



China's Stance on the War in Ukraine: Implications for Conflict Management and Resolution

Bernardo Mariani



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



PeaceRep
Peace and Conflict
Resolution Evidence
Platform



University of
St Andrews

The Global Transitions Series looks at fragmentations in the global order and how these impact peace and transition settlements. It explores why and how different third-party actors – state, intergovernmental, and non-governmental – intervene in conflicts, and how they see themselves contributing to reduction of conflict and risks of conflict relapse. The series critically assesses the growth and diversification of global and regional responses to contemporary conflicts. It also asks how local actors are navigating this multiplicity of mediators and peacebuilders and how this is shaping conflict outcomes and post-conflict governance.

Author: Bernardo Mariani
Series Editor: Mateja Peter
Managing Editor: Mia Foale

PeaceRep: The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform
School of Law, Old College, The University of Edinburgh
South Bridge, Edinburgh EH8 9YL

Tel. +44 (0)131 651 4566
Fax. +44 (0)131 650 2005
E-mail: peacerep@ed.ac.uk
PeaceRep.org
Twitter: @Peace_Rep_
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PeaceRepResearch>
LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/peacerep/>

This research is supported by the Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep), funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) for the benefit of developing countries. The information and views set out in this publication are those of the authors. Nothing herein constitutes the views of FCDO. Any use of this work should acknowledge the authors and the Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform.

Thanks are due to Dr Roy Gardner (Senior Expert on data analysis and natural language processing, PeaceRep) for the analysis of media perceptions of China's position on the war in Ukraine. The author is grateful for the insightful reading of earlier versions of this report and inputs from Dr Carla P. Freeman (Senior Expert at the United States Institute of Peace), Dr Pascal Abb (Senior Researcher at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt) and Dr Luke Cooper (Director of PeaceRep's Ukraine team, LSE IDEAS). Thanks are also due to Mia Foale, Allyson Doby, and Rick Smith of Smith Design Agency for production work and to the Edinburgh Law School for their support to this project.

About the author:

Bernardo Mariani is a senior research consultant at the University of Edinburgh, where he focuses on China's role in global security affairs. He served as Head of China Programme at Saferworld; held positions at Amnesty International; and consulted for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the European Commission.

Cover images: All images may be subject to copyright. Getty Images. ©2024

Contents

Abstract	01
<hr/>	
Key Findings	02
<hr/>	
Recommendations	03
<hr/>	
Introduction	04
<hr/>	
China's Position on the War in Ukraine	06
<hr/>	
China's Concerns and Strategic Interests	10
<hr/>	
International Reactions to China's Position Paper	15
Diplomatic reactions	15
Understanding international reactions through news	19
<hr/>	
Policy Implications	25
<hr/>	
Recommendations	29
<hr/>	
Conclusions	33
<hr/>	

Abstract

This report outlines China's position on the war in Ukraine. It examines China's proposals on the political settlement of the war, China's motivations for positioning itself as a potential peace broker between Russia and Ukraine, and the international responses to the Chinese proposals. It also appraises the international diplomacy surrounding the war, and avenues for effective engagement with China on conflict management and resolution.

The report argues that while the Chinese proposals somewhat lack substance and are yet to have any major impact on the conflict, they are nonetheless significant. It is in China's interest that the war ends, or at least de-escalates, and that it contributes to conflict mitigation and resolution. By positioning itself as a facilitator in a political solution to the conflict, a mitigator of the wider global fall-out of the war and, potentially, a post-conflict reconstructor, China is paving the way for its future role in the geopolitical agreement that will end the war.

Key Findings

- ▶ Various challenges arising from the war in Ukraine – including the danger of a more destructive conflict, the negative impact on Sino-European relations, the risk that a prolonged conflict might destabilise Russia and neighbouring countries, and negative economic repercussions – are detrimental to China's interests and have spurred China to seek de-escalation and a negotiated settlement.
- ▶ China's proposals for a political settlement of the war in Ukraine are also a diplomatic tool for China to pursue strategic interests with a broad international audience. By portraying itself as a constructive and responsible great power and a willing peace broker, China seeks to promote coalition building efforts in the Global South¹ and to improve its troubled relations with Europe.
- ▶ Many in the West have been left unimpressed by China's proposals for a negotiated end to the war, but they appeal to the perceptions and interests of numerous countries in the Global South that, while not supportive of Russia's war of aggression, share China's position on the causes of Russia's aggression and wish for peace talks.
- ▶ The Chinese position paper on Ukraine has facilitated interactions among Chinese, Ukrainian, and Western officials on addressing the war's impacts and promoting conflict resolution. For Ukraine, this has meant walking a fine line between welcoming China's diplomatic engagement while opposing attempts to freeze Russia's territorial gains.
- ▶ China's proposals do not qualify as a peace plan and demonstrate a pro-Russian stance towards the war. They signal, however, that China seeks to play a role in ending the conflict, in mitigating the dire impacts of the war, and in providing resources for post-conflict reconstruction. This establishes a foundation for China's future role in the geopolitical agreement that will end the conflict.

Recommendations

- ▶ Through diplomatic, political, and civil society activities, and increased communication between parties, Ukrainian, European, American, and Chinese officials and policy makers should seek common ground on handling the war's impacts and furthering the prospects for a just and durable peace.
- ▶ To align as much of the world as possible behind a lasting peace that safeguards Ukraine's territorial integrity, Ukraine and its Western allies should devise a more sustained outreach to countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. This would help to counter perceptions in the Global South that the war is a distant European affair, and Russia's efforts of rallying Global South nations behind a peace plan that for Ukraine would be detrimental and unacceptable.
- ▶ Enhanced dialogue and cooperation with China should address the security of food supplies, an issue of global concern where Chinese and Western interests converge. Currently, the most urgent action needed is to prevent Russian attacks on grain storage infrastructure and restore full and safe grain supply through the Black Sea routes.
- ▶ Ukraine will need a multi-year and multi-billion-dollar programme of recovery and reconstruction after the war ends. This will require the support of a coalition of governments, businesses, financial institutions, international organisations, and civil society. Despite geopolitical competition, Ukrainian, European, American, and Western-aligned officials and policy makers should engage with their Chinese counterparts to explore areas for cooperation in rebuilding the war-torn country.

Introduction

For a number of years, China's involvement in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts has been gaining prominence, both at a normative level through international norm-shaping efforts ([Freeman et al., 2023](#)), and operationally by way of dialogue facilitation and shuttle diplomacy. In what China calls "hot spot areas", like Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sudan, South Sudan, and more recently Iran and Saudi Arabia, Chinese diplomats have engaged in crisis diplomacy and conflict mediation efforts. Some analysts suggest that China's peace efforts are mainly facilitative and aimed at promoting dialogue, rather than providing substantive and practical proposals on the content of peace deals ([Sun, 2022](#); [Legarda, 2018](#)). Others have highlighted the flexibility of Chinese mediation tools between conflict management and conflict resolution ([Chaziza, 2018](#)) and China's efforts to acquire a leadership role in tackling conflicts and instability ([Freeman et al., 2023](#)).

During 2023, the scope and pace of China's engagement in regional conflicts appeared to have gathered momentum. In February 2023, the Chinese Foreign Ministry released three documents of great importance to understanding China's vision and role in relation to international peace and security: a report on "US Hegemony and its Perils" ([MFAPRC, 2023](#)), "The Global Security Initiative concept paper" ([MFAPRC, 2023](#)), and "China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis" ([MFAPRC, 2023](#)). It is not a coincidence that the Chinese authorities published these documents within just a few days of each other. They are part of the same strategy and approach to improving global security governance where China challenges Western notions of how to create a peaceful international order and aims to build an alternative to the US-led system that has prevailed since the end of World War II. Alongside the release of these official documents, the Chinese government engaged throughout 2023 in shuttle diplomacy activities in and around the Persian Gulf region, Ukraine, and Russia, amongst others.

This report focuses on the nature and impact of China's efforts to seek a political settlement in the war in Ukraine, and on the international reactions to the Chinese proposals. These reactions are usually negative in the West, and more positive in Russia and countries of the Global South. We aim to offer a nuanced picture of the Chinese proposals for a peace settlement in Ukraine by exploring the following broad questions:

- ▶ What are the concerns and interests of China's peace engagement in Ukraine?
- ▶ How has China put its peace proposals into practice?
- ▶ What has been the international reaction to the Chinese proposals for a political settlement?

- ▶ What are the global, regional, and national media perceptions of the Chinese initiative?
- ▶ What are the implications of China's engagement for conflict resolution, global food security, and post-conflict reconstruction?

The paper first provides an overview of China's position on the political settlement of the war in Ukraine and analyses the rationale and motivations underpinning China's engagement in Ukraine. The report then explores domestic and international reactions to the Chinese peace proposals, and delves into the implications for international diplomacy surrounding the war. The paper concludes with policy recommendations for more effective engagement with China and countries in the Global South in the areas of conflict resolution, global food security, and post-conflict reconstruction.

