

# Russia Says Taiwan is Part of China as Two Powers Further Align Against U.S.

Russia has unambiguously stated its position that the self-ruling island of Taiwan is a part of the mainland-based People's Republic of China, as strategic partners Moscow and Beijing seek to further align their positions regarding geopolitical issues across the globe.

During his visit Tuesday to the Kazakh capital of Nur-Sultan, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov declared Moscow's stance on the issue.

"Russia, like the overwhelming majority of other countries, considers Taiwan to be part of the People's Republic of China," Lavrov said. "We have proceeded and will proceed from this premise in our foreign policy."

Only 14 countries today, along with the Vatican, have diplomatic relations with Taipei. Even the U.S. maintains only informal relations with the island nation since recognizing Beijing in 1979, three decades after the Communist victory in a civil war drove nationalists into exile across the Taiwan Strait. The Soviet Union quickly sided with the new fellow Communist power, though Moscow and Beijing would soon develop their own feud that lasted the remainder of the Cold War.

But today, China and Russia are closer than ever, and this year celebrated the 20th anniversary of their 2001 Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation that redefined their relationship. These ties have grown especially warm in recent years as both found common ground in countering a mutual rival: the United States.

As the U.S. has turned its sights toward the Asia-Pacific region, especially since former President Donald Trump's administration, Lavrov and other Russian officials have more readily criticized U.S. coalition-building with Australia, India and Japan under the banner of a "free and open Indo-Pacific."

Lavrov has recently been voicing his opposition to those efforts.

"The Indo-Pacific concept is aimed at breaking up this system that relied on the

need to respect the indivisibility of security,” Lavrov told a defense and foreign policy conference last week, “and has openly proclaimed that its chief objective is containing China.”

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian praised Lavrov’s remarks days later, and on Monday also lauded Russian military expert Ivan Konovalov’s criticism over the behavior of U.S. and partnered navies in the Asia-Pacific region after a U.S. submarine collided with a still-unidentified object in the South China Sea.

During that same press briefing, Zhao shared his position on what he saw as Washington’s unhelpful actions targeting Moscow in Europe, where a new Russia-Germany gas pipeline known as Nord Stream 2 has drawn criticism from U.S. officials concerned about energy independence.

Over the weekend, Lavrov said the U.S. “is not hiding it and is straightforward” about pitting Russia and European powers against one another, and Zhao took the opportunity to support Moscow’s stance on Monday.

“It is well-known that the Nord Stream 2 project shows energy complementarity between Russia and Europe, and would help resolve the European energy crisis,” Zhao said. “The U.S., however, to serve its own geopolitical interests and monopolize the European energy market, spares no effort in disrupting and hobbling relevant projects to undermine the interests of Russia and Europe and their cooperation. This wins no support.”

He then linked the U.S. approach on the pipeline with that which it took in the Asia-Pacific, saying “the U.S. is adept at politicizing issues in all means and would hurt others indiscriminately, including its allies and partners, for its own interests.”

He argued that more nations are beginning to share this perception.

“We believe more countries, with their eyes wide open, will oppose the U.S. hegemonic approach featuring politicization and a sense of supremacy in pursuit of self-interests at the expense of others,” Zhao said.

However, as both Beijing and Moscow’s relations with Washington have deteriorated, each has attempted to stabilize its ties with the top world power.

On Tuesday, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov met with U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland in Moscow, where an attempt by the Russians was said to have been made to roll back tit-for-tat sanctions targeting one another's diplomatic missions.

"The officials discussed the status and prospects of bilateral relations," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a readout. "They paid special attention to the operation of the diplomatic missions on each other's territory. Mr. Ryabkov emphasized that the hostile anti-Russian actions will not remain unanswered although Moscow does not seek to further escalate tensions. He suggested removing all restrictions that both sides have introduced in the past few years."

And Ryabkov warned that continued tensions would only serve to make life more difficult for both parties.

"Ms. Nuland was told that the continuation of Washington's line toward confrontation on the bilateral agenda and in the context of acute international and regional problems can only result in the further degradation of Russian-US relations," according to the Russian side. "It is necessary to adopt a realistic approach and build bilateral ties on the principles of equality and mutual consideration of each other's interests."

