

Chinese Foreign Policy Brief

China's official commentary in the six months to May 2025

The Chinese foreign policy establishment appear determined to resist Trump's trade offensive. They have asserted China's position on Taiwan through both direct pressure and diplomacy, and sought to maintain a productive though defined partnership with Russia as well as amiable working relationships with the rest of Europe. They espoused a vision for a multipolar world organised through multilateral international institutions that better reflect China's status.

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Introduction

This brief examines publications, interviews, and statements on foreign policy issues from Chinese officials and state-affiliated analysts in the six months to mid-May 2025, compiling over 80 different sources. It covers four areas: the exchange of trade restrictions between China and the US, Taiwan's reunification with China and other countries' stance on the matter, tensions between the US and its European allies, and the Russia-Ukraine War.

The main findings are the following:

- The Chinese foreign policy establishment saw the Trump Administration's trade war as a dangerous, though not irreversible challenge to China's core interest, and clearly signalled their determination to resist American demand for one-sided concessions.
- Beijing consistently espoused its readiness to use military means to reunify with Taiwan, and sought to align other countries positions on the status of Taiwan with its own. Despite a growing assertiveness in Beijing generally, on both Taiwan and Europe, there remained an awareness that China's opportunities were limited.
- Beijing identified Europe as one of the (potential) poles in a multipolar global system, where there exists much more compatibility than competition between European and Chinese interests.
- Chinese analysts and policy-makers saw the continuing Russia-Ukraine War as causing unwelcome complications for its relations with other European states, and continued to avoid endorsing Moscow's policy on Ukraine. Nevertheless, there appears to be a consensus that Russia remained a valuable partner in reshaping international institutions to better reflect Beijing's vision of multipolarity.

China-US trade war

As of March 2025, Chinese officials and analysts appeared reasonably optimistic about Sino-American relations. Echoing President Donald Trump's conciliatory signals about the relationship, official Chinese media talked up the prospect of Sino-American cooperation and economic complementarity.¹ In early January, the *Global Times*, for instance, lauded

¹ E.g. *Global Times* editorial (2024) '中美加强对话合作，符合世界期待', <https://hqtime.huanqiu.com/article/4Ke46MVkUW6>; *Global Times* editorial (2025) '我们乐见美方将“欢迎中资”转化为实际行动' <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4Lf82icOUL8>; *Global Times*

Tesla's sales growth in China in 2024 as proof that, even in an industry with ultra-competitive local producers, China remained an attractive market.² Its commentary also touted the continued increase in Sino-American trade, the prospect of integrating American research and development on renewable energy tech with China's industrial capacity, and even the possibility of the two countries working together on Artificial Intelligence technologies.³ There seemed to be a consensus that Trump's approach would be opportunistic, transactional, and generally non-ideological, and that this would leave much room for negotiations and stabilisation sooner or later.⁴

In the first few weeks of the second Trump Administration, Chinese commentary included both opposition to trade threats, and hope for a return to stable bilateral relations. There was a strong emphasis that strong bilateral trade flows were dictated by fundamental economic principles.⁵ The formulaic statements about the United States's 'weaponisation' of trade and 'bullying' practices continued.⁶ China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi said his government would respond to US economic offensive by '奉陪到底', 'offering one's company [in a struggle] until the end' (a literal translation); this intentionally

editorial (2025) '中美应联手探寻大国正确相处之道',

<https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4KlViAy9cPv>. See also the previous brief from Yuan (2024)

'Chinese Foreign Policy | Brief', *The Australia Institute*,

<https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/chinese-foreign-policy-brief/>.

² *Global Times* editorial (2025) '特斯拉在华销量"再创新高"揭示了什么',

<https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4Kx9059EZvl>

³ *Global Times* editorial (2025) '中美加强对话合作, 符合世界期待',

<https://hqttime.huanqiu.com/article/4Ke46MVkUW6>; 贾卫列 (2024), '产业互补性是中美清洁能源合作重要抓手', *Global Times*, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4KmW3Nln1D>; 李峥 (2025) '以合作开启 AI "20 万亿美元时代"', *Global Times*, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4L6Kolvc0Kb>; 孙成昊 (2025) '特朗普 2.0 的决策风格与中美关系', Center for International Security and Strategy, Tsinghua University, <https://ciss.tsinghua.edu.cn/info/zmgx/7805>.