Methodologically, the research relied on empirical information drawn from a vast array of secondary sources (including official documents, scholarly sources, expert publications in the Chinese and English literature, and Chinese and Western media accounts relating to the war in Ukraine). Data was also acquired through nine semi-structured interviews with Chinese, Ukrainian, and Russian analysts in top educational institutions and think tanks. Additionally, in-country media perceptions of China's peace proposals on Ukraine were analysed, using the Global Database of Events, Language and Tone (GDELT), with data aggregated across all media source languages.

The specificities of the Chinese political, cultural, security, and language context, alongside the entrenched perceptions of China in other countries, impacted quality interviews, increasing the challenge of minimising bias within the documented responses discussed in this paper. This is pertinent to interviews with individuals who are connected to a political establishment through institutional allegiance and/or personal relationships. Conscious of this, we considered it important to offer respondents the opportunity to share their perspectives in order to gain a deeper understanding of China's perceived stance on the war in Ukraine, international reactions, and the implications for conflict management and resolution. To stimulate free and candid discussions and to protect confidentiality, in line with the approved ethics protocols of the project, three interviews were conducted off-the-record.

China's Position on the War in Ukraine

On 24 February 2023, the Chinese foreign Ministry published a position paper (lìchǎng wénjiàn 立场文件) on the war in Ukraine titled "China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis" (MFAPRC, 2023). Released exactly one year after Russia launched its war of aggression against Ukraine, Chinese leaders must have been mindful of the significance of the date. The document outlines in twelve points China's stance regarding what in Chinese is described as a question or problem (wèntí 问题) while making proposals to "gradually deescalate the situation" (ibid.) and reach a ceasefire.

At the outset, the document emphasises the need to uphold the principles of the UN Charter and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, in consideration of the fact that "all countries are equal, regardless of their size, strength or wealth" (ibid.). This is a long-standing principle of Chinese foreign policy that Beijing has promoted for decades, often accusing Western countries of undermining it. Implicitly, China argues that Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity should be respected. At the same time, China calls for "an identical and uniform application of international law" (ibid.) and the rejection of the use of double standards, an indirect critique of the US. In line with China's voting pattern at the UN and its abstentions on UN resolutions denouncing Russia for the invasion of Ukraine, China refuses to unequivocally condemn the war of aggression, or even to define the conflict as a war (Zhànzhēng 战争), using instead the word "crisis" (Wéijī 危机). The reason for this lies in the second point of the Chinese position paper. The second point draws from the principle of "indivisible security". Originally developed during the Cold War (de Brichambaut, 2010), "indivisible security" is central to Russia's justification of its invasion of Ukraine (MFARF, 2022; TASS, 2022; President of Russia, 2022). The principle states that the security of one nation is inseparable from the security of other countries in the same region. Following the GSI vision of "common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security" (MFAPRC, 2023), China urges all parties to "help forge a balanced, effective and sustainable European security architecture" (MFAPRC, 2023) and abandon "the Cold War mentality" (Ibid.) that relies on the expansion of military blocs. Without naming the US and the NATO alliance, China implies that NATO's eastward expansion constitutes the root cause of the problem, and that Russia has legitimate security concerns. For China the war is not just a confrontation between Russia and Ukraine, but a "strategic mistake" linked to the US and NATO (Zhao & Yu, 2022).

These parties are perceived by China as sharing responsibility: by undermining Russia's security, they were a catalyst for the war (Interview 4; [Ramzy, 2022](#); [Mações, 2023](#)). Moreover, numerous Chinese intellectuals and security experts believe that both the US and the NATO alliance use the war for their own advantage, supposedly as part of a global strategic effort to contain both Russia and China (Interview 4; [Bachulska & Leonard, 2023](#)).

After stating China's policy principles, the document sets out proposals on how to achieve peace. It advocates for a ceasefire, peace negotiations, protection of civilians, humanitarian aid, the impermissible use of weapons of mass destruction, an end of sanctions on Russia, steps to facilitate the export of grain, and measures to support post-conflict reconstruction. There is, however, no elaboration on these proposals, which lack detail on how to pursue them as part of a peace plan (Héping jìhuà 和平计划).

The content and tone of the document reflect China's overall attitude towards the war in Ukraine. The neutral political language used throughout the document, especially in the third point regarding the cessation of hostilities, which emphasises that "all parties must stay rational and exercise restraint" ([MFAPRC, 2023](#)), equates Russia and Ukraine within the conflict. In so doing, China downplays Russia's violation of the basic principles of the UN Charter, which according to the GSI are among the "core concepts and principles" (Héxīn lǐniàn yǔ yuánzé 核心理念与原则) of the new security order that China seeks to establish. The proposal does not call on Russia to withdraw its troops from occupied territories in the five Ukrainian provinces it fully or partly controls. An immediate ceasefire, which China favours, would work to Russia's political and military advantage, freezing Russian territorial gains, before possibly resuming the war in the future under more favourable conditions. However, Chinese experts interviewed for this study were adamant that against the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine military stalemate, there is a need to break the political and diplomatic deadlock (Zhao, 2023; Da, 2023). In their view, "resuming dialogue may not immediately end the war, but it can prevent further escalation, and foster peace pathways" (Ibid). From Beijing's perspective, both Ukraine's aim to restore the country's 1991 international borders and Russia's demand to consider "the new territorial realities" are not implementable as peace proposals because they focus predominantly on the most challenging issue of territorial sovereignty.

The priority, they argue, should be to assist the warring parties in rebuilding serious, reliable, and effective communication channels. Subsequently, Ukraine and Russia should address the exchange of prisoners of war, local ceasefires, and the withdrawal of military forces from the contact line, before looking at long-term issues like post-ceasefire security, the gradual resolution of territorial disputes and post-war reconstruction (Ibid; Interview 4).

China's position paper also calls for ending unilateral sanctions. China argues that sanctions do not resolve conflicts. Instead, they violate international law, undermine global economic stability and ultimately affect the lives of ordinary people, especially in developing countries (Le, 2022; Zhao & Yu, 2022). However, studies have also highlighted China's increased use of unilateral sanctions and other economic coercion measures – such as trade restrictions, encouragement of popular boycotts, and halting tourism – in disputes with countries including Australia, Japan, Lithuania, Mongolia, Norway, the Philippines, South Korea, and the US (Ghiretti, 2023; Harrell et al., 2018). One analyst points out that the number of unilateral sanctions imposed by China has increased dramatically since 2020 (Ghiretti, 2023). Moreover, ending sanctions on Russia would be beneficial to Moscow, boosting its ability to finance the war.

The release of China's position paper was accompanied by high-level diplomatic missions involving Wang Yi, China's top diplomat and Director of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) Central Committee Foreign Affairs Commission and Foreign Minister, and Li Hui, China's Special Representative on Eurasian Affairs, and a former ambassador to Russia. From the 14th to the 22nd of February, Wang Yi visited France, Italy, Hungary, Russia, and Germany to "promote China-EU strategic mutual trust, and exchange views on major international issues" (MFAPRC, 2023). At the annual Munich security conference, Wang announced China's imminent release of proposals "on the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis" (MFAPRC, 2023). From the 15th to the 26th of May, Li Hui visited Ukraine, Poland, France, Germany, the EU headquarters in Brussels, and Russia to clarify China's proposals for a political settlement of the war in Ukraine (MFAPRC, 2023).

China's stance on the war in Ukraine puts into sharper relief the complexity of concerns and interests that push China to preserve its strategic 'no limits' relationship with Russia while professing neutrality and seeking de-escalation and a negotiated settlement. China's position may appear contradictory, but it finds rationale in three distinct dimensions of China's engagement as a global actor. First is a focus on competition to counter the military, economic, and cultural power of the United States, which pushes China to align with Russia, despite historical animosities and Russia's violation of the traditional pillars of Chinese foreign policy² (MFAPRC, 2014). Second is a pragmatism that obliges China to preserve its relationships with the United States and Europe, which are at the heart of China's global economic engagement. Finally, the consensus-building desire to gain accreditation by the international community, especially countries in the Global South, as a responsible great power. Managing the complexities of these often-competing interests forces China to adopt a multifaceted neutral strategy that involves simultaneously: not undermining its strategic relationship with Russia; seeking to end the conflict to serve its own material interests; positioning itself as a country that is not a party to the conflict and does not stir it; and seeking a political settlement as a responsible actor in international affairs.

China's Concerns and Strategic Interests

In this section we examine China's concerns and strategic interests in conflict resolution in Ukraine. Despite China's pro-Russia attitude towards the war in Ukraine, a key question is whether China has concerns about the course of the war and interests in seeking de-escalation and a political settlement.

