

Beijing condemns Washington’s “irresponsible and immoral” behaviour in the Ukraine crisis

Peter Symonds
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The Chinese foreign ministry yesterday condemned Washington for deliberately inflaming the danger of war in the Ukraine crisis. It criticised US President Biden’s imposition of further sanctions on Moscow after Russian President Putin signed a decree recognising two eastern Ukrainian regions as “independent” and dispatched Russian troops into these areas.

At a press conference, foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said the US was “raising tensions, creating panic, and even playing up the schedule of war... If someone is adding fuel to the fire while blaming others... then that behaviour is irresponsible and immoral.”

Asked if China would impose sanctions on Russia, Hua stated that the Chinese government believed that “sanctions have never been a fundamental and effective way to solve problems.” She reiterated that the Chinese government regarded the US imposition of unilateral sanctions, not just on Russia but other countries, including China, as “illegal.”

“Since 2011, the United States has imposed sanctions on Russia more than 100 times, but we can all think about it calmly,” Hua said, adding: “Have US sanctions solved the problem?” She repeated China’s plea for negotiations to maintain regional peace and stability.

The US, however, has no intention of “solving the problem.” It is hell-bent on ramping up tensions in the Ukraine and provoking war with Russia. Beijing’s pleas for talks and a peaceful solution will fall on deaf ears.

Hua pointedly warned that in its handling of the Ukraine crisis and relations with Russia, “the US must not harm the legitimate rights and interests of China

and other parties.” Beijing is clearly concerned that the US will exploit its unilateral sanctions against Russia as a pretext for taking action against Chinese entities for any alleged breaches.

At the same time, while China has not condemned Putin’s actions in recognising the “independence” of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, it has given no political support to the move or Russia’s dispatch of troops to these areas.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has defended Russia’s concerns about the encroachment of NATO into Eastern Europe as legitimate, but Beijing is deeply worried by the international precedent set by any redrawing of national borders. It has not formally recognised Russia’s annexation of Crimea, which followed the US-backed coup, involving openly fascist forces, that ousted the elected pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych in 2014.

Hinting that Ukrainian security concerns also had to be taken into account, Hua said China had “called on all parties to respect and attach importance to each other’s legitimate security concerns, strive to resolve issues through negotiation and consultation, and jointly maintain regional peace and stability.”

Beijing’s concerns stem from legitimate fears that the US will exploit such precedents to justify support for separatist movements, including in Hong Kong and among the Uyghur and Tibetan minorities, as a means of destabilising and breaking up China. The US propaganda machine endlessly recycles the lie that the Chinese government is engaged in the “genocide” of the Uyghurs in China’s western region of Xinjiang.

Moreover, the US is deliberately inflaming tensions over Taiwan, which it nominally recognises as part of

China under the “One China” policy. In a definite echo of its accusations of a Russian invasion of the Ukraine, the US media has repeatedly claimed, without any substantiation, that China is preparing to take control of Taiwan using military force. In reality, the US has undermined longstanding protocols regarding the status of Taiwan by strengthening ties with the island, including the deployment of US troops there for the first time in more than four decades.

The Chinese foreign ministry statements yesterday follow a phone call between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday. Wang expressed concern about the “evolving situation in Ukraine” and did not endorse Blinken’s accusations of “Russian aggression.”

Wang blamed the crisis in the Ukraine on “the delayed implementation of the Minsk agreement.” This ceasefire deal was engineered by France and Germany, not the US, in 2014 and 2015 to end fighting between pro-Russian separatist militia in eastern Ukraine and the Ukrainian military, which was working with armed fascist groups.

The Minsk agreement cut across the agenda of the US and extreme right-wing Ukrainian parties and groupings, which sought to continue and intensify the fighting, including to regain control of the Crimea. Along with the removal of all foreign fighters and the pulling back of heavy weaponry, the agreement called for greater autonomy for the rebel-held areas in eastern Ukraine, while requiring the separatists to return control of the border between Ukraine and Russia to the Kiev regime. These provisions have never been established.

The Russian and Chinese presidents undoubtedly discussed the looming crisis in the Ukraine in depth at their meeting in Beijing on February 4 at the opening of the Winter Olympics. A lengthy joint statement said the two countries had a friendship that had “no limits.” Without naming the US and its allies, the statement declared that Russia and China “stand against attempts by external forces to undermine security and stability in their common adjacent regions,” and “counter interference by outside forces in the internal affairs of sovereign countries under any pretext.”

Putin and Xi no doubt also discussed their somewhat different positions on the separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, as well as the Crimea. As a result, Putin

will not have been surprised by the lack of Chinese support for his announcement recognising Donetsk and Luhansk as independent. He will, however, be looking for Chinese economic and financial support to combat the sanctions imposed by the US and its allies on Russia.

The summit concluded a major agreement for Russia to supply China with 10 billion cubic metres of gas per year—a critical lifeline to Moscow under conditions where its markets in Europe are now being hit by US sanctions. With trade between Russia and China already increasing in the wake of the 2014 Ukrainian crisis, Putin and Xi agreed to boost it to \$250 billion annually.

Biden declared that the penalties imposed on Russia this week were just the “first tranche,” so the potential for conflict with China for “breaching” the US sanctions regime can only rise. Washington will have no qualms about drumming up pretexts for punitive measures against Beijing, which it regards as even more of a threat to its global domination than Moscow. This underscores the danger that a war in Europe can rapidly extend to the Indo-Pacific, creating a global disaster.



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