia's in 2012; it is an indicator for the increasingly close cooperation between Ukraine and China. China currently needs maritime hardware and technologies for its grand navy strategy, for which products are supplied by Ukraine. China also needs state-of-the-art coordinating hardware and software; many sources indicated that China has been building up and showed interest in purchasing the capabilities of command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) which is the EU's strength and what Russia is unwilling to offer.¹⁴

As a conclusion to this section, China has been purchasing arms (especially C4ISR) that major EU arms exporters are willing to export. As to maritime hardware, China has been purchasing related products from Ukraine. The Crimean Crisis may also pace up Ukrainian sales to China. These issues will be discussed separately in the following sections.

3. The EU's Arms Embargo on China

China has long been planning to lift the EU's arms embargo on China and thusly enhance its military power. The first traceable clue was that, China brought lifting to France in April 1997, right before the "France-China Joint Declaration for A Global Partnership" in May, by the Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Guofang Shen saying the embargo was an "incorrect attitude" and China hoped that "the European Union will lift all its unreasonable criticisms of the Chinese Government."¹⁵

French Defence Minister Millon agreed with Shen that “there is no question of going back on the decision about the arms trade.”¹⁶ The Defence Minister suggested that France would like to revisit the issue at the EU level.¹⁷

The Chinese Government’s claim was a gesture of pressing France and the EU to loosen their arms control on China, as well as China’s will for arms imports from the EU. It is said so because recalling the US-China confrontation over the Taiwan presidential election that caused the Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1996, China had to back down with its outdated and small military vis-à-vis the United States’ cutting-edge aircraft carrier groups.¹⁸ Having the capability to expel the US influence from the Chinese shore has become the priority for the Chinese navy since then.

The connection between China’s realization of its military power gap with the United States, and China’s will to fix the gap by importing military technology from the EU as well as the other countries, can probably be possibly be shown by Table 4.

The total arms imports of China started to soar after the temporary low in 1998. From the table it is clear that France and Germany maintained their usual scale of arms exports to China, and France had been the leading arms exporter in Europe; Switzerland and the UK started to export arms to China in 1997; other countries such as Russia and Ukraine also increased arms export to China, in contrast to the total embargo of the United States. Significantly, the UK became willing to loosen the arms embargo on China in 1997.

Aside from the European exporters of arms to China, it does not necessarily mean that the rest of member states enjoyed the restrictions of the arms embargo. For example, in the case of the Netherlands; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Van Merlo, criticized China internationally but pragmatically reserved the rights of arms

Table 4 Increase in China's Arms Imports (Unit: million US dollars)

Country	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Total
France	120	137	155	101	97	128	123	139	1000
Germany	16	12	18	8	15	20	15	14	294
Russia	80	498	1160	652	173	1514	1795	3006	8878
Switzerland				33	33	65	65	65	261
UK				10	20	50	60	60	200
Ukraine	11		10	3	8	18	31	53	134
US	14	2	2						18
Total	241	649	1345	807	346	1795	2089	3337	10785

Source: Extracts from SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, <http://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/armstransfers>, accessed 8th February 2015.

exports for the Dutch domestically. During the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) session in 1997, on behalf of his country's Presidency of the EU, Merlo argued that dropping criticism on China is "not compatible with the universality of human rights" and the EU would be guilty of double standards.¹⁹ However, domestically, he stated to the Lower House of the Netherlands Parliament as follows:

"All the Government wishes to say here is that it has tried to ensure that all EU Member States interpret the arms embargo on China uniformly. When this proved impossible – a number of Member States do not interpret the embargo comprehensively – the Netherlands reserved the right to adopt an ad hoc approach with regard to certain military goods, in line with other EU countries."²⁰

It could be seen that arms exports was still optional for the Netherlands. Later an MEP (Member of the European Parliament) touched on the issue. On 10 July, the MEP Johanna Maij-Weggen submitted a written question to the Commission, elaborating the above attitude of the Netherlands, and enquired the member states' "compliance with the arms embargo on China".²¹ She questioned on three issues: the national differences of interpretations on the embargo, the measure securing uniform interpretation, and the approach of the EU to the embargo at the time. On 4 September, Sir Leon Brittan on behalf of the Commission replied that a decision was made within the "European political cooperation" framework, the "implementation fall in the first instance to member states", and the information at the Commission was "confidential".²² In other words, the EU had no clear definition of the embargo, no control of it, or publishable information.