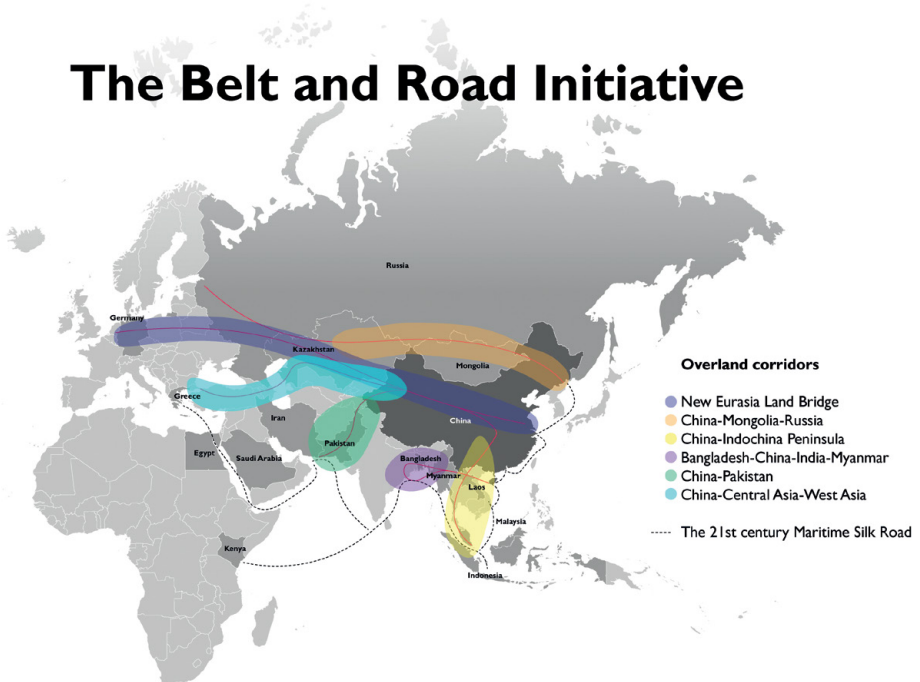
China's pursuit of a political settlement for the war in Ukraine is driven in the first instance by the war's negative repercussions for China. It can be argued that the war has shifted the balance of power in China's favour, by bringing Russia into a dependent economic and diplomatic position, and partly reducing the West's focus on the Indo-Pacific region. A conflict with no end in sight and negative global ramifications, however, also poses risks and is detrimental to China's interests (CIIS, 2023; Da, 2023; Ding, 2023; [Mações, 2023](#)). In the security and strategic domains, new challenges have emerged. These include the risks that the war may escalate and lead to direct military confrontation between Russia and NATO, a possible nuclear crisis, the deterioration of Sino-European relations and the expansion of a revitalised NATO alliance. China is also sensitive to the risk that a prolonged conflict might destabilise Russia and other countries in the Eurasian region. Indeed, the June 2023 rebellion by the Wagner group of mercenaries, the most serious security challenge to the Russian regime since President Putin came to power in 2000, highlighted Chinese concerns that a protracted war in Ukraine threatens stability in Russia and may even lead to regime change. While Chinese official statements and media reports downplayed the impact of the mutiny and presented a narrative of stability and minimal impact on Russia ([MFAPRC, 2023](#); [Chen, 2023](#); [Shi, 2023](#)), Chinese leaders are likely to be wary about the impact of a prolonged war on the stability of the Russian government.

The magnitude of the economic risks for China is more debatable. There is ample evidence that China continues to benefit from significant discounts on the price of its Russian oil and gas imports ([Aizhu & Xu, 2023](#); [Bloomberg, 2023](#)) and Chinese experts interviewed for this research do not see any significant negative economic impacts of the war for China (Da, 2023; Zhao, 2023; Ding, 2023). However, other analysts have highlighted that at a time of declining economic growth, the Chinese economic outlook is affected negatively by the conflict ([Bo, 2023](#)). The war has had adverse impacts on the world economy, especially on global commodity, financial markets, and trade flows ([Guénette et al., 2022](#)). The economic recession in the European Union and the UK hurts the Chinese economy, while the China-led global infrastructure Belt and Road Initiative project has slowed down.

The exposure of China's overseas loan portfolio, including in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, has increased (Reinhart et al., 2022). Notably, the railway and logistics networks of the New Eurasian Land Bridge,³ also known as Northern Corridor (see Figure 1), have been undermined by the war (Keuper, 2022; Mendez et al., 2022). China halted further investments in heavily sanctioned Russian territory (White, 2022) and as disruptions along the corridor caused delays and inflated prices of China-EU shipments (Ruta, 2022), China tried to find alternative overland trade routes bypassing Russia. Since 2022, East-West trade through the Middle Corridor⁴ has significantly increased, but trade along this route faces important challenges, due to logistics, climate conditions and politics. The cargo volume of the Middle Corridor remains below ten percent of that transported via the Northern Route (Eldem, 2022; Çolakoğlu, 2023; Donnellon-May, 2023).

Figure 1:

The Belt and Road Initiative



The war has also negatively impacted China's economic, financial and military connections with Ukraine. Although the volume of China's trade with Russia was always far larger than that with Ukraine ([Melkadze, 2022](#)), China's economic relationship with Ukraine before the war was not insubstantial ([Wishnick, 2022](#)). The bilateral trade between the two countries rose consistently over the past 30 years ([OECD, 2021](#)). In 2021, the trade turnover between Ukraine and China reached nearly USD 19 billion ([Qiu et al., 2022](#)), with significant Ukrainian exports to China in key sectors such as agriculture products – in 2021, China imported 29 percent of its corn crop from Ukraine ([Nigh, 2022](#)) – iron ore, and military goods (China's first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, was made using the hulk of a former Soviet ship that China purchased from Ukraine in 1998). The war in Ukraine has also disrupted plans for investments in construction and infrastructure projects ([Ministry of Infrastructure of Ukraine, 2021](#)) that could potentially have turned Ukraine into an important hub within the Belt and Road Initiative, which Ukraine endorsed in 2017.

More broadly, there are political and geopolitical interests and foreign policy goals that incentivise China's involvement in conflict management in Ukraine. China is keen to present itself on the world stage as a "champion of world peace and a positive force for global security" ([Le, 2022](#)), with a blueprint that many countries can support, strengthening its geopolitical influence in the process.

China is aware that the majority of countries in the Global South, including Brazil, India, Indonesia and South Africa, have not aligned with Western positions and contextualise the war in Ukraine within Western countries' previous actions and double standards ([Malhotra & Saran, 2023](#)). More recently, Western support to Israel for the war in Gaza has increased the gulf between Western powers and the Global South, which includes most Arab countries and countries like South Africa that have historically backed the Palestinian cause. These countries are also among those most affected by the economic fallout of the war in Ukraine and have an interest in peace talks that might reduce pressure on the price of food, fuel, and fertilisers. Their non-aligned stance, which is due to economic considerations (many countries buy oil, grains, fertilisers, and arms from Russia), historical grievances against the West ([Yabi, 2022](#)) and "long-standing ideological antipathy to the United States" ([Stent, 2023](#)), have weakened Western countries' attempts to isolate Russia and impede its access to the global economy.

Like China, many have kept or developed their own economic ties with Russia, have abstained from key UN resolutions denouncing Russia (Borger, 2022; EIU, 2022), and have called for a diplomatic solution to end the war. China's stance on the war may have been met with skepticism in the West, but its peace proposals are seen as beneficial by many countries in the South, whose solidarity and support, given the deepening rivalry between China and the US, are strategically important to Beijing.

By presenting China as a constructive actor that is willing to engage in viable solutions to the war, the position paper on Ukraine also serves as a diplomatic tool for China's dynamic with Europe. The war in Ukraine has intensified other issues that in recent years have strained Europe's relations with China (CISS, 2023; Mariani, 2022). China is aware that several European countries, especially those in Central and Eastern Europe, have reassessed their relations with China through the lens of the Moscow-Beijing axis (Mações, 2023; Da, 2023). There is a general sense within the Chinese policy community that while improving relations with the US is particularly challenging because of the China-US strategic rivalry and the US' China policy (CISS, 2023), it is possible to bridge differences with Europe. While China believes it is unrealistic that Europe will stay neutral between the US and China, China seeks to at least preserve its economic relationship with Europe and, where possible, deepen Sino-European cooperation on various global issues. After the publication of the position paper on the war in Ukraine, China has deployed its top diplomats to reverse the deterioration of relations with Europe, trying to convince skeptical European nations that China's cooperation with Europe is "unlimited," as with Russia (Woo, 2023). At the February 2023 Munich Security Conference, Wang Yi emphasised that "China and the EU are partners, not rivals" (MFAPRC, 2023) and that China was ready to strengthen communication and efforts with the EU towards a political settlement of the conflict in Ukraine. Seeking common ground was also high on the agenda of Ambassador Li Hui's visit to Europe in May 2023 (Chen, 2023).