⁴ 刁大明 (2025) '从 1.0 到 2.0: 特朗普政府对华安全战略的延续与政策变化', *国际安全研究*,

republished on Center for International Security and Strategy, Tsinghua University,

<https://ciss.tsinghua.edu.cn/info/zmgx/7808>; 袁征 and 关成龙 (2024) '特朗普第二任期对华政策趋向研判', *中国评论*, republished on *爱思想*, <https://www.aisixiang.com/data/158529.html>; 成汉平 (2025) '特朗普 2.0 的南海政策与美菲关系走向预测', *海外看世界*, <https://blog.haiwaikanshijie.com/成汉平-螺旋上升抑或适度降温?-特朗普 2-0 的南海政/>.

⁵ *Global Times* editorial (2025) '美邮政署的"反转剧", 折射一个重要现实',

<https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4LNhUSsa5H>; *Global Times* editorial (2025) '让中美关系稳下来, 也是美国利益所在', <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4La9m0GTgNd>.

⁶ (China) Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Conference [henceforth MFA-PC] (2025), 3 March (2025), www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/202503/t20250303_11567417.shtml; MFA-PC 4 March (2025),

www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/202503/t20250304_11568225.shtml; (China) Ministry of Commerce press conference [henceforth MOFCOM-PC], 4 April (2025), www.mofcom.gov.cn/xwfb/xwfyrbt/art/2025/art_330be38bfb354f88980ab900d97031ce.html.

ambiguous phrase became Beijing's stock descriptor for its stance in the trade war.⁷ With Beijing having already implemented an agreement with the Biden Administration in September 2024 on fentanyl export control, Trump's pressure on China to further step up its efforts remained an irritant.⁸ Still, a *Global Times* editorial in late March used relatively soft wording – the US 'has yet to find the right approach' by linking tariffs with narcotics control – suggesting openness to dialogue.⁹

Chinese analysts and officials continued to contend that China and the US were not engaged in a fundamentally zero-sum rivalry, and that Sino-American trade was and would continue to be mutually beneficial.¹⁰ It seemed that contesting the framing of the relationship was as important for them as the conduct of the trade war itself. Indeed, even after the US's escalation with Trump's 'liberation day' tariffs, China insisted that its reciprocal actions were not aimed at hurting American consumers or businesses, and that a return to normal trade relations through negotiation was still possible.¹¹

The 'liberation day' tariffs saw a measured injection of nationalism in Chinese commentary. An opinion piece in the *People's Daily*, the Communist Party-run newspaper, which rarely publishes editorials, made a reference to China's participation in the Korean War against the US (where it forced the US to a stalemate), as part of the long history of the Chinese nation overcoming grave challenges. The Chinese Foreign Minister declared that, by pushing back against America's bullying, China was defending both its national dignity as well as the peace and order of the world.¹² Beijing placed the onus of demonstrating

⁷ Wang (2025) 'Wang Yi at Munich Security Conference' (transcript from recording), *Pekingnology*, <https://www.pekingnology.com/p/wang-yi-at-munich-security-conference>; See also MFA-PC, 5 March (2025),

www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/202503/t20250305_11568706.shtml.

⁸ For the 2024 agreement, see Mann (2024) 'Critics wary as China promises tighter fentanyl controls', *NPR*, <https://www.npr.org/2024/08/29/nx-s1-5089978/fentanyl-china-precursors>.

⁹ *Global Times* editorial (2025) 'This detail of Daines' visit to China is intriguing', <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202503/1330790.shtml>.

¹⁰ e.g. Wang (2025) 'Better Future Is Possible but Uncertain', interview with *China-US Focus*, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/interview-with-wang-jisi-better-future-is-possible-but-uncertain>; *Global Times* editorial (2025) 'USAID 裁撤之争，不必扯上中国', <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4LSeVwiqBot>.

¹¹ MOFCOM-PC, 29 April (2025), https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/xwfb/xwfyrtth/art/2025/art_b18c5a54b9804a00b9e2a131b1c62717.html; *Global Times* editorial (2025) '中国以和为贵，但坚决对经济霸凌说不', <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4MAXI6ADnIU>; Wang Jisi (2025) 'Better Future Is Possible but Uncertain', interview with *China-US Focus*, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/interview-with-wang-jisi-better-future-is-possible-but-uncertain>.