When it comes to China, two notable interactions have occurred over the past month. Last month, Chinese President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Joe Biden spoke via telephone, and last Wednesday Chinese Communist Party Central Foreign Affairs Commission Director Yang Jiechi met virtually with U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan.

Tensions appear to have somewhat eased on the surface amid this communication, but core areas of contention exist, with Taiwan identified by both sides as the primary issue.

Under both Trump and Biden, the U.S. has gradually expanded its informal support for Taiwan, including in the security realm. Taipei officials, such as Foreign Minister Joseph Wu, have also increased their ambitions for challenging the "one-China" near-consensus that exists among the international community.

Responding to Wu's arguments that United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 that passed Taipei's U.N. seat to Beijing in 1971 does not preclude Taiwan from participating in the U.N, Zhao said during his daily press briefing on Friday "the remarks of some politician in Taiwan are just nonsense."

"There is only one China in the world, the Taiwan region is an inalienable part of the Chinese territory, and the government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China," Zhao said. "This is a basic fact recognized by the international community. Our position of adhering to the one-China principle will remain unchanged; our attitude of rejecting 'two Chinas', 'one China, one Taiwan' and 'Taiwan independence' is not to be challenged, and our resolve of upholding national sovereignty and territorial integrity is unswerving."

Zhao also emphasized that Taiwan was a province of China and therefore not qualified from participating independently in international organizations such as the U.N. And he reiterated Beijing's commitment to reintegrating Taiwan under mainland rule, a pledge Xi has vowed to achieve through diplomacy or force, if necessary.

"We believe that the just cause of the Chinese government and Chinese people to uphold national sovereignty and territorial integrity, oppose secession and achieve reunification will continue to win understanding and support of the U.N. and its member states," Zhao said.

That same day, the Chinese military's official online portal carried a commentary by the official military newspaper, the People's Liberation Army Daily, underlining the need to achieve reunification.

"The Chinese People's Liberation Army has firm will, full confidence, and sufficient capabilities to thwart all external interference and separatist acts of 'Taiwan independence' and resolutely defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity," the commentary read. "If the 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces dared to split Taiwan from China in any name and by any means, the People's Army will resolutely crush it at all costs."

The commentary also argued for an even more urgent need to focus on this point.

"The officers and soldiers of the entire army must increase their sense of anxiety

and responsibility for their missions, focus on fighting, focus on all tasks, and have the ambition to strengthen the army and rejuvenate the army,” the commentary read. “The high level of vigilance ensures that when the party and the people need it, they will come when they are called, they will be able to fight, and they will be victorious.”

Successive U.S. administrations have deliberately avoided making any overt pledges to defend Taiwan in the event of Chinese military action.

Asked about the U.S. planned response to a hypothetical Chinese incursion a day after his online talks with Jang, Sullivan replied, “Let me just say this, we are going to take action now to try to prevent that day from ever coming to pass.”

China and Russia have no formal military alliance, and both sides have said there were no plans to adopt such a framework, even as their defense ties continue to increase. But the two nations have pursued an increasing number of joint exercises, including large-scale drills in August focused on counterterrorism in northwestern China at a time of growing instability as U.S. troops left a two-decade conflict in neighboring Afghanistan, one of a number of regional and international issues on which Beijing and Moscow have stepped up collaboration.

And in yet another display of aligned interests, the two countries released a joint statement on the Biological Weapons Convention, in which “they emphasize that the United States’ and its allies’ overseas military biological activities (over 200 U.S. biological laboratories are deployed outside its national territory, which function in opaque and non-transparent manner) cause serious concerns and questions among the international community over its compliance with the BWC.”

This point has been especially promoted by China since the emergence of U.S. suspicions regarding a potential role played by the Wuhan Virological Institute in the outbreak of COVID-19, a disease first detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan. A U.S. intelligence report commissioned by President Biden came to an inconclusive finding as to whether the pathogen may have appeared naturally or accidentally leaked out of the facility, but the probe has only further damaged U.S.-China relations.

As his first year in office draws to a close, Biden has already met with Russian President Vladimir Putin during a June bilateral summit Geneva, and discussions are underway for a potential virtual talk with Xi, though no official date has yet

been confirmed.

“I don’t have any update at this point,” White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki told reporters Tuesday. “It’s just something that we’re working through and in discussions about at a staff level.”

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