

# PRC'S TWOFOLD GAME IN THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR



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“Can Russia find more Friends and supports in War against Ukraine?  
Position and reactions of Central Asian Countries”  
we provide the interested audience with the compilation of tactical  
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NATIONAL  
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# **PRC'S TWOFOLD GAME**

## **IN THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR**

**Authors:**

Tinatin Khidasheli

Ani Kintsurashvili

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**Civic IDEA**

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# INTRODUCTION

The invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces, which began in February and continues to this day, instigated massive concern among different states worldwide. After our Central Asia publication “Can Russia find more Friends and supports in War against Ukraine? Position and reactions of Central Asian Countries,” we provide the interested audience with the compilation of tactical and strategic narratives coming from Beijing over the Russia-Ukraine war.

While the entire civilized world stands together in condemning Russia over the aggression in Ukraine and calls [president Putin a war criminal](#) for the crimes committed every day against the civilian population of a sovereign country, there are more and more sanctions coming against those directly involved in war crimes or their allies and cronies from EU, NATO, Council of Europe, individual members states of those organizations, as well as [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#), [South Korea](#), [Singapore](#), [Japan](#), etc. The world's leading economies are absolutely clear and resolute on the Russian-Ukrainian war, on villains and heroes. However, China, as an emerging global superpower, is in no hurry to take a stance and is busy trimming its statements along with the neutral terminology and sentiments of a humanitarian nature. This is evidenced by all the speeches made by the PRC representative at the recent emergency meetings of the UN Security Council, special sessions of the UN General Assembly, or once coming directly from Beijing. Nevertheless, knowing its political decisions and super-power ambitions, coupled with pre-war economic ties with Russia, we can only speculate on how Beijing will position itself in the future, whether it expands bonds with the sanctioned Moscow or stick to maintaining a neutral standing under changing reality. At this point, we see that since the beginning of the war, official China has been announcing the [maintenance of economic relations with both Russia and Ukraine](#). It is important to underline that it refrained from acknowledging Russia's “invasion” of Ukraine by abstaining from its vote at the UN on March 2, 2022 (United Nations General Assembly Resolution ES-11/1). Moreover, the Chinese state-controlled media outlets have pushed the disinformation narratives derived from the Russian propagandist sources to mislead the Chinese-speaking population worldwide.

Meanwhile, we also observe China officially acknowledging the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, urging for immediate peace talks between Russia and the US, as well as Russia and the EU. The most recent [Biden-Xi Jinping call](#) on March 18th was yet another demonstration of this two-fold policy or, one would say, balancing approach of Beijing. Biden warned the Chinese leader to restrain from helping Russia with military equipment, otherwise, it would result

in severe consequences for Beijing. Nevertheless, during the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference, the CCP leader announced [a Global Security Initiative](#), favoring Russia's so-called "Indivisible Security"<sup>1</sup>, which was perceived by the Western world as a landmark of China's general strategy in the Russo-Ukrainian war.

The article does not seek to substantiate conspiracy theories but rather examines existing standpoints, the PRC's ignorance of human rights and humanitarian law issues, and its ties to Russia prior to the current war.

## PRC'S POSITIONING IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR: A DOUBLE GAME FOR BEIJING

China and Russia enjoy a wide range of cooperation that has only expanded over the decades. There is no doubt that this collaboration is based on the individual strategic interests of two authoritarian regimes and one general foreign policy goal of deterring their main rival, the US. [Sino-Russian partnership platforms vary](#) from the military, economy, and foreign policy to energy domains, and their synchronized actions in IOs are also visible. However, their coordination also comprises some hitches in dealing with issues such as dominance in Central Asia or economic rivalry in the whole of Eurasia. The bilateral alliance carries different weights for the participating parties. For example, it would be much more difficult for Russia to confront the West without Chinese support, and we are already witnessing multiple [attempts of Moscow to make China a supporting party in the unjustifiable and cruel war](#).

Concurrently Beijing has a less-dependent approach as it grows as a global superpower on its own, and strategically speaking, strengthened and rising Russia on its borders does not suit its long-term interests at all. Nevertheless, both sides maintain a stable relationship in the face of one enemy – alliances of democratic states striving to *establish* an authoritarian rule on the whole continent.