Nonetheless, as to the arms embargo *per se*, despite China's criticism in 1997, the embargo had been widely discussed, though not as an issue of priority within the EU until 2002.²³ Regarding defence, most of the attention was paid to the official adoption of the EU's Code of Conduct on Arms Exports, and consequent discussions, which involved an annual review of the Code.²⁴ The Code was first created in European Council meetings in 1991 and 1992; after the intensive lobbying of human rights non-governmental organisations (NGOs), it was officially adopted in 1998.²⁵ The annual report on the use of the Code started in 1999.

In 2003, the EU tried to lift the arms embargo against China. The EU member states, even Sweden and some other countries critical of the human rights status of China, agreed to lift the embargo to improve EU-China relations. The lifting gathered great momentum, though it was suspended for the US pressure in 2005. Although it did not succeed, it showed the EU's intention and readiness to face the pressure to the EU's

compromise on key grounds such as human rights. There was no noticeable change in China's human rights record, which possibly meant that the EU just wanted to sweep the human rights issue under the carpet. Besides, there was hardly a successful record of the long-existing arms embargo in history. Austin (2005) argues that the main weakness has been the availability of alternate suppliers and the unwillingness of states to observe sanctions rigorously.²⁶ Russia and Ukraine kept exporting arms to China, which greatly compromised the EU arms embargo into a symbolic gesture.

In general, during the 2000s, the EU and China had been moving toward an unparalleled honeymoon. In 1998 EU and China made the decision to develop a comprehensive partnership.²⁷ Since then, the EU and China have noted "the increasing maturity and growing strategic nature of the partnership."²⁸ And some essential points of a strategic relationship are: "a commitment to promote stable political links and economic exchange; a mutual understanding not to interfere in domestic politics while working together on international issues; frequent official high-level visits."²⁹ Clearly, the EU is very unlikely to improve a strategic partnership with an embargo. Both strengthening and keeping the embargo are hindering a strategic relationship.

Economically, the EU has become China's biggest trading partner and China has become the EU's second largest trading partner since 2004. China is also becoming the biggest non-European trade partner to more and more European countries, such as Spain. Both the EU and China are endeavouring to preserve their market share in each other's markets. China is an important raw material and labour-intensive product exporter to the EU and the EU has numerous technologies that China thirsts for. Moreover, the Chinese Government regularly signs billion-dollar contracts with European companies, which encourages the EU to improve relations with China.

A much freer transaction of arms could also bring both parties economic benefits. Although probably arms trade will not increase too much after the removal of the ban, many European countries wanted to sell arms to China. Clear evidence indicated that in 2008, some EU countries sabotaged the legislation of the EU's Code of Conduct on Arms Export and prevented it from becoming a legally binding instrument.³⁰ Even though the Code was legalized by the end of 2008, the essential rights of arms exports still lie in the hands of member states, as the Code only legalized the responsibilities of member states to report arms transfers, rather than punishment for rule breaking. The whole series of evidence indicates that there has always been a will within the EU to strengthen ties with China through arms transfer.

4. Ukraine's Relation with China

The start of the military industry cooperation between China and Ukraine was from the end of the Cold War. At the time the collapse of the USSR Empire resulted in massive layoff, bankruptcy of factories and R&D institutions in the defence industry. Engineers, expertise and professors who still had jobs suffered from sharp reduction of income. Against this background, Chinese government initiated the “*shuang yin* 雙引” [double introduction] project to attract former USSR expertise to work in or for China. The prime minister Li Peng at the time believed that the number and the level of expertise was so overwhelming that China could not foster anything similar, not even after 10 years.³¹ It was also for the purpose to attract those expertise, the State Department ordered the State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs to set up “*youyi jiang* 友誼獎” [Award of Friendship] to award those who work for China. From 1991 to 2002, the “*shuang yin*” project attracted more than 10,000 expertise and accomplished over 2,000 projects.³² The First

