

Chinese politics & policy

China's premier warns against conflict in Asia amid US tensions

Li Qiang calls for peace one day after Beijing threatens Taiwan over its president's visit to California



China's premier Li Qiang said Beijing would expand market access and 'effectively prevent and diffuse major risks, particularly concerning financial sectors' © Dake Kang/AP

Joe Leahy in Boao 4 HOURS AGO

China's premier Li Qiang has warned against allowing "chaos and conflicts" to erupt in Asia and jeopardise the region's prosperity amid soaring tensions with Washington.

Speaking at a conference of global political and business leaders, [China](#)'s second-highest official vowed that Beijing would continue to reform and open up as it sought to revive an economy stricken by strict Covid-19 controls.

"To achieve greater success in Asia, chaos and conflicts must not happen in Asia, otherwise the future will be lost," [Li](#) told the Boao Forum for Asia, one of China's biggest annual international conferences.

Li's comments followed a [warning from Beijing](#) on Wednesday that it would retaliate if Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen met US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy during an upcoming trip to California.

While Li did not refer specifically to Taiwan, China and the US are increasingly at loggerheads over issues ranging from Washington's close ties to Taipei to American efforts to control Chinese access to advanced semiconductor technology.

"Peace is the prerequisite for development and the significant success achieved by

“... case is the prerequisite for development and the significant success achieved by Asian countries in the past few decades,” Li told the forum, which was attended by Spain’s prime minister Pedro Sánchez, Singapore’s prime minister Lee Hsien Loong, Malaysia’s prime minister Anwar Ibrahim and IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva.

While most speakers at the forum have studiously avoided mention of the war in Ukraine, Sánchez and Lee condemned the Russian invasion in blunt terms on Thursday. The Spanish leader described the conflict as Russia’s “brutal and illegal aggression . . . that is causing a major humanitarian crisis, food insecurity and inflation”.

Spain is set to take over the EU’s rolling presidency in July, and Sánchez is [expected to discuss the war](#) during his visit to China. He is scheduled to meet Chinese president Xi Jinping on Friday.

European governments want Xi to use his influence with Russian president Vladimir Putin to help end the war, but there is [deep suspicion in the west](#) over Beijing’s close ties to Moscow.

Xi has not called Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy since Russia’s full-scale invasion but has maintained regular contact with Putin and met his Russian counterpart for [talks in Moscow last week](#).

Beijing, which has sought to portray itself as a non-aligned actor, [published a position paper](#) on the conflict last month that did not condemn the invasion. State media regularly parrots Russian propaganda, referring to the conflict as a “crisis” rather than a war.

Singapore’s Lee on Thursday said Moscow had violated the UN charter and international law, while calling for Asia to remain open to trade with the west.

China’s Li also said Beijing would continue to expand market access to business, which was largely cut off for three years by pandemic restrictions, and “effectively prevent and diffuse major risks, particularly concerning financial sectors”.

Since becoming China’s premier and head of the cabinet this month, Li has sought to promote a more business-friendly face to the world.

“Beijing intensified its charm offensive as the new cabinet took office in March,” Morgan Stanley wrote in a recent report. It said Beijing had “dusted off its old playbook of opening up, substantiated with actions that announce the return of China

— to business”.

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