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<sup>1</sup> "The indivisibility of Security" – The security of one state is inseparable from the security of other states in its region. Source: <https://www.ft.com/content/84a43896-2dfd-4be4-8d2a-c68a5a68547a>

# COOPERATION AND ECONOMIC TIES



Figure 1(Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/04/xi-jinping-meets-vladimir-putin-china-russia-tensions-grow-west>)

Prior to the invasion of Ukraine, PRC signed [15 co-operation agreements](#) with Russia, including in the geo-political and economic areas, followed [by law enforcement, foreign affairs, trade in goods, investment cooperation, agriculture, global navigation satellite systems, gas purchase, and sales, informatization and digitalization.](#)

China announced it would allow [wheat imports](#) from Russia while also signing the 30-year deal on increased imports of Russian gas. These actions indirectly express a specific commitment and faith in Putin's win.

Despite the circumstance that these agreements between the two authoritarian powers were signed prior to the war, and since then, they have been neither rejected nor withdrawn. Even more disturbing is that Russia has initiated [a \\$117.5 bln worth deal](#) with China on exporting its oil and gas supplies. This occasion changes the orientation of the Kremlin's energy market and directs it towards the East, meaning Putin tries to reduce its dependency on European customers. Russian energy giant Gazprom signed a 30-year contract with the Chinese company CNPN and claimed that it is going to increase gas supplies to the PRC to 48 bcm per year, while initially, the plan was to deliver only 38 bcm.

In this challenging time for Russia, when China, as its number one trading partner, is almost the sole savior of its economy, Beijing may have other priorities altogether, as their interdependency varies radically. Beijing may consider that its trade with Moscow comprises only [2% of its total trade volume](#), while the US and the EU have larger shares. The international expert community believed that this occasion, together with the fear of indirect sanctions deriving from the contracts with Russian banks and firms, might deter the PRC from aiding Kremlin. This suspicion was justified [in particular](#) but not in all cases. PRC continues to look for new ways to continue business relations with Russia. For instance, in early April, a board member of the National Card Payment System (NSPK), Oleg Tishakov, announced that [the Chinese companies would supply the Russian domestic payment system "Mir" with the microchips.](#) In addition to that, Chinese refiners

continued [to buy Russian oil secretly through alternative payment systems](#) and using Chinese currency to avoid public criticism. Even Chinese state-controlled energy companies such as PetroChina, CNOOC, Sinopec, and several others [operate on old deals](#) and continue their transactions with Russia. These very same companies were willing to [purchase the shares of Sakhalin-2 oil and gas facilities](#).

Moreover, Xi Jinping's reference to Putin as his ["best friend"](#) prior to the Beijing Winter Olympics and his ["best and bosom friend"](#) even earlier on his birthday in 2019 indicates their close ties. As China has no formal Western allies, it also clearly validated Russia's claim to stop the NATO expansion during the [emergency meeting of the UN Security Council](#):

*"China advocates a common comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security concept that the security of one country cannot come at the cost of undermining the security of other nations. Much less can regional security be secured through group strengthening and, from that matter, group expansion against the backdrop of five successive rounds of NATO expansion? Russia's legitimate security aspirations should be given attention and addressed properly," – said a Chinese representative to the UN Security Council on February 25<sup>th</sup>.*

According to PRC's MFA spokesperson, Wang Wenbin, NATO seeks to extend its sphere of influence toward the Asia-Pacific region and ["stir up conflicts"](#) there.

# INVASION AND SANCTIONS

Beijing has avoided using the word “invasion” and seeks a solution that will prevent the West from achieving its goal. “The party (CCP) has no friends, no sentiments or compassion - it only has interests. The existential one is to counter the liberal West, especially the US, which threatens the position of Chinese communists.” -



Ukraine - Security Council | Resolution Veto | United Nations | UNTV Live (25 Feb) - Official

Ukraine - Security Council | Resolution Veto | United Nations | UNTV Live (25 Feb) - Official

mentioned Polish journalist and analyst Jędrzej Winiecki in his article for Polityka.pl. The question today is whether China could be the one who assists Kremlin in easing the damage coming from the Western sanctions? This question is equally troubling to both Moscow and the western capitals. Wang Wenbin, the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, highlighted during his briefing on February 25 that official China opposes the use of sanctions against Russia as they do not represent an efficient way to cope with the problem. During the same second emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, China’s ambassador to the UN, Zhang Jun, also stressed:

*“At present, faced with a highly complex and sensitive situation, the security council should make a necessary response, and at the same time, such response should also be taken with great caution. All actions should be truly conducive to defusing the crisis rather than adding fuel to the fire. If not handled properly and treated by bending oneself on exerting pressure and imposing sanctions, it may only lead to more casualties, more property loss, a more complicated and chaotic situation, and more difficulties in bridging differences. It may completely shut the door to a peaceful solution, and eventually, it is the vast number of innocent people that will be the victims.”*

Chinese explanation of the opposition to sanctions is not its support for Russia’s action against Ukraine, but they took more of a holistic approach criticizing Sanction Policy as such well expressed in rhetorical question by Hua Chunying, a spokeswoman for China’s foreign ministry “Have U.S. sanctions solved



[the problem?](#)". On a regular press briefing on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, she [outlined the Chinese position](#):

*"The position of the Chinese government is that we believe that sanctions have never been a fundamental and effective way to solve problems, and China always opposes any illegal unilateral sanctions," at a regular press briefing on. "Since 2011, the United States has imposed sanctions on Russia more than 100 times, but we can all think about it calmly," - she added.*

In other words, one might argue that Beijing feels for Moscow and challenges the introduction of sanctions as a kind of prospective self-defense step but has no intention to rush into helping President Putin circumvent its consequences either. As Guo Shuqing, chairman of the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission, highlighted, ["the country won't participate in sanctions, but he didn't offer any relief either"](#). This policy was proven by decisions of the Chinese development bank called Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), ["suspending all its activities in Russia as the war in Ukraine unfolds."](#)

The ambiguity of further Chinese actions is derived from the fact that, while being in a close economic relationship with Moscow, it officially supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine, claiming that its sovereignty should be ["respected and safeguarded"](#). On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Chinese MFA spokesperson, Wang Wenbin, claimed that the PRC maintains ["smooth communication with the relevant sides on the Ukraine situation"](#) but refused to comment on [the Zelensky-Xi phone talk](#) that was announced by the Ukrainian Presidential Chief of Staff Andrei Yermak one day before Wenbin's press conference. Later, during a video conference with the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, it was confirmed that the leader of the Chinese Communist Party, Xi Jinping, [did not show any commitment to holding direct talks with President Zelensky](#), which again points to a double standard attitude coming from China. However, the Chinese leader is ready to talk to everyone, including his European counterparts, about the Ukraine war, world peace, and tranquility. On May 9, he held a phone call with the German Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, during which [Xi invited him to participate in the proposed Global Security Initiative](#). The next day, the CCP chief called French President Emmanuel Macron and agreed [on the need for a ceasefire in Ukraine](#). Apparently, Xi Jinping is ready to talk about peace and prosperity with everyone in the world, except the leader of Ukraine.

Additionally, Chinese traders initially cut back imports of coal from Russia as [they struggled to secure backing from state banks](#). After Russia's expulsion from the SWIFT system, most banks functioning on dollar-denominated contracts had to stop the payment operations, making it difficult to trade with Moscow on coal. Therefore, trades were on hold until they reached a consensus on trading in Chinese currency. Already on April 2, the Chinese MFA Director-General of the European affairs, Wang Lutong, highlighted during a press conference that despite the Western sanctions, China would again [normalize trade relations with Russia](#), as it was not a related party in the ongoing conflict between Moscow and Kyiv. Chinese Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Zhang Hanhui, praised the Sino-Russian growing cooperation in the fields of energy, military, and technology and admitted that both sides are looking for ways to continue [trade relations in local currency](#) to substitute the US dollars and euros. Therefore, both private and public sectors in China organize "[stress tests](#)" to prepare for the potential future sanctions and facilitate meetings and discussions with each other regarding evading the Russian sanctions and continuing to conduct effective long-standing business with them. The end of April marked the [meeting of Chinese officials with large foreign and domestic banks functioning in the PRC](#), where the issue of avoidance of the imposed sanctions was discussed. Moreover, Chinese local and provincial governments [are hosting conferences to accelerate the cooperation](#) between the local companies and Russian entities.