Secretary of the Chinese Embassy in Ukraine Li Qianru indicated that only in the year 2006, China has invited over 2000 Ukrainian professionals for over 150 projects.³³

Not only China viewed Ukraine with significance; Ukraine also sees China as opportunities, especially economically. In 2013, Ukrainian economists observed that China could become a balancer between the EU and Russia:

In the context of Ukraine's options, Beijing can be the ideal supplemental partner for Kyiv. With the signing of the AA between Ukraine and the EU, China will get new opportunities for development of the all-European market through the organization of joint ventures on the Ukrainian territory.

According to recent information from the Ministry of Revenue and Duties of Ukraine, Ukraine-China economic relations are on the rise. In particular, the share of export-import transactions with China makes up about 8% from the total amount of goods turnout of Ukraine and is on constant increase. Over the first eight months of 2013 the goods turnover between Ukraine and China has made up \$7.3 billion (€5.4) which is 16.6% more by \$1 billion than the similar period of 2012. Foreign trade between Ukraine and China grows at the expense of increase of both import (by 9.2%) and export (by 46.6%). Besides, recently Chinese State Corporation "Xinjiang Production and Construction" has leased nearly 3 million hectares of land for food cultivation for 49 years.

Thus, China starts playing a balance role for the relations with the EU and Russia in Ukraine's foreign economic activities, and allows diversifying the Ukrainian presence at the international markets.

Profound development of relations with the EU, preservation of close cooperation with Russia and the CU countries, and also dynamic growth of trade and economic relations with China can become a new success formula for Ukraine in the XXI century.³⁴

Besides economic and human resource connections with Ukraine, China has endeavoured to utilize the defence industry of Ukraine, as shown in Table 5.

As shown in the table, the defence cooperation between Ukraine and China covers many important areas, such as: diesel engines and gas turbine for tanks and ships, missiles and radars for fighters, and a variety of platforms.

It should be noticed that the defence deals goes closely in line with China's modernization strategy for navy, which includes blue water navy development (Kuznetsov, the Liaoning aircraft carrier) and near sea amphibious warfare (Zubr, the biggest hovercraft). Other than supplying China with equipments, Ukraine was also offering China to train Chinese pilots for aircraft carrier at Nitka, though the cooperation on the issue was never confirmed publicly.³⁵ As a matter of fact, Chinese leadership values Ukraine's support so much that in June 2011 Chinese president Jintao Hu visited Ukraine, signed \$3.5 billion worth deals with Ukrainian president Viktor Fedorovych Yanukovich, as well as a strategic partnership to elevate overall cooperation including security.³⁶ Interestingly, the first stop of the Chinese president was not Kiev but Simferopol, the capital of Crimea, two hours away from Feodosia, where the ships for China were made.³⁷

In December 2013, China even offered Ukraine nuclear umbrella in order to strengthen its tie with Ukraine:

China pledges unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the nuclear-free Ukraine and China further pledges to provide Ukraine nuclear security guarantee when Ukraine encounters an invasion involving nuclear weapons or Ukraine is under threat of a nuclear invasion.³⁸

Table 5 The Defence Product Orders by China

Number ordered	Weapon designation	Weapon description	Year of order/ licence	Year(s) of deliveries	Number delivered/ produced	Comments
1	Fedko	Tanker	1992	1996	1	naval tanker/supply ship
4	Zubr/ Pomornik	ACV/ landing craft	2009	2013	1	\$315-319 m deal; incl 2 produced in China; Project-958 Bizon version; delivery probably by 2015
(250)	R-27/AA-10 Alamo	BVRAAM	(1991)	1992-1994	(250)	For Su-27SK combat aircraft
4	DT-59	Gas turbine	(1992)	1996-1999	4	For 1 Type-052 (Luhu) and 1 Type-051B (Luhai)
(2000)	R-27/AA-10 Alamo	BVRAAM	(1995)	2000-2009	(2000)	For Su-27SK and Su-30MKK combat aircraft
58	AI-25	Turbofan	1997	1997-2004	(58)	For JL-8 (K-8) trainer aircraft
1	Kuznetsov	Aircraft carrier	1998	2012	1	Second-hand (production stopped 1992 with end of Soviet Union and unfinished ship sold 1998 in \$20-30 m
3	2S9 120mm	Self-propelled gun	(1999)	2000	3	Probably Second-hand
(24)	R-73/AA-11 Archer	SRAAM	(1999)	2000	(24)	Possibly Second-hand

