



EVENSTAR

**PREPARING FOR THE GREAT SPLIT: THE DEPRESSING
REASON FOR CHINA'S SUPPORT OF RUSSIA**

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Summary

- The US has criticised China for its refusal to back the Western sanctions on Russia over Ukraine and threatened Beijing over any potential arms deliveries.
- China's unwillingness to comply comes from its strategic and economic alignment with Moscow across food, oil, and defence.
- For China, Russia is key to both balancing US dominance now, and help in future in the event of Western sanctions following an attempt to seize control of Taiwan.
- Adopting Russia (and its resources) as a semi-client state adds another layer of defence for China as it prepares for the potential Great Split between East and West over Taiwan. Other defences include its Dual-Circulation strategy, the internationalisation of the RMB, and enticing Wall Street money.

Introduction

Over the last few weeks, the US government has been at pains to make China realise that it is on the “wrong side of history” when it comes to its refusal to back the West in its sanctioning of post-invasion Russia. Not only that, but it has threatened China with “consequences” if its ostensibly neutral stance tips into supplying arms to Russia.

Although it remains unclear what these consequences would be, China is most likely not yet in a strong enough position to withstand any significant economic sanctions put on it by the West. Much of its technology, fuel, and food comes either from the nations aligned against Russia, or is paid for in dollars. Economically, China has no choice but to pay attention to what America says about sanctions.

Then there is the Chinese elite. Similar to their Russian counterparts, many of the “who's who” of China spend their time in the West, whether for business, holiday, or the education of their children. Running the risk of Western wrath runs the risk of destabilisation at home, given how the elites are likely to react against any sanctions placed on them.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is fixated on internal security, and spends more money on controlling its population than it does on external defence. With this in mind, and the potential disorder that American actions could generate, it seems strange that China has not shifted to the Western bloc over Russia. As the former Foreign Minister of Australia, Alexander Downer, notes, how can this enhance China's security?



China's reasoning on Russia

An insight into Beijing's thinking on the Russia's current situation came in a social media post on the Chinese platform Weibo. The author was Hu Xijin (胡锡进), the recently retired Editor-in-Chief of the CCP's tabloid mouthpiece the *Global Times*. It is not, it is fair to say, a shrinking violet of a paper: its writers are constantly urging the nation's leaders to smash or bash any country that either dares to stand up to China or insults it in somehow. These are not, however, haphazard polemics but carefully crafted narratives. The *Global Times* has strong connections to the top of the CCP and is generally considered to be a reliable source of what the Party is thinking. Its current editor-in-chief, Fan Zhengwei, also [serves as Communist Party Secretary](#) of the tabloid and regularly reports to Xi Jinping.

This makes Hu's recent musings even more interesting, as he states that Beijing is playing the long game with Moscow. The aim is for the CCP to use Russia as a bulwark against future American actions against them.

"There is support between China and Russia when it comes to superficial matters like Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang, Tibet, and other issues," notes Hu. However, he claims, the most important aspect is the back-to-back strategic relationship between the two nations. Although Russia is the focus right now, it is clear that China is America's main strategic competitor. So when Washington turns back to dealing with Beijing, China will be grateful to have Russia on its side.

Hu goes on to say that Beijing and Moscow working together is a win-win for both. It has become more difficult for the US to pressure China when it retains access to Russia's food, energy, and other resources. Likewise, China has the edge over America in conventional military forces, and together with Russia's nuclear umbrella, the two countries are too difficult for the US to take on. "We must use our own strength to make the United States accept peaceful coexistence with China. Russia is China's most important partner to achieve this goal."

Preparing for sanctions

If Xi and the CCP believe that America will come after them either way, then their stance on Russia seems logical. Indeed, many argue that China has already been defending itself



against American economic actions that have included Trump's trade war and the blacklist on investment into Chinese companies that Biden has strengthened. If China expects Russian-style sanctions to happen anyway, then it is of its best interest to keep a vast pool of resources (i.e. Russia) onside to help pre-empt and cushion the blow.

China's strategy on Russia is part of a suite of defences being established. Dual-Circulation strategy (for greater self-reliance), the internationalisation of the RMB (to wean itself off dollars), and the sucking in of Wall Street money (who will hopefully dissuade the US government from attacking China lest they lose their investments), are all part of the same defensive plan.

Conflicts – either economic or kinetic – do not happen without a spark, and the obvious one to galvanise Washington and Beijing into action is Taiwan. Despite the dire situation Russia finds itself in Ukraine, Evenstar's research has failed to show any obvious softening in the CCP's line about reunification with Taiwan since the invasion began.

Conclusion

Putting all this together - China's stance on Russia, establishing its wider defences, and its unchanging stance on reunification by force if necessary – paints a painful picture for the coming years. Of course, it takes two to tango, and America and the West may decide to ignore whatever China does with Taiwan to avoid triggering Beijing.

But given how hard Washington, London, and Brussels – plus their global allies – have come after Moscow for attempting to upend the global order, it is unlikely that they would ignore Chinese action over Taiwan. Only at that point will it be clear whether Beijing has chosen the right or the wrong side of history with its position on Russia and Ukraine.



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