

# Russia wants military aid from China - here's why this deal could help China, too

Tuesday 21 March 2023, by [ALEN Michael A.](#) (Date first published: 8 March 2023).

**China and Russia's relationship is complex. But China's decision to support Russia's war on Ukraine could ultimately come down to China's own political interests.**

## Contents

- [China's official stance](#)
- [A common adversary](#)
- [The Taiwan factor](#)
- [Western pressure](#)

[China is considering](#) sending weapons, ammunition and drones to Russia, according to information the Biden administration declassified at the end of February 2023.

China's military aid would directly [support Russia's war](#) in Ukraine.

This public disclosure, emerging less than a month after the [U.S. navy shot down a Chinese balloon](#) that allegedly was being used for spying purposes, further heightened existing tensions between the U.S. and China.

It also comes as Russia is facing [mounting costs in its war on Ukraine](#) - both financial and in human lives.

These setbacks have [pushed Russia to seek help](#) where the government can find it.

Russia has tried to secure weapons and other military support from allies such as [North Korea](#) and neighboring [country Belarus](#). Russia has also turned to neutral countries [like India](#) and [China to whom it can sell](#) its oil and gas and bring in more money.

China has not publicly announced a decision [to give military aid](#) to Russia.

I am a [scholar](#) of [international relations](#) whose work focuses on the [increasing competition between the U.S. and China](#). Based on my research, I'm certain Russia would [welcome](#) any assistance China would offer. China's decision about whether to get involved in the Ukraine war will be carefully calculated, factoring in potential long-term benefits, risks and the influence of Western powers.

But I think that China's choice in supporting Russia or not chiefly comes down to two considerations: how the Ukraine conflict will affect China's overall growth in world politics, and its [interest in invading Taiwan](#).

## **China's official stance**

Massive military aid to a struggling army is not cheap. The U.S. spent [over US\\$75 billion](#) on aid to Ukraine in 2022. But despite the costs of war, China is considering supplying Russia military hardware for a few reasons.

Economically, China's interests in Russia include money, energy and trade opportunities.

During the Cold War, the U.S. [successfully drove a wedge between the two countries](#). However, after the Cold War, Russia and China grew closer [and became economically interconnected](#).

Since Russia first launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, China has appeared to maintain a ["pro-Russia" neutrality](#). That is, China is officially neutral and not contributing to the conflict, but its government officials are [still echoing Russia's war narrative and propaganda](#), while ignoring what Ukraine is telling the world.

China has [criticized Western interference](#) in the war. It has [also proposed a peace plan](#) for the conflict - [which does not](#) actually call for Russia to withdraw its troops from Ukraine.

So far, China has stopped short of sending military aid to Russia. Reversing course would be a substantive departure from China's previous policy of official neutrality.

## **A common adversary**

Russian success in Ukraine would align with China's goals of reshaping [global politics and power](#), and could help facilitate China's own rise as an economic and [military leader](#).

In February 2022, Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Winter Olympics in Beijing. [They issued a joint document](#) calling for reshaping global politics. The lengthy statement details shared values and a vision for a world without the United States as a major leader, and where China and Russia gain more control and influence.

China's and Russia's foreign ministers met on March 2, 2023, and China's government [released a statement](#) that reiterated this point, saying that the two countries "have maintained sound and steady development, setting a new paradigm for a new type of major-country relationship."

[Political scientists](#) and [human rights scholars](#) do not consider [Russia](#) or [China](#) to be democracies or politically free. But both countries have lauded their own traditions of democracy and say they stand opposed to a world where the U.S. asserts its version of democracy and human rights as the only option.

## **The Taiwan factor**

Another reason China may want Russia to succeed in Ukraine is that a Russian victory would give [China more external support](#) in any plans to overtake Taiwan or other territories. [Taiwan is an island](#) off the coast of China that claims independence, but China maintains it is simply a breakaway province that it wants to regain control over.

If Russia had [won the Ukraine war](#) as quickly as it initially planned, this might have [paved the way for China to attempt a similar invasion](#) of Taiwan. But there was no quick victory.

Yet a prolonged Russia-Ukraine war may present a new kind of opportunity for China in Taiwan by diverting U.S. money, military resources and attention away from the island.

[Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang](#) argued on March 7, 2023, that because the [U.S. sells weapons to Taiwan](#), this justifies China selling weapons to Russia.

Some critics have noted that U.S. aid to Ukraine makes it harder for the [U.S. to justify defending Taiwan](#) if China attempts to overtake it.

While [China invading Taiwan appears unlikely](#) in the short term – and some experts say such a move [would be disastrous for China](#) – both the U.S. and China have a vested interest in the fate of Taiwan and the surrounding region.

The U.S. and China have made recent moves to establish more military presence in the South China Sea region. China has increased its [display of military force](#) surrounding Taiwan. The United States recently announced it would [deploy troops and military equipment in the Philippines](#), a strategic military base that is close to Taiwan.

### **Western pressure**

In the [past few months](#), the Biden administration and other Western powers have warned China that it should not get involved in the Ukraine conflict.

In March 2023, German Chancellor [Olaf Scholz publicly warned China](#) that there would be consequences if it gets involved.

Given that China has not yet officially stepped forward to support Russia, [these efforts appear successful](#).

However, research has shown that [countries intervene in conflicts when they think](#) their interests may be affected and when [they can make a difference](#). This could be a factor that pushes China to become more involved in Russia's battle.

[Michael A. Allen](#), Professor of Political Science, [Boise State University](#)

<http://theconversation.com/republishing-guidelines> —>

---

### **P.S.**

- The Conversation. Publié: 8 mars 2023, 14:39 CET.

This article is republished from [The Conversation](#) under a Creative Commons license. Read the [original article](#).

- [Michael A. Allen](#), [Boise State University](#)

Michael A. Allen. I research topics including power, war, and asymmetry in relations between states and other actors. Much of my work has focused on US military deployments and basing overseas.

Currently, I am part of a research team working on a Minerva Initiative and Army Research Office grant that examines the positive and negative effects of US troops deployments and how those effects are perceived by people within countries hosting US troops.

- The Conversation is a nonprofit news organization dedicated to helping academic experts share ideas with the public. We can give away our articles thanks to the help of foundations, universities and readers like you. [Donate Now to support research-based journalism](#)