Finally, China's peace initiative allows Beijing to position itself in the reconstruction of postwar Ukraine. The twelfth point of China's position paper on Ukraine calls on the international community "to take measures to support post-conflict reconstruction" ([MFAPRC, 2023](#)) in Ukraine. It states that "China stands ready to provide assistance and play a role in this endeavor" (Ibid). Cost estimates for Ukraine's post-war reconstruction are huge. For Ukraine, which in 2017 signed on to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) ([SCPRC, 2017](#); [Xinhua, 2017](#)) – the ambitious China-led infrastructure project that aims to connect markets around the world – the prospect of Chinese assistance, expertise, and investments must be tempting. The expansion of the Belt and Road Initiative project in Europe is not a realistic scenario, at least in the short and medium terms, but seen from China, contributing to the reconstruction of war-ravaged Ukraine, a country near the intersection of Europe and Asia where it has already invested in agriculture and infrastructure ([Reinhart et al., 2022](#)), would strengthen China's overall engagement with Europe.

Because of these complex and at times diverging economic, political, and geopolitical concerns and interests, China's stance on the war in Ukraine is likely to remain filled with contradictions and balancing acts, a position that offers Chinese leaders the best chance of protecting national interests while finding opportunity in the crisis ([Freeman, 2022](#)).

International Reactions to China's Position Paper

Diplomatic reactions

China's proposals for a political settlement of the war in Ukraine have generated mixed diplomatic reactions worldwide.

Faced with difficult political choices, Ukrainian officials have performed a "delicate balancing act" ([Skrypchenko, 2023](#); [Melkozerova, 2023](#)) in responding to China's proposals. Soon after the release of the Chinese position paper, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky reportedly gave qualified support to the Chinese initiative, describing it as a promising "first step" ([The Kyiv Independent, 2023](#)). On 26 April 2023, after speaking to President Xi Jinping for the first time since the beginning of the war, President Zelensky described the exchange as giving "a powerful impetus" to the return of trading links between China and Ukraine. He also called on China's assistance in settling security concerns around Russia's occupation of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant ([The Presidential Office of Ukraine, 2023](#)). Both parties supported the continuation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative and expressed hope for China's active participation in efforts to restore peace. Special attention was paid to cooperative efforts towards a just and sustainable peace (*ibid.*). In this regard, President Zelensky outlined the content of the Ukrainian Peace Formula and the need to restore the territorial integrity of Ukraine within the 1991 borders ([Zelenskiy/Official, 2023](#)). Crucially, the two leaders agreed to maintain a regular dialogue and President Xi announced a forthcoming visit by Ambassador Li Hui, the most senior Chinese diplomat to visit Ukraine since Russia's invasion. A month later, Li Hui visited Ukraine and other European countries to conduct dialogue on the political settlement of the war ([MFA of Ukraine, 2023](#)). Within the Ukrainian diplomatic community, there are voices expressing openness to Chinese peace efforts. One former senior Ukrainian official interviewed for this research emphasises that the potential for a positive role by China in managing and resolving the conflict is "significant and far from exhausted" ([Chalyi, 2023](#)). This relates to multiple policy areas, including: preventing the use of tactical nuclear weapons on the territory of Ukraine; guaranteeing the safe transportation of grain through the Black Sea; introducing a moratorium on missile attacks on Ukraine's port infrastructure; and dealing with humanitarian priorities, such as the exchange of prisoners and the return of Ukrainian children who have been taken from Ukraine to Russia (*ibid.*).

However, media reports show that there is a plurality of views among Ukrainian officials and diplomats, with criticism levelled at China ([Kapnik, 2023](#); [Honcharenko, 2023](#); [Ukrinform, 2023](#); [Bondarenko, 2023](#); Allen-Ebrahimian, 2022). Censure intensified in April 2023, when China's Ambassador to France questioned the sovereignty of former Soviet states ([Eruygur et al., 2023](#)), and again in September 2023, when a Chinese opera singer performed in the ruins of a bombed-out theatre in the occupied city of Mariupol ([Radio Svoboda, 2023](#)).

Outside of diplomatic circles, a prevailing negative sentiment emerges from interviews with Ukrainian civil society experts. One expert points out that while Beijing's influence over Moscow can potentially restrain the worst of Russia's war excesses and prevent the conflict's escalation with the use of weapons of mass destruction, Ukraine is not a key entity in China's geopolitical calculations and "the war serves its interests to a certain extent" (Kazdolina, 2023). Other Ukrainian analysts draw attention to China's significant "trust deficit" in Ukraine (Interviews 5 and 6). They are critical about the position of China, which, in their views, seeks to position itself as a peace broker without acting as such. They emphasise that "China is not well-placed to have a mediation role because it is not impartial" (Interview 5) and "since the Russo-Ukrainian War began in April 2014, it [China] has not played any peace facilitation role" (Interviews 5 and 6). One interviewee highlights that without taking a stronger stance against Russia's war of aggression, which would be consistent with its responsibilities as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, "China can only pay lip service to conflict resolution in Ukraine" (Interview 5). A nationwide survey on the attitude of Ukrainians towards certain countries, which was conducted in March 2023, shows that Ukrainians attitudes towards China are deteriorating. While in October 2022 63 percent of respondents considered China a rather neutral country, five months later in March 2023, only 52 percent rated China as neutral and 34 percent saw it as a hostile country ([Rating Group, 2023](#)).

Russian officials' public rhetoric about the Chinese initiative has been positive. In one official commentary released soon after the publication of China's position paper, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spoke highly of China's efforts "to contribute to a settlement of the conflict in Ukraine through peaceful means", highlighting that Russia shared the views of China on how to resolve the conflict via political and diplomatic means (MFARF, 2023). At the Russia-China summit in March 2023, President Putin praised China's "objective and impartial position on the Ukraine issue" (Permanent Mission of PRC, 2023) and stated that many of China's proposals could be used "as a basis for a peace settlement when the West and Kiev are ready for it" (President of Russia, 2023). During a visit to Moscow by the Chinese special envoy Li Hui in May 2023, Russia reiterated appreciation for China's efforts to promote a peaceful settlement of the Ukraine crisis and stated that it would continue to strengthen communication and coordination with China (MFAPRC, 2023). One Russian policy expert interviewed for this research believes that China is well-positioned to act as a peace mediator, or facilitator of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine. In his view, China is uniquely placed because in addition to close ties with Russia, "China has experience in mediating conflicts, for example the normalisation of ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia; it has good relations with Ukraine; and both Ukraine and China are willing to continue their economic cooperation" (Kozyulin, 2023). He points out that Chinese mediation is nonetheless currently impossible because under a Ukrainian presidential decree, Ukrainians are prohibited from conducting negotiations with Russian President Putin (Ibid.), a concern that was also highlighted by two Chinese interviewees (Ding, 2023; Interview 4).⁵

Western political leaders, officials and commentators initially rejected China's peace proposals on Ukraine. The EU Foreign Affairs chief Josep Borrell delivered the harsh verdict that the proposals were "wishful thinking" (Mc Mahon, 2023) that put the aggressor and the victim at an equal level (Borrell, 2023). The US Secretary of State Antony Blinken similarly warned against any attempts to freeze the war on Russia's own terms and lock in Russia's territorial gains (USDS, 2023). At the 49th Group of Seven (G7) summit held in May 2023 in Japan, G7 nations reiterated their support for Ukraine's peace formula, highlighting that any call for peace must include the withdrawal of Russian troops and military equipment from the territory of Ukraine (G7, 2023). However, more conciliatory statements made by Western officials in the months following the release of China's position paper suggest that the US and European countries have gradually warmed to China's potential role in resolving the war in Ukraine (Ignatius, 2023).

One Chinese analyst describes this evolution as "moving from dispute to cooperation" (Da, 2023). In June 2023, after meeting President Xi Jinping, Antony Blinken stated that some of China's and the US' priorities in Ukraine were very consistent with each other, "particularly when it comes to protecting Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty" and that the US would welcome China taking a mediator role between Ukraine and Russia that would help establish a "just and durable peace in Ukraine" ([Schweitzer, 2023](#)).

Reactions in the Global South have been varied, but emergent nations have largely welcomed China's efforts to promote peace in Ukraine and taken a similar line. Among them are Brazil, India and South Africa ([CGTN, 2023](#)), fellow members with China and Russia of the BRICS group of states, whose leaders have emphasised support for negotiations to end hostilities, offering a model of peace that is aligned with the Chinese one. Indeed, the African peace mission's 10-point proposal ([Singh & Reva, 2023](#); [Government of South Africa, 2023](#); [Mac Ginty, 2023](#)) that was tabled to Kyiv and Moscow in June 2023 by a delegation of African leaders from six countries, with its emphasis on the importance of territorial sovereignty, de-escalation and security guarantees for all parties, largely echoes the tone and content of China's proposals. Similarly, the peace proposal that the Indonesian Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto presented at the Shangri-la Security Dialogue in June 2023 ([Subianto, 2023](#)) mirrors some key elements of the Chinese paper on Ukraine, namely its call for a ceasefire and the immediate start of negotiations based on the military status quo.

