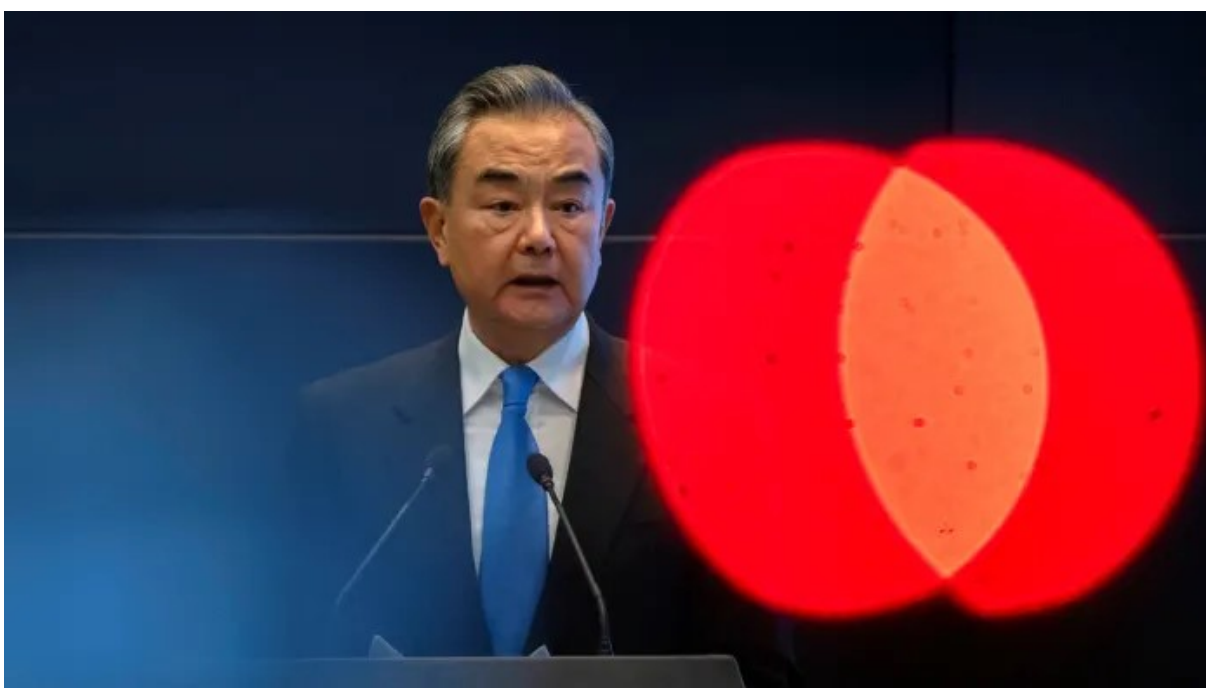


War in Ukraine

Beijing moves to strengthen Moscow ties in wake of Ukraine invasion

Russian and Chinese foreign ministers meet for first time since conflict began last month



Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi told his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, that 'the two sides' will to develop bilateral ties is even firmer' © Mark Schiefelbein/AP

Kathrin Hille in Taipei YESTERDAY

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China has reaffirmed its partnership with Russia and said it wanted to push bilateral relations “to a higher level” as Moscow faces international sanctions and widespread criticism over its invasion of Ukraine.

In the first meeting between the countries since Russia started the war a month ago, China’s foreign minister Wang Yi told his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, that “the two sides’ will to develop bilateral ties is even firmer, our confidence in advancing co-operation in various areas even stronger”, according to a Chinese foreign ministry statement.

Lavrov, who is visiting Beijing for multilateral talks on Afghanistan, is due to travel on Thursday to India, another critical Russian partner that has [refused to criticise](#) the attack on Ukraine. New Delhi has abstained in UN votes condemning the invasion.

The Chinese readout of the Lavrov-Wang meeting also repeated support for the [Russian security concerns](#) that Moscow claims drove it to attack Ukraine.

“The Ukrainian issue . . . is not only the outbreak of the long-term accumulation of security conflicts in Europe, but also the result of the cold war mentality and group

security conflicts in Europe, but also the result of the cold war mentality and group confrontation,” Wang said.

“In the long run, we should learn the lessons of the Ukraine crisis, respond to the legitimate security concerns of all parties based on the principles of mutual respect and indivisibility of security.”

The boosting of Sino-Russian ties followed an [agreement reached last month](#) between China president Xi Jinping and Russia’s Vladimir Putin to deepen co-operation across a range of security, political and economic areas.

Yet in a subtle sign of [Beijing’s efforts to balance](#) its support for Russia with its global interests, China’s readout of the Wang-Lavrov meeting presented a more cautious version than the Russian one.

The Russian foreign ministry said Wang and Lavrov had criticised the sanctions imposed on Russia over the Ukraine war. They “noted the counterproductive nature of the illegal unilateral sanctions imposed on Russia by the United States and its satellites”, it said.

Lavrov also said Russia and Iran would look together for “practical steps” to bypass western sanctions. He did not specify what Russia and Iran were considering to circumvent the economic curbs other than to “condemn this unacceptable phenomenon internationally”.

Beijing did not offer any support for this position and the Chinese readout of the meeting did not mention joint criticism of the sanctions.

China has been careful to comply with the sanctions as the US government has [threatened to punish those](#) found in violation, specifically warning Beijing.

Matthew Borman, deputy assistant secretary for export administration at the US commerce department, said on Tuesday that Washington had not noticed any violations of the sanctions.

Additional reporting by Max Seddon in Riga