## MILITARY ASSISTANCE

On March 13, Financial Times, New York Times, and several other popular media outlets leaked the information about the [Kremlin requesting military assistance](#) (including missiles, drones, intelligence-related equipment, armored vehicles, vehicles for logistics, and support) from Beijing in support of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The Chinese side has refused the claims calling them “disinformation” spread by the United States, while later on, the same media outlets wrote about Beijing’s willingness and [openness to providing Russia with the requested weapons](#), including surface-to-air missiles. The EU leaders also justified this argument based on [reliable evidence of China considering military assistance to Russia](#).

This occasion worries the US and the EU officials, who constantly warn the PRC not to attempt to bail out Russia amid the western sanctions. Washington believes that Beijing tries to covertly assist Moscow while publicly playing the role of peace-loving mediator urging for the diplomatic resolution of the Russo-Ukrainian war and [small countries to “cherish peace” in the ASEAN region](#). It is also doubtful that [China deployed anti-aircraft missiles to Serbia](#) in April using the PLA’s heavy airlifters that flew over Serbia for two days. MFA spokesperson, Mr. Zhao Lijian, tried to dispel the doubts of the Western countries, declaring that this delivery had nothing to do with the war that emerged in the region but was a part of the dual cooperation plan without any third parties involved.

Another contradiction is linked to the PRC’s knowledge of the occurrence of war in late February. [The Chinese Ambassador to the US, Qin Gang](#), follows the narrative of China being a peace-maker and claims that Beijing would do its best to prevent the war if the country was aware of such incidents prior to its emergence. On the contrary, media reports stated that in early February, [China asked Russia to delay war until the end of the Beijing Olympics](#), taking into account the previous unpleasant experience in 2008, when Russia attacked Georgia during the Beijing Olympics and drew all the attention of the international community.

All the allegations were denied by the PRC Ambassador to the US, Qin Gang, who asserted in his op-ed that [China’s earlier knowledge of Moscow’s activities, as well as provision of military aid to it, is pure disinformation](#) invented and orchestrated by the West. The most surprising is the fact that on the very same day that this op-ed was published, the Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Le Yucheng met with Russia’s Ambassador to China, Andrey Ivanovich Denisov, and assured him of [a mutually beneficial, strengthened cooperation](#) in building a new world order.

# CHINA AS A PEACEKEEPER?

## RESTRAINT FROM THE UN VOTES

While China is playing a twofold game, the world democracies continue criticizing the PRC for not having a clear position. For instance, Australian PM Morrison disparaged Beijing for the “[lack of a strong response](#)”. On the contrary, China not only disapproved of the sanctions but also initially accused [Washington of fueling the Russo-Ukrainian war in Europe](#). PRC’s Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, implied that the US was a “[culprit](#)” for “[fanning up flames](#)”. He made this point due to the US’s constant warnings prior to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Moreover, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson [Zhao Lijian blamed the US for importing crude oil and fertilizers from Russia](#) while simultaneously urging its European allies to stop economic relations with Kremlin. The CCP-controlled media outlet “The People’s Daily”, which has been recently distinguished by airing official Chinese propagandist narratives on the Russian-Ukrainian war under the article series called “Viewing American Hegemony from the Ukrainian Crisis”, has published various anti-Western and, particularly, anti-US analysis criticizing the latter in the attempts of “[financing terrorism](#)” while implying to the sanctions and economic blockade of Russia, in [increasing Europe’s dependency on the US economy](#) and in gaining the role of Hegemony on the international arena. Not only Chinese media outlets or state spokespersons but also Chinese scholars have been very active in promoting anti-Western sentiments. To give an example, a Chinese scholar Shen Yi was also extreme in his opinions, [comparing a threat of NATO’s expansion for Russia to a 1960s Cuban Missile crisis](#). He stated that the US and its partners are aiming to lead the international order along with this policy.

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(Source:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THDHTlaSb50>)

Later on, China's rhetoric changed, and it adopted the role of peacekeeper and the initiator of the dialogue between the disputing sides while simultaneously and constantly abstaining from voting for the resolution concerning "the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine."