After the international summit on the war in Ukraine, convened by Saudi Arabia in Jeddah in August 2023 and attended by representatives from 40 countries, a different picture for the involvement of countries in the Global South has emerged. The meeting signalled Ukraine's diplomatic push to build support beyond its core Western allies; the abandonment by some countries in the South, Saudi Arabia in particular, of their "hands-off approach to the conflict" in favour of a policy of more active engagement; and what many described as the constructive participation of China despite the fact that Russia was explicitly not invited ([Brumberg, 2023](#)). The influence exerted by non-Western states was displayed at the last Group of Twenty (G20) summit that was held in September 2023 in New Delhi, India. The G20 declaration on Ukraine, in contrast to the previous year's G20 meeting, retreated into generalised support for Ukraine's territorial integrity without any specific condemnation of Russia ([G20, 2023](#); [G20, 2022](#)).

In such a context, one Chinese analyst interviewed for this project points out that “China does not dismiss the idea of forming a multilateral ‘Peace Contact Group on the Ukrainian crisis’” (Zhao, 2023), comprising primarily of BRICS nations, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation members and observer states, and dialogue partners. This group could function as an intermediary, “facilitating contact between the warring parties and aiming to reach consensus on de-escalation and ceasefire measures” (Ibid.). In his view, this approach differs significantly from the U.S.-led ‘Ukraine Defense Contact Group’ in terms of values, goals, and operational methods (Ibid.).

Understanding international reactions through news

The Global Database of Events, Language and Tone (GDELT) – a Google-based database of coded global news stories⁶ – is a useful tool for understanding international reactions to China's peace engagement in Ukraine. Using GDELT, we have explored how media attention relating to China's proposals for a political settlement of the war in Ukraine has shifted in individual countries and groups of states. We have also analysed the sentiment⁷ with which the Chinese proposals have been viewed. Data on the number of stories⁸ related to cooperative and diplomatic activities by China regarding Ukraine, alongside a measure of the sentiment of these stories, have enabled us to assess the way that news sources perceive the Chinese peace proposals. By comparing media perceptions between three groups of countries (Global North countries⁹, Global North countries excluding the USA, and Global South countries¹⁰) within a 15-month timeframe¹¹, we have been able to measure perceptions both in terms of the volume of media mentions and the sentiment of these mentions, expressed as a moving average time series generated using a 60-day averaging window.¹²

The analysis shows a significant increase in the number of media mentions just after the publication of China's position paper on Ukraine in all three conditions, after which media interest decreased over time (Table 1). Both Global North and Global South media sentiment show a sharp decline after the Chinese position paper is announced. This indicates that mentions of the initiative occur in stories that are broadly negative. Overall, throughout the eight-month timeframe, media perceptions of the Chinese initiative in the Global North were more negative than in the Global South. However, the Global North response is largely due to US media outlets that dominate Global North media coverage. Once the US is excluded from the analysis, the sentiment of media perceptions in the Global North is less negative than in the Global South (Table 2).

This indicates that US news sources are likely to be more critical of the Chinese initiative than sources in other Global North countries. In all three conditions, the sentiment becomes less negative between May and September 2023. This is not surprising, since during this period China engaged more intensively with the war in Ukraine. The media may have perceived such engagement as positive, alongside more positive views expressed by Western diplomats and politicians on China's role in addressing the war.

Table 1: Mentions as a moving average time series.

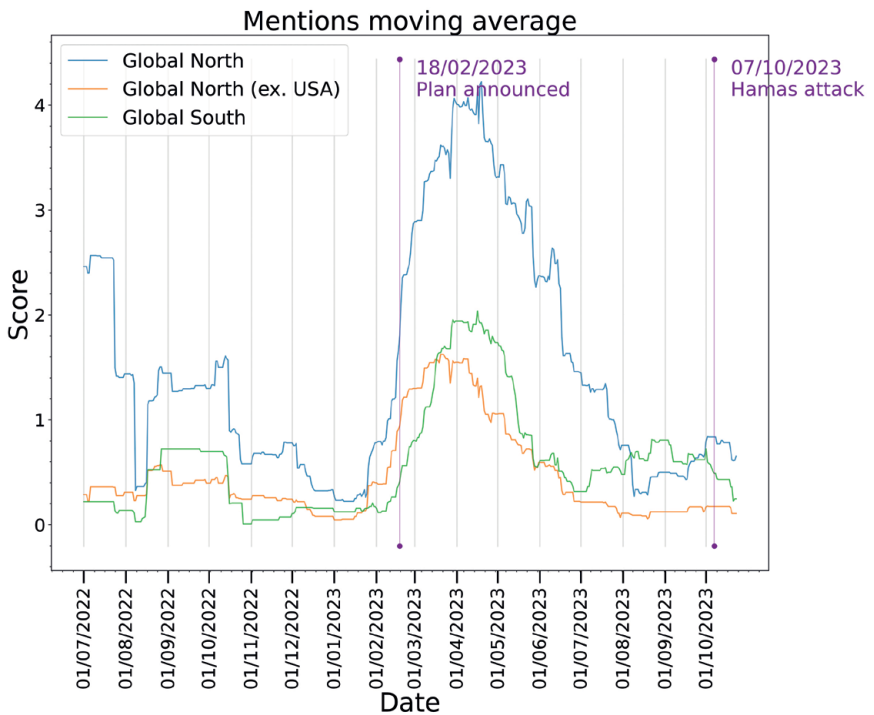
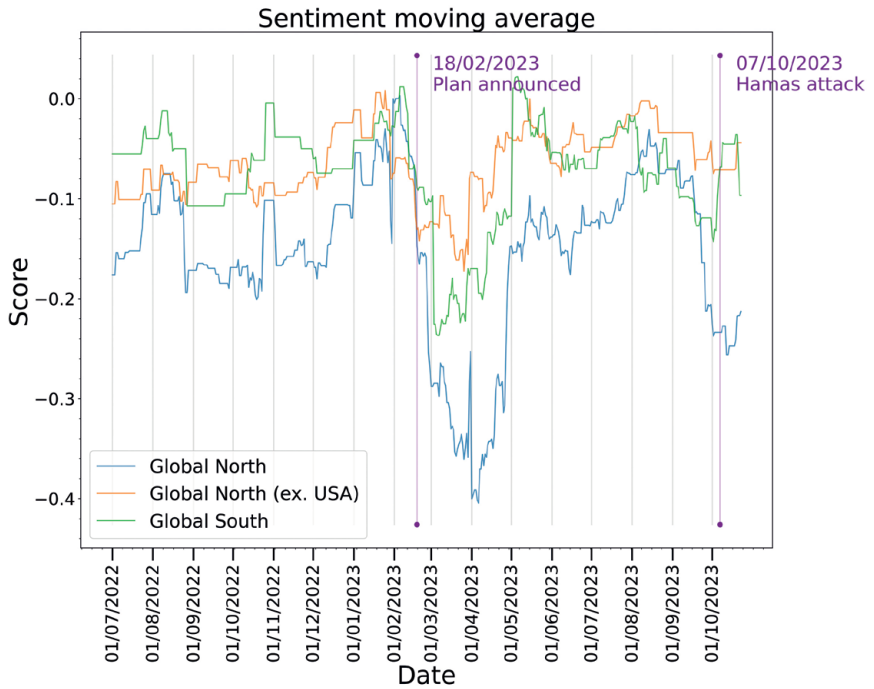
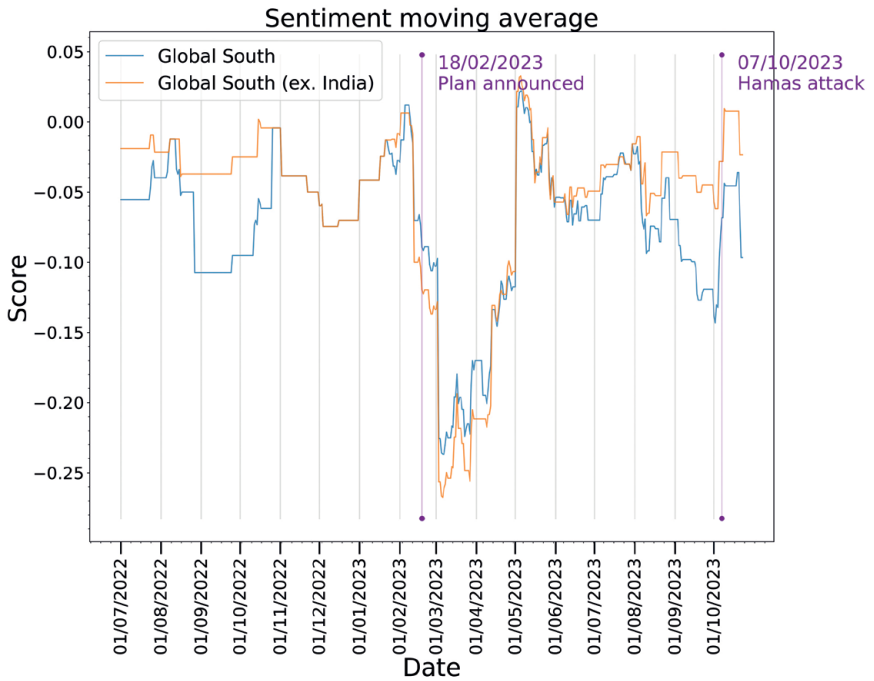


Table 2: Global North and Global South media sentiment.