¹² *People's Daily* official commentary [人民日报|仲音] (2025) '从三则故事看美滥施关税' <http://opinion.people.com.cn/n1/2025/0416/c1003-40460689.html>; Wang (2025), '时代不容倒退，公道自在人心', speech at BRICS Foreign Ministers meeting,

readiness for compromise on Washington, as encapsulated by a Chinese proverb, used by the Ministry of Commerce's spokesperson, that, "the one to untie the bell [from a tiger's neck] has to be the one who tied it in the first place".¹³ This was consistent with Minister Wang's declaration, made at the Munich Security Conference in February, that China would remain 'calm and unshakable', like a mountain or a great river. After echoing this Chinese literary reference, Wang invited his audience to use the Chinese AI product, DeepSeek, to translate the phrase.¹⁴ China's messaging, aimed at international and domestic audiences alike, has become increasingly colourful and self-referential, suggesting a sense of confidence matching the content of Beijing's messages.¹⁵

Although on 12 May China and the US reached a preliminary agreement to unwind the tariffs, Beijing appeared to remain suspicious of the Trump Administration.¹⁶ Indeed, on 13 May, the international affairs editorial on the People's Daily insisted that resolving the Sino-American trade disagreement would require the US to 'completely correct its approach of unilaterally imposing tariffs'.¹⁷ In the subsequent week, Chinese official press commentary on the topic either restated this position or remained muted. There was no suggestion that China had 'won' by forcing Trump into a (temporary) trade truce without concessions, which was consistent with Beijing's framing of the bilateral relationship.¹⁸

https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/gjldrhd_674881/202504/t20250430_11613318.shtml.

For other examples, see *Global Times* editorial (2025) '关税讹诈唬不住中国',

<https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4MBV4FCduTR>.

¹³ MOFCOM-PC, 24 April (2025),

<https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/xwfbzt/2025/swbzkklxwfbh2025n4y24r/index.html>. For more

examples, see MOFCOM spokesperson response to press question (2025), '就中美经贸对话磋商情况答记者问',

https://www.mofcom.gov.cn/xwfb/xwfytrth/art/2025/art_ecd95ccc65ea4495a308f6fa2dbffd7e.html ; *Global Times* editorial (2025) '面对关税讹诈，缓靖妥协只会是“与虎谋皮”',

<https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4MN7DQ2m1GB>.

¹⁴ Wang (2025) 'Wang Yi at Munich Security Conference' (transcript from recording), *Pekingnology*,

<https://www.pekingnology.com/p/wang-yi-at-munich-security-conference>.

¹⁵ A Ministry of Defence press conference even end with the spokesperson encouraging journalists to ask more questions in the future, 'including the difficult and obstruse (刁钻古怪) ones', see Ministry of Defence press conference (2025) '国防部新闻发布将增频扩容',

http://www.mod.gov.cn/gfbw/xwfytr/lxjzh_246940/16371630.html.

¹⁶ Leonard (2025) 'US, China cite 'substantial progress' in Geneva trade talks', *The Australian*

Financial Review, <https://www.afr.com/world/north-america/us-china-cite-substantial-progress-in-geneva-trade-talks-20250512-p5lyb5>.

¹⁷ People's Daily (2025) '通过平等对话协商解决分歧的重要一步',

<http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2025/0513/c1002-40478371.html>.

¹⁸ E.g. *Global Times* editorial (2025) '世界为什么对中美这次会谈“齐刷好评”',

<https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4MeX81e9LCZ>. Even the *Observer* segment on the *Global Times*, usually reserved for the paper's famous, provocative commentary, made no reference to the trade war between 12 and 20 May.

More importantly, Beijing has treated the trade war as a malicious attack on China's right to development by the US.¹⁹ Beijing has made clear that it treats development as a fundamental right for nations. It continued to describe developmental rights alongside Taiwan, China's human rights situation, and the Chinese system of government as the 'four red lines' in its foreign relations.²⁰ Chinese commentary has also applied the concept of 'developmental rights' to other developing countries, and even the US public itself, arguing that they were the first victims of Trump's tariffs.²¹ Consistent with this view, Beijing also warned other countries against reaching agreements with Washington at the expense of their trade with China.²²