Earlier, at the end of February, [it also joined the United Arab Emirates and India in refraining from the UN resolution](#) on the condemnation of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

*"We must draw profound lessons from the extremely painful experience in the past based on above-mentioned China abstain in the vote just now. I wish to stress that the issue of Ukraine is not something that only emerged today, nor did the current situation occur suddenly overnight. It is the result of the interplay of various factors over a long period of time." – mentioned Zhang Jun during the meeting of the UN Security Council.*

Despite the abstains, the official Chinese representative to the UN continues building the image of the peacekeeper and claims the following:

*"In the current context, all parties concerned should exercise restraint and avoid the further escalation of tensions. We believe that the door to a peaceful solution to the Ukraine issue is not fully shot, nor should it be. China has pointed out on many occasions that there is a complex historical context on the Ukraine issue and that the current situation is the result of the interplay of many factors. China's position on safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states has been consistent." (23 Feb 2022);*

*"We believe that the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of all states should be respected and that the purposes and principles of the UN Charter should be jointly upheld. We have always called on all parties to see reasonable solutions to address each other's concerns through peaceful means on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. We welcome and encourage all efforts for diplomatic solution. We support Russian Federation and Ukraine in resolving this issue through negotiations." (25 Feb 2022);*

*“China supports and encourages all diplomatic efforts conducive to a peaceful settlement of the Ukraine crisis and welcomes the earliest possible direct dialogue and negotiations between Russia and Ukraine. China supports eco-footed dialogues between the EU and Russia on European Security issues and upholding the principle of indivisible security to eventually form a balanced, effective, and sustainable European security mechanism. China believes that the security council should give priority to regional peace and stability and the universal security of all countries and play a constructive role in resolving the Ukraine issue; actions taken by the UN should help cool the situation and facilitate the diplomatic solution to avoid escalation of tensions.” (27 Feb 2022).*

The same rhetoric continued in March and April during the UN security council meetings, as Mr. Jun called [the occurrences in Bucha, Ukraine](#), disturbing while avoiding naming Kremlin as the only culprit in war crimes.

Hence, China has not taken a precise position, as while talking about peaceful reconciliation of the war at the UN, it simultaneously refrains from acknowledging Russian aggression and opposes sanctions. Apparently, China’s definition of “peace” is dubious since it avoids the recognition of Putin as a war criminal and Russia as an aggressor state. PRC places itself among such states as India, Nicaragua, Cuba, and several others, which refuse to stand along with the democracies around the world.



# HUMAN RIGHTS AS A SENSITIVE TOPIC FOR BEIJING

On February 28, China voted against [Ukraine's initiative to hold an urgent debate at the UN Human Rights Council \(HRC\) on the Situation of Human Rights in Ukraine deriving from Russian aggression.](#)



(Source: <https://twitter.com/aguirreol/status/1498250609404874752?s=21>)

One week after the disturbing occurrences revealed in Bucha, during the UN General Assembly on April 7, Mr. Jun abstained [from voting on the resolution to exclude the Russian Federation from the UN Human Rights Council:](#)

Voting Started

07-Apr-22

12:48:47

Item 5 - Draft resolution A/ES-11/L.4

Suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council

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ARMENIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMOROS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GREECE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LIBYA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NORWAY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SLOVENIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> VANUATU
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IN FAVOUR: 93

AGAINST: 24

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ABSTENTION: 58

(Source: <https://twitter.com/UN News Centre>)

(Source: [https://twitter.com/UN\\_News\\_Centre](https://twitter.com/UN_News_Centre))

On May 12, China, together with Eritrea, voted against the resolution at the UN HRC on the ["deteriorating Human Rights situation in Ukraine."](#) The resolution aimed at [the independent international commission to investigate possible war crimes and human rights violations](#) orchestrated by Russia in the country.

We can say with confidence that Beijing-like behavior is motivated by it to cover up its human rights violations against the Uyghur minorities in Xinjiang. The modern world is well aware of human rights being taboo for the Chinese government, especially when it comes to its recognition and protection.

Nowadays, there are numerous precedents of how [China oppresses its Muslim minorities in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region \(XUAR\)](#). Human rights defenders claim that the Chinese government has detained millions of Uyghurs in so-called "re-education camps" and imprisoned thousands. They are also alleged to commit a crime against humanity and several countries, such as the US, the Netherlands, or Canada, accused China of genocide against the minorities in Xinjiang. The evidence shows that Uyghurs are also used for forced labor, and their women are being sterilized, sexually abused, and tortured. The [international community has actively condemned](#) these activities. However, PRC actively seeks to deny and cover-up such illegal actions, which also explains why it opposes investigating human rights abuses orchestrated by Russia in Ukraine.