It is somewhat surprising that, given the uneasy state of Sino-Indian relations, there is no significant difference in the sentiment of Global South media with or without India. In both conditions, there is a sharp decline just after the Chinese plan is announced with sentiment becoming less negative in the following months (Table 3).

Table 3: Sentiment moving average in the Global South.



A comparison of media perceptions in Russia and Ukraine shows a rapid increase in the number of Russian media mentions following the announcement of the Chinese position paper. In contrast, mentions in the Ukrainian media rise at a slower rate (Table 4). There is a slow increase in the sentiment of mentions in both the Russian and Ukrainian media. The sharp decreases in sentiment visible in US and Global South media are not seen in Russian and Ukrainian media (Table 5).

Table 4: Mentions moving average in Russia and Ukraine

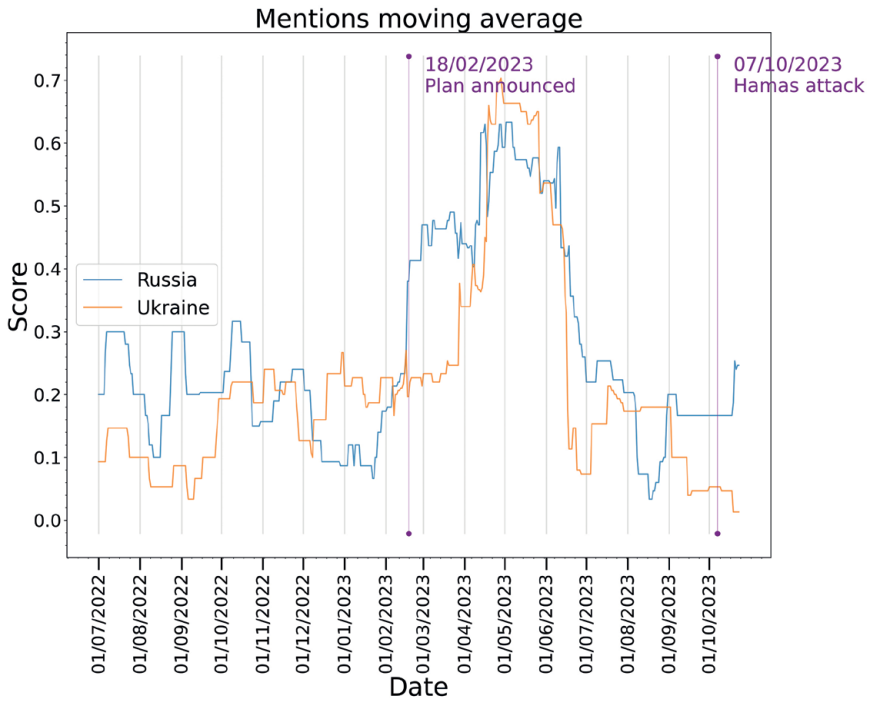
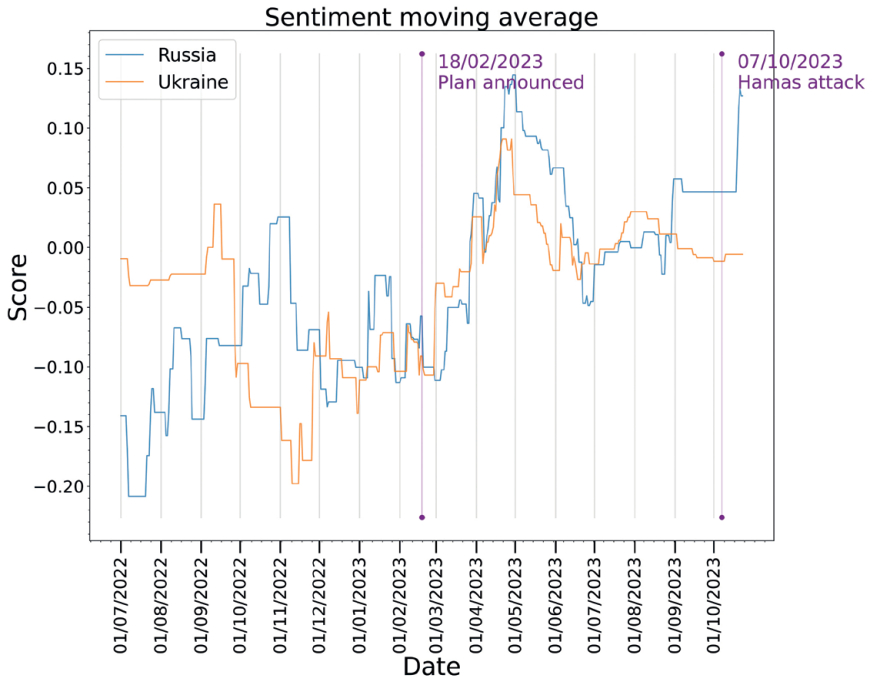


Table 5: Sentiment moving average in Russia and Ukraine.



Media perception studies do not provide a complete picture of how countries have responded to specific events. However, they can help to better understand international reactions to them. In this case, the analysis of media perceptions confirms the conclusions drawn from official government statements and diplomatic reactions worldwide. Generally, countries of the South look at the Chinese peace initiative more favourably, or less negatively, than those of the North, although over time Global North countries have warmed to the Chinese initiative. Importantly, the disproportionate number of US news sources affects the difference in sentiments between Global North and Global South countries.

Policy Implications

After the publication of China's position paper in February 2023 and the shuttle diplomacy of Chinese diplomats in the following months, China's diplomatic efforts appear to have lost momentum. At the Xiangshan security forum in October 2023, the Chinese Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nong Rong, made reference to China's efforts towards a peaceful solution of the war in Ukraine, but did not go beyond the generalities of commitment to "the right direction of promoting peace talks", "work for cessation of hostilities and de-escalation" and creating "conditions for restarting talks" (Nong, 2023). Chinese interviewees attribute the lull in diplomatic engagement to the fact that it is not possible to solve the Ukraine conflict in the short term because the direct combatants are not ready to end the war (Zhao, 2023; Ding, 2023; Da, 2023), even though "neither side possesses the capacity to achieve a decisive military victory over the other" (Zhao, 2023). Moreover, the war in the Gaza Strip has deflected attention from Ukraine, particularly in China and other Global South countries where there is more concern about the potential impact of an expanding war in the Middle East on global energy supplies. However, regardless of China's current perceptions and diplomatic focus, China's position on the war in Ukraine and any follow-up peace engagement will have implications for managing and resolving the conflict.

China's proposals for a political settlement have created opportunities for communication and dialogue with China regarding the conflict's long-term resolution. However, there should be a realistic understanding of what China is able and willing to do. Given its economic and geopolitical ties with Russia, for example, China will realistically not be lured away from it as a strategic partner (Bekkevold, 2023). While Ukraine demands that Russia commits to a full restoration of its territorial integrity and a complete withdrawal of troops as preconditions for peace talks, China is unlikely to pressure Russia to act accordingly, because, in the words of one Chinese analyst, "that is as challenging as asking Europe to convince Ukraine to relinquish its sovereignty" (Zhao, 2023). A more realistic expectation is that while China continues to support Russia rhetorically, diplomatically and economically, it does not cross the redline of supplying arms, especially heavy weapons, to Russia. Moreover, it is probable that China will act as a restraint on Russian war excesses, and help deter Russia from using weapons of mass destruction. China's conflict resolution efforts will likely remain confined to promoting dialogues, rather than adopting a full-scale mediation role with substantive and practical proposals to the warring parties.

Interviewees highlighted the role of China as a "peace-facilitator" (Da, 2023; Zhao, 2023) – rather than a "conflict-mediator". China wants foremost to reopen major communication channels between Russia and Ukraine and encourage talks between the two countries "to clarify their bottom lines, priorities, and negotiable issues, while advancing a phased and negotiable process from easier to more challenging aspects" (Zhao, 2023). Some form of negotiations will eventually be needed to shift from war to peace and agree to a long-term settlement of the conflict. Most probably, this will be a multilateral affair where China will be involved, particularly if an agreed mechanism creates an international framework for dialogue and negotiations among Ukraine, Russia, and their partners. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council with a close relationship to Russia, China will be involved in consultations, peace talks, roadmaps for a peaceful settlement, key negotiations to end hostilities, and the necessary security assurances and post-conflict reconstruction pledges (Mariani, 2023). This may eventually lead to a geopolitical agreement where a range of different and powerful actors all have a stake, despite their disagreements with each other (Bell, 2022).