However, Chinese officials and the press made some distinction between the 'red line' (红线) and the 'bottom line' (底线), with the latter sometimes referred to but never publicly explained. A reading of these sources suggests that, while both are inviolable, the first is more inviolable than the latter.²³ President of the Peking University's Institute of International and Strategic Studies, Wang Jisi, seemed to propose that both the US and China clarify their 'bottom lines', indicating an awareness within the Chinese system that the 'four red lines' formula might need refining to serve the purpose of crisis prevention.²⁴

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- ¹⁹ E.g. MFA-PC, 8 April (2025), www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/202504/t20250408_11590221.shtml; 赵振华 (2025) '夯实中国式现代化和大国博弈的物质基础', *People's Daily*, <http://opinion.people.com.cn/n1/2025/0410/c1003-40456648.html>; *Global Times* editorial (2025) '告别零和博弈，华盛顿才能走出战略焦虑', <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4L4bBHmF6yX>.
- ²⁰ E.g. 谢彬彬 (2024) '“四条红线”为中美关系构筑发展基座', *Xinhua Daily Telegraph*, <http://www.xinhuanet.com/mrdx/20241217/e013e8d91d6d4cc89a9013da74d60fea/c.html>; *Lianhe Zaobao* (2024) '谢锋列出四红线警告美国勿寻求改变中国体制', <https://www.zaobao.com.sg/realtime/china/story20240913-4716048>; (China) Ministry of Defence press conference (2025) '国防部评中美两军交往：美方不应对外作秀', http://www.mod.gov.cn/gfbw/xwfy/lxjzh_246940/16362046.html.
- ²¹ 徐祥丽 (2025) '世界要公道，不要霸道', *People's Daily*, <http://opinion.people.com.cn/n1/2025/0429/c1003-40470689.html>; *Global Times* editorial (2025) '“美国优先”夺不走各国发展权利', <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4MD8c1MbEk4>.
- ²² MOFCOM spokesperson response to press question (2025) '就美国以关税手段胁迫其他国家限制对华经贸合作事答记者问', www.mofcom.gov.cn/xwfb/xwfy/rth/art/2025/art_3277f51446f143eda489a1bd5de6f72f.html; *Global Times* editorial (2025) '面对关税讹诈，绥靖妥协只会是“与虎谋皮”', <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4MN7DQ2m1GB>.
- ²³ E.g. 学习中国 (2016) '习近平为党员干部做人做事划出的四条底线', *Xinhua*, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-04/10/c_128880477.htm.
- ²⁴ Wang (2025) 'Better Future Is Possible but Uncertain', interview with *China-US Focus*, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/interview-with-wang-jisi-better-future-is-possible-but-uncertain>.

Taiwan and ‘one-China policy’

Beijing identifies the Taiwan question as ‘the first red line that cannot be crossed in China-U.S. relations’.²⁵ China’s military also conducted another exercise around Taiwan in early April, making it a semi-routine practice with an interval of approximately six months. This began with the then US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to the island in mid-2022.

Beijing considers America’s arms sales to, and expanding ties with, Taipei as not only interference in Chinese domestic affairs, but an attempt to ‘contain China through Taiwan’.²⁶ Beijing has also warned other countries against adopting this approach, though it has not directly accused countries other than the US of doing so.²⁷ Some Chinese analysts have identified ‘doing everything possible to prevent reunification [with Taiwan]’ as a new ‘unspoken goal’ in US policy.²⁸

However, early in the Trump Administration, Beijing placed more emphasis on Taipei’s alleged ambition to undermine the status quo than it did to attributing malice to the Trump Administration. For example, it said Taipei exaggerated the reception of a Taiwanese delegation to Washington ‘for its own entertainment’.²⁹ A Chinese analyst warned that Washington could be ‘led by the nose and open itself to manipulation’ by Taiwan separatists.³⁰ This was consistent with the somewhat optimistic tone about Sino-American relations in the first weeks of the second Trump Administration.

The Chinese foreign policy establishment attaches much importance to diplomatic language about Taiwan. In the read-out of the meeting between Chinese and Australian foreign ministers, the Chinese side expressed appreciation of Australia’s declared adherence to ‘One-China principle’, even though this is not Australia’s actual policy as

²⁵ 谢彬彬(2024) ‘“四条红线”为中美关系构筑发展基座’, *Xinhua Daily Telegraph*, <http://www.xinhuanet.com/mrdx/20241217/e013e8d91d6d4cc89a9013da74d60fea/c.html>; *Xinhua Commentary* (2024) ‘Why the four red lines are critical to China-U.S. ties’, <https://english.news.cn/20241217/eef4f3529a2c4c5190edd6d0d176bbec/c.html>.