# IS THE CHINESE “TAIWAN POLICY” THE REASON FOR PRC TO ARGUE FOR TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY IN THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR?

As mentioned by the Chinese representative during the [UN General Assembly Emergency Special Session](#) on February 28: *“As a prominent member of the UN security council, China always conscientiously fulfills its responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. It is our consistent and unequivocal position that all countries’ sovereignty and territorial integrity should be respected.”*

But is this really true?

While Beijing is trying to play a role of a peacekeeper in the Russo-Ukrainian war, Taiwan worries about the impending military threat due to China’s claims on its territory. Taiwan has transformed into a self-governing state [since 1949](#) and, to this day, is not under the control of the Chinese Communist Party. Nevertheless, according to “One China Policy”, Beijing views Taiwan as its part, where the Chinese Communist Party must be the only legitimate governor. Seeking reunification with Taiwan, the PRC rejects its participation in the UN bodies and various international institutions. There are only [fifteen states](#) in the world that abstain from recognizing the “One China Policy” and maintain diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

While Russia continues severe military operations in Ukraine, Beijing [keeps violating Taiwan’s airspace](#) by sending military aircraft, as stated by the defense ministry of Taiwan. Despite the frequency of such precedents, Taiwan’s concern over these issues has deepened in the wake of the Ukraine crisis, as the security analysts claim that China is monitoring the international community’s response to the recent developments and then will decide whether to launch more substantial assaults on Taiwan or not. The official Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying, claims that Taiwan is [“not Ukraine”](#) and has been the inseparable province of China, which further raises worries in Taiwan. According to [“The Diplomat”](#), sanctions will not threaten Beijing in the fight for Taiwan, as it has more capability to lean on a domestic market during the economic blockade than Russia does. Furthermore, unlike Moscow’s strategy against Ukraine, China [cannot directly cross over Taiwan](#) due to different geolocation and logistics. Hence, Beijing might not use similar tactics but draw more general lessons and identify the opportunities.

However, there is also the possibility that the international community will respond to China in the event of Taiwan's seizure differently from what we have seen in the case of Russia. For instance, if we talk about the US, what we see is that Taiwan has maintained close ties with its government both during the Trump and Biden administrations. Under President Donald Trump, [several official visits and massive military support](#) were unveiled. A similar tendency continued after the change of the administration. ["Since Biden took office, the US government has been highlighting the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait in many diplomatic statements that it has issued with allies,"](#) - mentioned Bonnie Glaser, director of the Asia Program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States in the interview with DW. On May 23, during the press conference in White House, President Biden assured that [the US would respond "militarily" if China attempted to seize Taiwan](#). Consequently, in the event of ineffective sanctions amid the escalation of the Sino-Taiwanese war, direct US military intervention is not an excluded scenario.

Meanwhile, Taiwan has vowed its support to Ukraine while worrying about its own fate. For decades, it has existed under the constant military threat of the PRC, as the latter gradually increases its military capabilities. The [Taiwanese Foreign Minister, Joseph Wu](#), assumes that Beijing's army advancement could allow it to go beyond Taiwan and attack the first island chain. Therefore, Taiwan must be cautious and avoid any provocations both of China and from China.

# PRC'S DISINFORMATION STRATEGY DURING THE WAR



Global Times  
@globaltimesnews  
China state-affiliated media

Zelensky left Ukraine for Poland,  
Russian State Duma speaker says:  
Sputnik #UkraineTensions



21:23 · 04 Mar 22 · Twitter Web App

The most common storylines are: "[The people of Kyiv are quite happy that Russia has invaded](#)"; "[Putin states only Fascists fight like this](#)"; "[An opposition parliamentarian's claim that Zelensky had already fled to Poland](#)"; "[Zelensky has run away from Kyiv](#)"; "[later reports that Ukraine has refused peace talks](#)".<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the Chinese state media personalities are embedded to Russian soldiers deployed within the frames of the so-called "operation Z" to implement the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. It is notable that the Chinese journalists are interviewing Russian soldiers dismissing the cruelty of their actions. Below, we see [the Chinese Phoenix TV reporter](#) in front of a Russian military vehicle and later riding with Russian soldiers:



CGTN  
@CGTNOfficial  
China state-affiliated media

#Ukrainian President Volodymyr  
Zelenskyy has arrived in Poland, TASS  
news agency reported Friday.