In a context where, in addition to China, other countries from the Global South are increasingly asserting themselves on the global scene (Tocci, 2023), the Chinese proposals also affect debates and strategic thinking about the political and diplomatic role of the Global South in addressing the war in Ukraine. One Ukrainian former government official stresses "Ukraine needs the votes of Global South countries to support Zelensky's peace formula at the UN" (Chalyi, 2023) and without the support of the Global South, "it is impossible to effectively implement the policy of sanctions against Russia" (Ibid.). As previously noted, while not supportive of Russia's war of aggression, numerous countries from Latin America, Africa and Asia share China's stance on the war in Ukraine and wish for immediate peace talks. There is appreciation by most political leaders in the Global South that the war in Ukraine is not completely removed from the realities of their own countries and that the war is having a detrimental impact on their country's economies and people's lives (Government of South Africa, 2023). But beyond the widely shared concerns about food and energy costs, the case has yet to be made that there is more at stake in standing up for Ukraine. A world that does not respect the UN Charter would be anarchic and intensify security concerns everywhere. The implications of this anarchic approach to the international order would be grave for smaller and less powerful countries. Wars such as Russia's upon Ukraine set precedents that the great powers can act without recourse within their spheres of influence (Malhotra & Saran, 2023). Indeed, countries that orbit major powers could be particularly vulnerable if the UN Charter continues to be disregarded.

While agreeing the conditions for a peace settlement may take a long time, possibly years, to materialise, in the short to medium term, the Chinese proposals open opportunities for dialogue and cooperative efforts on managing the global repercussions of the war, particularly the growing risk of food insecurity. According to a 2022 World Food Programme report, the combined impacts of conflict, climate crisis, and the Covid-19 pandemic, alongside the “ripple effects” of the war in Ukraine, have caused a global food crisis ([WFP, 2022](#)). More recent data demonstrates that the overall situation is not improving. Between January and August 2023, 48 countries were affected by acute food insecurity ([GNAFC & FSIN, 2023](#)). Russia's decision in July 2023 to not extend the Black Sea Grain Initiative ([United Nations, 2022; United Nations, 2023](#))¹³ and its repeated attacks on Ukrainian ports and infrastructure vital for agriculture exports, have imperilled food exports around the world, further aggravating the global food crisis. Despite the establishment by Ukraine of a “temporary humanitarian corridor” ([Saul, 2023](#)), which hugs the Bulgarian and Romanian coastlines ([Ostiller, 2023](#)) and exports from river ports on the Danube, global grain supplies continue to be affected negatively by the declining export of Ukrainian grain ([European Council, 2023](#)), as well as a reduction in exports of agricultural products and fertiliser from Russia. While exports of food and fertiliser are not subject to Western sanctions against Russia and Belarus, the complexity and scope of sanctions Russia and Belarus, including restrictions on payments, logistics, and insurance, and the reluctance by many countries and companies to do business in either country, have created obstacles to the export of food and fertilisers from Russia and Belarus.¹⁴ China's Position Paper on Ukraine calls for the implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative and highlights that its 2022 Cooperative Initiative On Global Food Security ([MFAPRC, 2022](#))¹⁵ “provides a feasible solution on the global food crisis” ([MFAPRC, 2023](#)). Chinese and Western interests converge enough on this matter to enhance dialogue and cooperation to collectively define and prioritise global food security issues, including working towards a new agreement over a broader Black Sea corridor.

Finally, there are implications for post-conflict recovery and reconstruction in Ukraine. Considering the extent of the destruction caused by Russian attacks to Ukraine's civilian infrastructure, Ukraine will aim for the quick reconstruction of roads, power stations, railways, hospitals, and schools – to name a few. In February 2023, a joint assessment by Ukraine, the World Bank, the European Commission, and the UN estimated that post-war reconstruction costs will amount to \$411 billion ([The World Bank, 2023](#)), a figure that is set to increase as the war continues. It is generally accepted that Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction will require mobilising both international public and private sector support. The US, the EU and the European states that currently provide most of the military, financial, and humanitarian aid to Ukraine are expected to be highly involved in Ukraine's post-war recovery, but with their long-standing economic weaknesses and the world economy slowing ([IMF, 2023](#)), it is unlikely that Western countries and their allies will be able to bear the costs on their own ([Kraemer, 2022](#)). China, despite its own decelerating economy and a significant reduction of capital outflows since 2018, has the means, the expertise and, arguably, economic and political interests to assist in rebuilding Ukraine. Over the past three decades, it has built more infrastructure around the world than any other country. While geopolitical competition is an undeniable reality, a shared common interest in rebuilding Ukraine, China's propensity to talk about physical and economic reconstruction, and the similarities of major infrastructure-based connectivity initiatives, such as China's BRI and the G7's Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) ([Mariani, 2023](#)), suggest that China and Western countries could potentially be involved in the reconstruction of Ukraine. From a security perspective, China's involvement could provide a guarantee against future Russian threats to Ukraine's reconstruction and security. Given Russia's close relationship with and dependence on China, Russia's military attacks targeting Chinese-invested infrastructure projects in Ukraine would be unlikely.

Ultimately, it is Ukrainian national leaders and policy makers who are responsible for setting the priorities for Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction. They will assess the risks and opportunities of external assistance and will determine the role that China has in rebuilding their country. They must harness relationships with Western countries and China not only to address reconstruction needs, but also to safeguard progress towards a secure and stable post-conflict Ukraine. How they will manage the opportunities and geopolitical risks of Chinese engagement in rebuilding Ukraine will shape not only the country's recovery and reconstruction, but also the role Ukraine will have in the shifting geopolitical landscape ([Borodyna, 2023](#)).

Recommendations

Based on the analysis of China's position on the war in Ukraine, China's interest in seeking a negotiated settlement and addressing the impact of the war, and the international responses to the Chinese proposals, the policy recommendations listed below identify needs and opportunities for effective engagement with China and other countries in the Global South on conflict resolution, food security and post-conflict reconstruction in Ukraine. While the number and variety of actors involved in the international diplomacy surrounding the Ukraine-Russia war is extensive, the recommendations below are intended specifically for the strategic communities of Ukraine and Western countries that seek a common roadmap for a just and durable peace in Ukraine. They might also inspire a more detailed and nuanced analysis of the actors and factors that affect China's peace efforts in the Russia-Ukraine war and other regional conflicts.

- ▶ **Finding common ground on a just and durable peace.** There are options, at diplomatic, political, and civil society levels, for strengthening communication and dialogue among Ukrainian, European, American, and Chinese officials and policy makers on what a just and durable peace in Ukraine may look like and how China can leverage its influence to further the prospects for a lasting peace. Bilateral government consultations, visits to China by political leaders, Ukraine-China, and EU-China exchanges – in particular the annual EU-China strategic dialogue – could provide useful platforms for discussion. The nature of a geopolitical agreement that will eventually end the war in Ukraine is yet unknown and will depend on the situation on the ground and the willingness of the direct combatants to make significant steps towards a cessation of the hostilities. Although the time for negotiations has not come yet, forward-looking diplomacy requires preparing for such an eventuality. In addition to contributing to the creation of an international environment that is conducive to conflict resolution and the emergence of a final geopolitical agreement, dialogue with China should also help address design options for such an agreement and what its content might be. While there are serious differences between the Chinese, Ukrainian and Western conditions for a political settlement of the conflict and it is unlikely that China will significantly distance itself from Russia, seeking common ground on a roadmap for peace would add significant leverage to international peace efforts. When a settlement emerges, China may realise that it will be in its interest to deploy its full capacities to facilitate a geopolitical agreement. In the meantime, it is advisable to refrain from taking actions that push China and Russia closer together.

Europe should prioritise devising appropriate strategies on dealing with China, which rely more on policies of constructive engagement, and move away from the “China threat” combative rhetoric ([Bet, 2023](#)). If China believes that it can pursue profitable and productive ties with Europe, it will have incentives to play a more constructive role between Russia, Ukraine and Europe.

- ▶ Reaching out to countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Ukraine and Western countries need to devise a broader and more sustained outreach to political elites and civil society in the Global South ([Stent, 2023](#)). This may lead to more concerted peace efforts, or at least help to counter Russia's efforts of rallying them behind an unjust, and for Ukraine, disadvantageous peace plan that would legitimise the illegal acquisition of Ukrainian land and would likely cause a renewal of the war in the future. In reaching out to countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, Ukraine and Western countries should make a better case for why the war in Ukraine and its outcome should concern the rest of the world and the political and strategic interests that developing countries have in a just and durable peace. By engaging the Global South in international talks about the war, emphasis should be placed on the fundamental interest that they have to be on the side of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and international law. Commentators have already noted that if the aim is seeking non-Western countries' support in stabilising the rules-based global order, the West must also create stakeholders that believe in such an order ([Malhotra & Saran, 2023](#)). As countries of the Global South are emerging rapidly and demanding their rightful seats at the international table, discussions on how to end the conflict in Ukraine and rebuild security in Europe cannot be insulated from the Global South's legitimate aspirations to reform the international order and create a more level playing field within global multilateral institutions.