²⁶ MFA-PC, 21 December (2024), https://www.mfa.gov.cn/fyrbt_673021/202412/t20241221_11514705.shtml; *Global Times* editorial (2025) ‘“台湾牌”又来，美国还能打多久’, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4LXgSU2ZJIN>.

²⁷ See, for instance, *Sina Finance* (2025) ‘王毅：借台湾生事就是给日本找事以台制华无异于螳臂挡车’, <https://finance.sina.com.cn/jjxw/2025-03-07/doc-inenuzhi7014168.shtml>.

²⁸ Shao (2024) ‘How U.S. Strategy Will Impact Beijing on Taiwan’, *China-US Focus*, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/peace-security/how-us-strategy-will-impact-beijing-on-taiwan>. See also Jin (2024) ‘America’s Taiwan Policy Going Off Course’, *China-US Focus*, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/peace-security/americas-taiwan-policy-going-off-course>.

²⁹ MFA-PC, 27 January (2025), https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/202501/t20250127_11546757.shtml.

³⁰ Jin (2024) ‘America’s Taiwan Policy Going Off Course’, *China-US Focus*, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/peace-security/americas-taiwan-policy-going-off-course>.

Australian foreign minister's own recorded comment made. The read-out did accurately represent the Australian foreign minister's own comment that Australia adhered to the 'one-China policy'.³¹ The wording of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) echoes an opinion article by the Chinese ambassador to Australia earlier, which claimed that 'the one-China Principle is the fundamental political foundation of China-Australia relations'.³² However, like other Western governments, Australia's 'one-China policy' means that China's claim of sovereignty over Taiwan is acknowledged but not necessarily endorsed. Similarly, the MFA called on the US and Japan to adhere to the 'one-China principle' when protesting their joint statement on Taiwan in February.³³ It is worth noting that Beijing frames the importance of 'one-China principle' in the language of an international order centred upon the UN, declaring that the principle flows from the *UN General Assembly Resolution 2758* passed in October 1971.³⁴

Beijing continues to send stark warnings against separatism to the Lai Ching-te administration in Taipei. In reference to Taipei's alleged plot to resist reunification through force, China's Ministry of Defence declared that the Mainland would 'sooner or later come to sweep you up' (早晚要来收了你们).³⁵ A *Global Times* editorial suggested that the Taiwanese public believed the People's Liberation Army would only attack the separatist forces on the island – this could be both reassurance to domestic audience that the Taiwanese public would still support reunification and a warning to Taipei.³⁶ Still, Chinese policy-making circles remain circumspect. The President of the Shanghai Association of Taiwan Studies told the Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* that, for now, China had the military capability to prevent Taiwan independence, but not the capability to enforce reunification at will. He also recognised that young Taiwanese people were not moving towards supporting reunification, and that cultivating soft power remained a

³¹ MFA press release (2025) '王毅会见澳大利亚外长黄英贤', https://www.mfa.gov.cn/wjzbzd/202502/t20250222_11560514.shtml. For Australian government position, see (Australia) Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2025) *Statement on Australia's one-China policy*, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/news/correcting-record/statement-australias-one-china-policy>.

³² Xiao (2025) 'Seven truths on why Taiwan always will be China's', *Australian Financial Review*, <https://www.afr.com/world/asia/seven-truths-on-why-taiwan-always-will-be-china-s-20250112-p5l3l4>.

³³ MFA press release (2025) '中方就美日联合声明涉华内容向美日提出严正交涉', http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/bmst/202502/t20250211_12683461.htm.

³⁴ E.g. Xiao (2025) 'Seven truths on why Taiwan always will be China's', *Australian Financial Review*, <https://www.afr.com/world/asia/seven-truths-on-why-taiwan-always-will-be-china-s-20250112-p5l3l4>; *Sina Finance* (2025) '王毅：借台湾生事就是给日本找事以台制华无异于螳臂挡车', <https://finance.sina.com.cn/jjxw/2025-03-07/doc-inenuzhi7014168.shtml>.

³⁵ (China) Ministry of Defence press conference (2025) '国防部正告民进党当局：早晚要来收了你们', http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/bmst/202502/t20250227_12686706.htm.