21:13 · 04 Mar 22 · Twitter Web App

<sup>2</sup> Disinformation spread by the Chinese media outlets:

<https://archive.ph/YhoRf>

<https://archive.ph/yCiEM>

<https://archive.vn/ccq7J>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1e\\_h8Tg-GSA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1e_h8Tg-GSA)

<https://archive.ph/7eUOP>



Such actions are mostly typical of the Russian state-run media outlets, although we also see Chinese journalists involved in the process. This circumstance violates the PRC's neutral position initially envisaged and taken on the Russian-Ukrainian issue.

China's anti-western sentiments are also portrayed on media platforms. The comments promoted are not directly about the Russia-Ukraine war but about how NATO and the US have triggered Russia to shift into a "self-defense" mode. Hence, several stories target the West and particularly the United States on Chinese manipulative websites. For instance, the trending anti-US plots include the following titles: "[the US told Ukraine to light the fire in order to gain international support](#)"; "[Are you still expecting big brother the USA?](#)"; "The US and NATO are responsible for the war". The comments that appear below the Weibo posts citing the Chinese MFA spokesperson Zhao Lijian are also misleading, claiming that: "[NATO will pay for its blood debt,](#)" or "[NATO has no limits, and its aggressive ambition will trigger pushbacks.](#)"<sup>3</sup> The narratives published in mandarin are meant to mislead the Chinese speaking society about the chronicles of war.

<sup>3</sup> Disinformation spread by the Chinese media outlets:

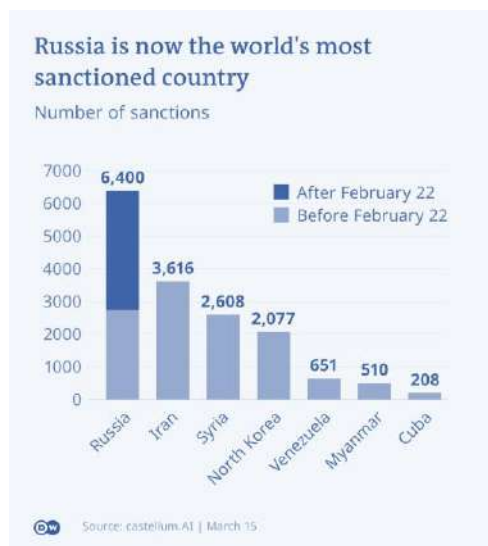
<https://archive.fo/UBQav>

<https://archive.ph/KUar8>

## CONCLUSION

Since the Russian aggression, democracies all around the globe have supported Ukraine systematically diplomatically, politically, and by delivering military and humanitarian aid. For this reason, [Russia surpassed Iran in the battle for the title of the most sanctioned country in the World.](#) We are witnessing unprecedented sanctions from the west and nearly total isolation of Russia and President Putin, his government and his cronies, as well as Russian oligarchs from the civilized world. However, China is not among them, as it avoids naming Russia's "invasion" in a correct manner, refuses to impose sanctions, and abstains from voting against Kremlin in the UN.

Various factors contribute to PRC's silence on this matter. First, we can assume Sino-Russian economic and financial proximity, which has only strengthened with time. Several weeks prior to the war, on February 4<sup>th</sup>, Moscow and Beijing signed a new oil and gas deal worth \$117.5 billion, giving Russia concrete guarantees to expand its economy to the East to avoid pressure from the Western sanctions. The second point is related to the alignment of two authoritarian regimes against the West, which was well reflected in China's support for Russia's argument against NATO expansion. Thirdly, the role of peacemaker Beijing created for itself while accusing the US and NATO of being the main instigators of the war. At last, its avoidance of Human Rights issues, due to the magnitude of offenses towards Uyghurs, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, etc.



Overall, its official position remains vague and dubious, enriched with various twofold statements. This occasion makes us think that Beijing still observes the developments and will act accordingly, putting its self-interest in the first place. As it seems, Beijing will try to play peace broker for a while at this stage. It suits Chinese interests both strategically and tactically. Such a pace will keep them on a blurry side for a while, as neutrality and no side-picking guarantees access and opportunities for dialogue from both parties, and strategically if it actually manages to bring the parties around the table for peace talks, they can claim the trophy of a peace-maker in these challenging times for entire Europe and the world.

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