



**Rising Powers Initiative- Sigur Center for Asian Studies  
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**Rising Powers Respond to Crimea Crisis**

Earlier this week, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the annexation of Crimea, two days after a referendum that declared the region's separation from Ukraine. In this Policy Alert, we examine commentary from Russia, China, India, Japan, South Korea, and Brazil on the Crimea crisis.

**RUSSIA**

On Thursday March 20, Russia's lower house of parliament overwhelmingly approved a treaty to annex Crimea from Ukraine. Numerous officials and other public figures have voiced support for Crimea's annexation, while others have remained cautious.

- In a speech to Russia's Federal Assembly, President Vladimir Putin declared, "[Crimea is our common heritage and a major factor of stability in the region](#). This strategic area should be under strong, stable dominion, which, in fact, can only be Russian."
- Fyodor Lukyanov, editor of *Russia in Global Affairs*, wrote, "If Russia loses the Ukraine gamble, it would be a shock of unpredictable proportions...the risk of loss is considerable, but the [prize is undeniably attractive](#)." Regarding economic sanctions on Russia, he noted, "There is [no experience of enacting effective sanctions](#) against a nuclear superpower that occupies a large part of Eurasia, retains influence all over the world and has an enormous wealth of resources."
- Vladimir Ryzhov, a State Duma deputy from 1993 to 2007, was critical of Crimea's annexation. "Moscow has violated the [principle of the inviolability](#) of its neighbor's borders. This will prompt other former Soviet republics to revise their own military and strategic policies and to seek additional security guarantees from countries other than Russia."
- Terming the Ukrainian crisis a potential "[geopolitical Cold War](#)," Sergei Markov, director of the Institute of Political Studies in Moscow explained the Kremlin's thought process: "Moscow does not see the revolution in Ukraine as an attempt to create a more democratic or law-based society. Instead, it sees the events in Kiev as an attempt to make Ukraine as anti-Russian as possible."

**CHINA**

Chinese officials and media outlets urged outside countries to remain impartial and encouraged resolution of the Crimean issue through dialogue.

- *China Daily* wrote, "Since the issue originated in the form of a Ukrainian domestic crisis and

involved substantial Russian interests, its resolution rests ultimately on the domestic maneuvers inside Ukraine and diplomatic ones between Ukraine and Russia. [Third-party intervention may help contain the crisis, but cannot solve it.](#)"

- Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said in a press briefing, "China has always respected the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries. The issue of Crimea should be solved politically under a [framework of laws and regulations.](#)"
- An editorial in the *People's Daily* deemed Ukraine the "final battlefield in the 'cold war'" and concluded that "a geostrategic conflict leads to the [tragedy of big-power politics.](#)"
- Another editorial in the *Global Times* predicted that "once the confrontation between the West and Russia goes out of control, [it is China that will suffer.](#) Many countries will change their strategies, which will lead to changes to China's external strategic surroundings."

## INDIA

The Indian government remained distant from the West in condemning Russia, making it clear that it will not support any [unilateral measures](#) against Moscow. Indian newspapers offered differing assessments of the crisis and the government's response.

- The *Hindustan Times* supported the government's response in light of India's traditional stance of non-interference in the affairs of other countries. "[\[T\]he wisest course for India](#), for now at least, would be not to involve itself in the geopolitics of the region and maintain a distance from both Mr. Putin and the West."
- *The Hindu* questioned the effectiveness of the Western sanctions against Russia, saying that "no Western bloc may be able to stop the dismemberment of Ukraine and prevent [the start of a new Cold War.](#)"
- *The Economic Times* agreed that these sanctions may be "[toothless](#)," warning that the Crimea crisis could mark the "dawn of a new Cold War era."
- Sreeram Sundar Chaulia, Dean of Jindal School of International Affairs, Jindal Global University, argued that the West "[cannot claim to be on a moral high ground](#)" to condemn Russia, since the West has repeatedly used military means and bypassed international laws in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya.

## JAPAN

Japan imposed [somewhat modest sanctions](#) on Russia, which reflected Tokyo's difficult position in improving its bilateral relations with Moscow despite an international crisis.

- Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida stated that Japan does not recognize the outcome of Crimea's referendum to split from Ukraine, and that "we cannot overlook Russia's attempt to [change the status quo by force.](#)"

Japanese newspapers unanimously criticized Russia's annexation of Crimea.

- The *Yomiuri Shimbun* condemned the referendum under Russia's de facto military control as "[unacceptable](#)," urging the United States and the EU to maintain pressure through sanctions while searching for a peaceful diplomatic solution.
- The *Sankei Shimbun* not only rebuked Russia's move as a "[serious challenge to the post-Cold War order](#)," but also attributed the unravelling of the order to President Obama's "[amateur diplomatic strategy](#)" that abandoned the U.S. role as a world police and encouraged the rise of new challengers such as Syria and China.

## SOUTH KOREA

South Korean media discussed the implications of the Crimea crisis for the Korean Peninsula.

The *JoongAng Ilbo* warned that the crisis will [encourage North Korea](#) to further develop its nuclear weapons, as Russia invaded Crimea despite the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, which was supposed to protect Ukraine's sovereignty in return for the abandonment of its nuclear program.

- The newspaper also argued that what Ukraine will do in the future [has implications](#) for a potential unification between two Koreas, questioning whether a unified Korea would be able to maintain relations with the United States and China amidst their geostrategic rivalry.

## BRAZIL

History and East-West tensions figured prominently in Brazilian reactions to the crisis.

- Assessing the conflict culminating between the former rivals of the East and West over Russia's occupation of Crimea, the [Estado de Sao Paulo believes Putin is attempting to instigate further reactions](#) from the West and thus offer an opening for broader military actions to reclaim lands formerly controlled by Russia. *Estado* termed these actions as "fraught with risks," calling it "a minefield."
- The history of wars dating back to the 1850s including disastrous conflicts between the U.K, France, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire weighed heavily in the [interpretation of events made by Folha de Sao Paulo](#). The paper described the current encounter between Obama and Putin as "a new battle of wills...resonant [of] very old and very unhappy precedents."

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*The Elliott School's new [Brazil Initiative](#) has joined the Rising Powers Policy Alerts, giving voice to the 'B' in 'BRIC.' The Brazil Initiative promotes improved understanding of Brazil through hosting special events and research related to Brazil.*

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