³⁶ *Global Times* editorial (2025) '龙应台罕见批评赖清德反映出什么？', <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4M7LuqNul1O>.

crucial element of Beijing's strategy.³⁷ In short, Beijing's stridency around Taiwan continued to be tempered by an underlying realism.

Europe and US-Europe relations

In comparison to statements about the US, China's rhetoric about the EU has been manifestly more conciliatory. This reflects Beijing's intention to quarantine its relations with the bloc from Sino-American disputes. In a telling example, the MFA made a low-key response to a report that German intelligence agencies had information that COVID-19 emerged from a laboratory in Wuhan, and did not criticise the German media or government over what had been a highly sensitive issue for Beijing.³⁸ Reports of the EU's investigation into Chinese trade practices in medical equipment, likewise, only elicited a vague statement that did not explicitly criticise Brussels.³⁹

Beijing espouses much hope about its relationship with Europe. Chinese leaders have declared that there are neither fundamental conflicts in interest nor geopolitical tensions between itself and the EU, that their relationship is that between partners, and that both were defenders of the global multilateral trade system.⁴⁰ Beijing also identified Europe as an important pole in the multipolar world and, implicitly distancing itself from Moscow, declared that China had always supported the progress of the EU.⁴¹ Even on electrical vehicle manufacturing, a crucial area of Sino-EU competition, the Chinese official press talked up the prospect of the two sides' complementarity.⁴²

Chinese analysts downplay the prospects of western Europe's political realignment away from Washington. With US Vice President Vance's speech at the Munich Security

³⁷ Wang (2025) 'Beijing adviser Yan Anlin on why a timetable for Taiwan reunification has disadvantages', *South China Morning Post*, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3307208/beijing-adviser-yan-anlin-why-timetable-taiwan-reunification-has-disadvantages>.

³⁸ MFA-PC, 13 March (2025), www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/202503/t20250313_11574313.shtml

³⁹ MFA-PC, 15 January (2025), www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/202501/t20250115_11534987.shtml.

⁴⁰ 人民日报 (2025), '习近平同欧洲理事会主席科斯塔通电话', http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/pc/content/202501/15/content_30052049.html.

⁴¹ Wang (2025) '坚定做变革世界中的建设性力量', *speech at the 61st Munich Security Conference*, www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjbzhd/202502/t20250215_11555652.shtml; *Global Times* editorial (2025) '西班牙首相访华发出了什么信号', <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4MEmDSyFWzq>. See also *Global Times* editorial (2025) '中欧应共同书写多极化世界新叙事', <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4LVzOjEd3lF>.

⁴² *Global Times* editorial (2025) "'大小组合'给中欧合作带来有益启示', <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4Kxy6aU9hei>.

Conference in mid-February, American strategic intentions have come under question, with some even noting an ideological rift on the two sides of the Atlantic.⁴³ But there was no suggestion from Chinese sources that European governments would seek to break from their alliance with Washington, particularly given that their lack of independent defence capability.⁴⁴ As one prominent Chinese scholar pointed out, any strategic dividend brought by the Trump presidency would go through a complex process of redistribution.⁴⁵ Another senior analyst likewise argued that US allies could work under more flexible partnerships between themselves, even as the cohesion of a US-centric alliance system diminishes.⁴⁶

Russia-Ukraine War

Beijing continues to refrain from publicly endorsing Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In an interview at the Munich Security Conference, Minister Wang repeated Beijing's position that 'all disputes and disagreements should be settled through dialogue in a political way because *force and sanction cannot truly and completely solve the issue...* [T]he same goes for the Ukraine issue' (emphasis added). Wang also reiterated China's basic views on settling the war, which include respect for 'the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries' as well as taking 'the legitimate security concerns of all parties' seriously.⁴⁷ The Chinese press has discussed the spill-over impact of the Russian-Ukraine War, including grain shortages, the inflation of energy prices, and the disruption of global supply chains.⁴⁸ While Beijing clearly disagrees with the sanctions imposed by the US and its allies on

⁴³ E.g. Fu (2025) 'Thoughts on Munich Security Conference 2025', <https://www.chinausfocus.com/peace-security/reflections-on-attending-the-61st-munich-security-conference>.