Table 5 (Continued)

Number ordered	Weapon designation	Weapon description	Year of order/ licence	Year(s) of deliveries	Number delivered/ produced	Comments
4	Kolchuga	Air search system	(2000)	2002	(4)	
(8)	DT-59	Gas turbine	(2001)	2004-2005	8	For 4 Luyang (Type-052B/C) destroyers produced in China; DA-80 version
(42)	AI-25	Turbofan	(2004)	2005-2009	(42)	For JL-8 (K-8) trainer aircraft produced in China
50	6TD	Diesel engine	2011	2013	(25)	Probably for tank produced in China
250	AI-222	Turbofan	2011			\$380m deal; for L-15 trainer/combat aircraft produced in China; AI-222-25F version

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, http://www.sipri.org/databases/arms_transfers, accessed 8th February 2015.

The offer itself may be problematic as Ukraine is consistently struggling for survival between the EU and Russia; how much China could really commit to Ukraine with its nuclear weapons stays in question. But the signal is clear: China is seeking nothing but stronger ties with Ukraine.

Of course the relationship between China and Ukraine is not always smooth. After the Crimean Crisis, China has been playing on the fence, leaning to Russia mostly of the time. Sometimes China supports Ukraine for that national sovereignty: “China is deeply concerned about the

current situation in Ukraine; the relevant parties in Ukraine should resolve their internal disputes peacefully within the legal framework. The independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine are respected”; sometimes China also shows understanding to Russia, saying “biased mediation has polarized Ukraine and only made things worse in the country, the west should stop trying to exclude Russia from the political crisis they failed to mediate.”³⁹

The Ukrainian government was aware of the fact that China was not on its side unconditionally, and China had doubt over Ukraine’s past deals with China; therefore when the new Ukrainian government came into being it immediately reassured China that: “The Ukrainian government has made its promise clearly. It will adhere to the documents signed by each side and implement the existing cooperation projects, in the hope of pushing mutual cooperation to a higher level.”⁴⁰ Nevertheless China became highly cautious already, for that supporting Ukraine also means supporting the “West” to confront Russia, China’s most valuable ally.

With such current given circumstance, the view of Ukrainian political scientist is somehow dimmer than their government. According to the author’s interview with Oleksandr Bogdanov, a professor of the National Academy of Security Service of Ukraine, he saw Ukraine distancing China in contrast to Japan.⁴¹ Although basically he believes that Ukraine-China relation and Ukraine-Japan relation are both in good shape, Ukraine sees China as a non-democratic country, therefore China will not support the democracy of Ukraine as much as Japan does. Especially with the recent development of the Crisis, China has been progressively critical on Ukraine not Russia. From Ukraine’s perspective, Ukraine may be able to contribute to China-Japan relation with its reconciliation experience with former enemies, even though Ukraine is still having difficulties with Russia. Regarding the arms

export from Ukraine to China, he believes that politically speaking Ukraine does not take pressure from Russia or the US into its decision-making on deals; but if there is to be economic pressure, Ukraine may alter its decisions. Regarding the current defense cooperation between Ukraine and China in the Crimean region, although Ukraine hopes China to continue cooperation with Ukraine not Russia, and join international effort to sanction Russia, Ukraine also knows that China is not going to do so.

The defense cooperation that Oleksandr referred to was that, as Russia annexed Crimea, where Feodosia Shiyard makes the Zubr hovercrafts, the Zubr delivery was suspended. In December 2014, China desperately wanted to get the Zubr deal done therefore China has been negotiating with Russia (upon Russian's request) to pay the rest of the payment to the shipyard in Crimea, US\$14 billion, not to Ukraine but to Russia. It is apparently unacceptable to Ukraine, and China may have to make a clear stance and pick a side between Ukraine and Russia for taking this action.⁴² According to the most recent update on the deal, Chinese media reported that China finished imports of Zubr from Crimea, without mentioning both Ukraine and Russia. How China reacts to the Crimean Crisis might be able to tilt the balance between the EU, Ukraine and Russia.

5. The Dynamics of Crimean Crisis and Military Rebalance in Asia

Given then continuing confrontational relations between the EU and Russia, Ukraine and Russia, how would the dynamics in Asia change in favor of China? The classic analog of strategic triangles shall be applied for explanation:

Three different systemic patterns of exchange relationships are conceivable: the “ménage a trois,” consisting of symmetrical amities among all three players; the “romantic triangle,” consisting of amity between one “pivot” player and two “wing” players, but enmity between each of the latter; and the “stable marriage,” consisting of amity between two of the players and enmity between each and the third.

(Dittmer, 1981: 489)⁴³

Noticeably this analog is not applicable for the situation before the Crimean Crisis. The analog was used to analyze the triangle during the Cold War, when amity and enmity were relatively stable with the USSR-US confrontational structure. Before the Crimean Crisis, in other words in the post-Cold War era, the relationship among the EU, China, Russia and Ukraine – or between most states – are dynamic and fluctuant. But as the Crimean Crisis broke out, relationships of amity and enmity emerged and got clear, therefore the analog can be applied.

Using the analog, it is argued that with the intervention of China in the Crimean Crisis as a pivot, the strategic triangles in the Crisis shift, and cause the military balance between China and Japan to rebalance.

The Crimean Crisis caused the enmity between Ukraine and Russia, and between the EU and Russia, where China can play a pivot as in romantic triangle.

One triangle is the Ukraine-China-Russia triangle. Right before the Crisis, China had a purely bilateral relationship with Ukraine: given the loan-for-grain agreement, the defence cooperation, or the nuclear umbrella. The relationship with Russia was similar: the Russian supply of defence products was stable but at an outdated level; the economic and energy cooperation were stagnant.⁴⁴ The reason why is that

Ukrainian foreign policy could shift between amity and enmity towards Russia and the EU; China has been an important source of growth for Ukraine but Ukraine had many options. Russia also had stable economic ties with Ukraine and the EU; therefore it had no rush for arms sales to China for money. Looking at the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, Ukraine kept shifting from the EU pressure and the Russian pressure, and the EU and Russia kept trying to draw Ukraine to their sides; it was a triangle among which China had no role to play with.

After the Crimean Crisis, the new Ukrainian government soon reassured China for its past pacts to ensure future incomes; Ukraine fought with Russia for the future payment of the Zubr. Russia signed huge pacts with China, including more than 30 cooperation projects in defence industry and energy sector, some of which marked the first large purchases from China in a decade.⁴⁵ Mostly significantly, China got US\$400 billion gas deal from Russia, replaced Germany to be the biggest energy partner for Russia.⁴⁶

As to the EU-China-Russia triangle, it is also changing. The EU and Russia never wished for an overall confrontation; however as the sanctions goes on, both parties are seeking additional help. The EU went for the NATO expansion, which just announced the biggest reinforcement since the Cold War.⁴⁷ There will be six new small units in Eastern Europe; the rapid reaction force will be doubled.⁴⁸ As to Russia, it will conduct the arms sales of cutting-edge technologies and equipment, which include building submarines in China. It bears great resemblance to 2005, when the EU was trying to lift its arms embargo on China and encroach upon Russia's market share of Chinese defence market, Russia also responded with giving China the coproduction rights of advanced conventional submarines.⁴⁹ The Crimean Crisis may trigger the Russian arms sales to China for economic help, and it will also

trigger the EU arms cooperation with China, to replace Russian suppliers in order to strangle the Russian economy.

As a result, the Crimean Crisis has already helped China to gain huge energy deal and cutting-edge defence products from Russia and Ukraine. To counter the Chinese influence, the EU may have to offer a stronger tie with China, which may also result in arms deals. The Crimean Crisis provided China with great opportunity for playing a pivot in many strategic triangles.

Notes

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