⁴⁴ 姚锦祥 (2025) '在慕尼黑感受两个热点问题的“温度差”', <https://ciss.tsinghua.edu.cn/info/zlyaq/8018>. See also 朱俊玮 (2025) '欧俄战略不平衡使欧洲安全仍离不开美国', <https://blog.haiwaikanshijie.com/朱俊玮-欧俄战略不平衡使欧洲安全仍离不开美国/>; 赵俊杰 (2025) '东欧安全焦虑影响欧洲“战略自主”', *Global Times*, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4LzxJGYkaft>.

⁴⁵ 朱峰 (2025) "'特朗普关税"是开倒车, 美国定会反对美国', Center for International Security and Strategy, Tsinghua University, <https://ciss.tsinghua.edu.cn/info/mggc/8227>.

⁴⁶ Li (2025) 'Is the West Heading Toward Schism?', *China-US Focus*, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/is-the-west-heading-toward-schism>.

⁴⁷ Wang (2025) 'Wang Yi at Munich Security Conference' (transcript from recording), *Pekingnology*, https://www.pekingnology.com/p/wang-yi-at-munich-security-conference?utm_source=publication-search.

⁴⁸ E.g. *Global Times* editorial (2025) '世界乐见“和平”成为安理会涉乌共识', <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4LdSPC4vZel>.

Russia, it is not shy to signal its discomfort with Russia's use of force, even if it sympathises with Moscow's security concerns.

Likewise, in the read-out of Minister Wang's meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov on 1 April, the Russia-Ukraine War was referenced only towards the end, with Wang restating China's officially impartial position that it supported all efforts towards peace. The Chinese read-out recorded that Russia 'fully supports China's position on the Taiwan question', a stronger endorsement of Beijing's position than Russia's previous language on the issue, although the official Russian press release of the same meeting made no reference to Taiwan.⁴⁹ Similarly, in his opinion article published on the *Russian Gazette* (a Russian state newspaper) for the 80th anniversary of V.E. Day in May, President Xi Jinping expressed appreciation of Moscow's support for the 'one-China principle'. But there was no explicit reference to Russia's war against Ukraine, or any suggestion of Chinese support for it.⁵⁰ The asymmetry in mutual political support reflects the intrinsic and growing power imbalance between China and Russia.

Opposition to sanction and coercion is also China's stance (and that of Russia) on international responses to Iran's nuclear program.⁵¹ But Beijing appears to have refrained from concretely and fundamentally challenging the Western sanctions on Russia. When asked about a Chinese port company's refusal to allow oil tankers from countries under US embargo to dock, a Foreign Ministry

⁴⁹ MFA press release (2025) 'Wang Yi Holds Talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov', https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjbzhd/202504/t20250405_11588902.html; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (2025) *Press release on Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to the Russian Federation*, https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/2006568/. For previous stated position by Russia, see Xinhua (2022) '中华人民共和国和俄罗斯联邦关于新时代国际关系和全球可持续发展的联合声明', https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-02/04/content_5672025.htm.

⁵⁰ Xi had made no reference to Taiwan in his article commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the V.E. Day in 2015. See Xi (2015) '铭记历史，开创未来', *Russian Gazette*, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zyjh_674906/201505/t20150507_7945366.shtml; Xi (2025) '以史为鉴 共创未来', *Russian Gazette*, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/gjldrhd_674881/202505/t20250507_11616610.shtml.

⁵¹ MFA-PC, 14 March (2025), www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/202503/t20250314_11575985.shtml; MFA-PC, 18 March (2025), https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/202503/t20250318_11577882.shtml.

spokesperson offered only brief reiteration of the Beijing's official opposition to sanctions without a UN Security Council mandate.⁵²

Chinese press commentary around President Xi's visit to Moscow in May were mostly celebratory restatements of the strength and breadth of the bilateral relationship, and repetitions of the formula that their bilateral relationship was neither targeted at, nor constrained by, third parties.⁵³ However, a shift in focus in Beijing's goal for the relationship was noticeable in the contrast between Xi Jinping's articles, a decade apart, in the *Russian Gazette*. In 2015, Xi's emphasis was on international collaboration over climate, energy and resource security, and included a declaration of shared resolve to defend international justice and peace. While these themes remained in Chinese official discourse in 2025, Xi now places great emphasis on the centrality of the United Nations and the founding role of China and the USSR in that organisation, connecting China and Russia's claims to participating in international governance to their own nationalist narratives about their sacrifices in the Second World War. 'Orderly multipolarisation' (有序的世界多极化) was held up as a common pursuit, consistent with recent Chinese pronouncements.⁵⁴ A *Global Times* editorial lauded the Sino-Russian joint statement from Xi's recent visit, noting in particular the two sides' shared interest in containing the risk of nuclear war; this was contrasted with a 'certain great power' ('个别大国', often a veiled reference to the US) who had been deploying its missiles on the doorsteps of other nuclear powers.⁵⁵ China's official press presents America's imposition of sanctions, tariffs, and export controls – and attempts to rally its allies to follow suit – as a severe challenge to the post-war international order.⁵⁶ In short, Beijing has made a multipolar international order an organising

⁵² MFA-PC, 8 January (2025), www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/202501/t20250108_11529191.shtml. For the news report, see Chen, Liu and Yap (2025) 'China's Shandong Port, entry point for most sanctioned oil, bans US-designated vessels', *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/chinas-shandong-port-group-blacklists-us-sanctioned-oil-vessels-say-traders-2025-01-07/>.

⁵³ E.g. *People's Daily* official commentary [人民日报和音] (2025), '全面提升中俄关系的高度、维度、韧度' <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2025/0510/c1002-40476880.html>; *Global Times* editorial (2025) '中俄关系的时代价值愈加凸显', <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4MbDSWL6ywp>.

⁵⁴ Xi (2015) '铭记历史，开创未来', *Russian Gazette*, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zyjh_674906/201505/t20150507_7945366.shtml; Xi (2025) '以史为鉴 共创未来', *Russian Gazette*, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/gjldrhd_674881/202505/t20250507_11616610.shtml.

⁵⁵ *Global Times* editorial (2025) '维护全球战略稳定，中国又干了件实事', <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/4MdfxGrYky7>.

⁵⁶ 吴志成 (2025) '坚决维护战后国际秩序', *光明日报*, republished on 求是网, <http://www.qstheory.cn/20250516/f4b6e137ce094b9d83e478c5f85fcb22/c.html>.

principle of its foreign policy, and has identified Moscow as a partner in that pursuit.

Likely reflecting the political sensitivity of the issue, there was relatively little publicly available discussion from state-affiliated experts about the Russia-Ukraine war. Available commentary identified little advantage for Beijing in the prolonging of the conflict. Wang Jisi observed that China's relations with both the US and the EU suffer from the war, while another analyst hinted that the Russia-Ukraine War has complicated China's relationships in Central and Eastern Europe.⁵⁷ However, they expect continued delay in settling the conflict, while seeing direct Chinese participation in the process as inviting problems.⁵⁸

Public commentary discounts the possibility of Moscow turning against Beijing through a rapid rapprochement with Washington; it identifies significant divergence in interests between the US and Russia, as well as the lack of existing Sino-Russian disputes.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, one analyst noted the need to maintain a stable and positive relationship with Moscow to hedge against the risk of a Russo-American détente.⁶⁰ There was no suggestion that China might leverage Russia's continued economic isolation from the West for more benefit from the bilateral relationship.

⁵⁷ Wang (2025) 'Better Future Is Possible but Uncertain', interview with *China-US Focus*, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/interview-with-wang-jisi-better-future-is-possible-but-uncertain>; 孔田平 (2025) '中东欧在地缘政治夹缝中左右为难', *世界知识*, republished by Institute of European Studies of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, http://ies.cass.cn/cn/work/comment/202412/t20241226_5827479.shtml.

⁵⁸ 王梓元 (2025) '俄乌冲突发展的三种可能', *海外看世界*, <https://blog.haiwaikanshijie.com/王梓元-俄乌冲突发展的三种可能-海外看世界/>; 李海默 (2025) '对于俄美关系前景的一点蠡测', *海外看世界*, <https://blog.haiwaikanshijie.com/李海默-对于俄美关系前景的一点蠡测-海外看世界/>.

⁵⁹ Fu (2025), 'What Does Trump Want from Russia-Ukraine War?', *US-China Focus*, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/what-does-trump-want-from-russia-ukraine-war>; 刘佩怡 (2025) '川普上台后未来可能出现的四种国际局势', *海外看世界*, <https://blog.haiwaikanshijie.com/刘佩怡-川普上台后未来可能出现的四种国际局势/>.

⁶⁰ 李海默 (2025) '对于俄美关系前景的一点蠡测', *海外看世界*, <https://blog.haiwaikanshijie.com/李海默-对于俄美关系前景的一点蠡测-海外看世界/>.