- ▶ Ensuring grain supplies and tackling food insecurity. China is a key player in the global food system ([Zhan, 2022](#)) and therefore seeking China's cooperation in addressing the availability of and access to global resources and tackling food insecurity is a priority. There is a need to enhance dialogue and cooperation with China to collectively respond to priority food security risks, which the war in Ukraine has exacerbated. China's proposed Global Development Initiative ([MFAPRC, 2021](#)), the Cooperative Initiative On Global Food Security, and China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis all contain important commitments to draw from when seeking cooperative actions with China to tackle food insecurity. Despite the establishment by Ukraine of a "temporary humanitarian corridor" shipping channel, there is a need for a new multilateral agreement. This should address both limitations on Ukrainian exports and Russian grievances regarding restrictions on payments and insurance that limit exports from Russia and Belarus. China, the biggest recipient of Ukrainian grain under the expired Black Sea grain deal, should be encouraged to use its leverage to support the establishment of such a new agreement, which would ensure the safe and unimpeded movement of grains and fertiliser across a broader Black Sea corridor, with Russian security guarantees. A more immediate priority is a moratorium on missile attacks on Ukrainian port infrastructure, which the leveraging of pressure from China and the wider Group of 77 (G77) developing countries could help secure.
- ▶ Cooperation on post-conflict recovery and reconstruction. China and the West should explore opportunities to cooperate on post-conflict recovery and reconstruction in Ukraine. This is an area where a potential confluence of interests runs parallel to concerns, both in China and the West, in advancing geopolitical goals by increasing influence and shaping the future of Ukraine. The ideal scenario would be one where Europe and the US re-adjust their current stance that views the BRI as an opaque, if not malign, strategy that aims to expand Chinese influence and power ([Kraemer, 2022](#); [Bennon & Fukuyama, 2023](#)), while China distances itself from Russia and demonstrates its willingness to support a transparent and people-centred approach to supporting recovery and reconstruction in Ukraine. This scenario, however, clashes with geopolitical realities that encourage the opposite. Ukraine will benefit if post-conflict recovery and reconstruction needs transcend geopolitics and are instead determined by the country's priorities.

In the short term, cooperative interventions are needed within the framework of the Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) in the five key recovery and reconstruction priorities identified by Ukraine: critical and social infrastructure and basic service delivery to vulnerable populations; energy infrastructure; housing; private sector development; and humanitarian demining ([The World Bank, 2023](#)). Opportunities for cooperation in the long term under the framework of infrastructure-based connectivity initiatives, such as China's BRI and the G7's PGII, should also be explored. It is premature to say exactly where and how BRI- and PGII-backed projects could work in parallel or even cooperate, but there are sectors where joint Chinese and Western interventions would be highly beneficial and potentially feasible. This could be in the less sensitive areas of disaster prevention and response, and humanitarian assistance, including demining of civilian and agricultural areas, as well as the provision of "soft infrastructure", such as health, grain storage infrastructure and basic services. Finding a common ground in these areas may potentially lead to cooperation in the more sensitive areas of hard or critical infrastructure. A good starting point would be seeking dialogue through the participation of Chinese representatives in future international conferences that aim to mobilise international support for Ukraine's reconstruction and economic and social recovery. This should be accompanied by efforts that aim to establish effective forms of communication and dialogue between Ukrainian, Western and Chinese policy experts who play a role in shaping policies in this vast and complex area. Discussions may cover the role that Chinese entities could play by applying their expertise in supporting Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction, as well as consideration of specific sectors and opportunities for international cooperation.

Conclusions

Nearly two years into the war in Ukraine, without a diplomatic solution in sight, China's security, strategic and economic concerns are likely to intensify, outweighing any real or perceived "benefits" that China may derive from the conflict. It is in China's interest that the conflict ends, or at least de-escalates.

China's 12-point position paper on the political settlement of the war is not a peace plan per se. It repeats China's standard principles and offers little by way of substantive proposals. Moreover, because of its pro-Russia inclination, China does not qualify as an impartial third party that is equidistant between the two warring sides. This does not necessarily hinder China's ability to facilitate a compromise or deal with the war's impacts and long-lasting effects. In recent history, there are examples of mediators who successfully brokered peace deals even if they were partial to one side or directly invested in the outcome. This was, for example, the case in the resolution of the Bosnian War where the US simultaneously intervened militarily and engaged in mediation. The more urgent question is whether China has the motivation and capacity to act as a peace broker and to address the war's impacts.

While many Western officials, analysts and commentators have been dismissive of China's genuine interest and ability to mediate in a conflict in which the demands of Ukraine and Russia are diametrically opposed, these criticisms often fail to recognise China's interest in bringing the war to an end. Moreover, they underestimate China's ability to contribute towards a multilateral agreement once both Russia and Ukraine are willing to hold peace negotiations. Even though China's peace initiative has so far done little to impact the course of the war, by positioning itself as a mediator or promoter of peace talks, a mitigator of the wider global fall-out of the war and, potentially, a post-conflict reconstructor, China has made a serious foray into addressing the war in Ukraine and its global impacts. It is not only pursuing its strategic interests with a broad audience in the Global South and in Europe, but it is also paving the way for the role it will have in a future peace process and the geopolitical agreement that will eventually end the war.

As the situation in Ukraine continues to evolve, it remains to be seen what exactly China's involvement in negotiating an end to the war will be and what tangible deliverables China will provide to the resolution and/or mitigation of the conflict. Beijing's engagement on the Ukrainian conflict will remain cautious and secondary to China's higher security priorities – in particular, the strategic rivalry with the US, tensions in the Taiwan Strait and security risks in the Korean peninsula. Further, because of converging strategic interests between China and Russia, China will not renounce its partnership with Russia and its pro-Russia stance. On the one hand, Beijing will continue to echo Moscow in blaming NATO for the war and condemning Western sanctions. At key UN votes, it will either abstain or support Russia. Sino-Russian economic and trade cooperation will continue to grow, especially due to purchases of Russian energy and supplies of important technologies and, in all probability, China and Russia will conduct more joint military exercises in the future. On the other hand, China and Russia are not in a military alliance and their relationship is not based on ideological fraternity. For China, Russia is “a needed, but increasingly erratic partner” (Abb, 2022). Barring a major conflict between China and the US and its allies, China will not unconditionally be backing Russia against the US and NATO. China's political and diplomatic support for Russia will continue as long as it does not become an unwieldy political and economic liability. China will continue to proclaim its neutrality; it will not recognise Russia's illegal annexations of Ukrainian territories, and it will speak out against nuclear threats. Chinese companies will likely continue to comply with sanctions against Russian individuals and entities, and China will refrain from delivering heavy arms and ammunition to the Russian military. As of this writing, there is no evidence that Chinese entities – both private and state-owned – have systematically evaded economic sanctions or supported Russia militarily.

As the war in Ukraine continues and its negative impacts are felt more strongly in China and globally, China's strategic choices, policies and actions will likely evolve and adapt, creating opportunities for dialogue between the West and China on how to bring the war to an end, how to mitigate the wider global fall-out of the war, including the need to tackle food insecurity – and how best to cooperate on post-conflict recovery and reconstruction.

Against the backdrop of a fracturing international order, Global South countries are increasing their political influence and seek a bigger say in the global order going forward. In such a context, the political and diplomatic role of the Global South – where the Chinese peace proposals have won plaudits – in dealing with the war in Ukraine acquires greater importance. It is not just China that believes that the war cannot be resolved on the battlefield and there is a need to seek a political and diplomatic solution. Brazil, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and other African countries and Turkey – to name a few – share a similar, if not the same position and are increasingly important actors in the diplomatic arena. Alongside much needed dialogue and cooperation with China, Western countries should reach out to nations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East and make a better case that the war in Ukraine is not just a European affair and there is more at stake for them than the war's negative impacts on food and energy costs. It is not possible to create the just and balanced international order that the Global South aspires to, without upholding peace, international law and the UN Charter principles, which Russia's invasion of Ukraine has flagrantly violated.

Endnotes

¹ The 'Global South' is here defined as comprising countries that have a relatively low level of economic and industrial development as estimated by the World Bank according to GDP per-capita criteria, with an overwhelming majority located to the south of more industrialised countries.

² The so-called Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence: respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.

³ The New Eurasian Land Bridge (NELB) is the overland corridor that links the Pacific and the Atlantic. It aims to develop rail transportation between China's east coast and Europe through Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland and Germany. Although the corridor relies on existing rail infrastructure, the plan is to modernise the existing networks and to add highways, power transmission lines and dry ports.

⁴ The China–Central Asia–West Asia Economic Corridor, also known as "Middle Corridor", links Chinese and European markets via Central Asia, the Caucasus and Turkey.

⁵ In a decree signed in October 2022, Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelensky formally declared the prospect of any Ukrainian talks with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin "impossible", but he left the door open to discussions with Russia.

⁶ GDELT uses Conflict and Mediation Event Observations (CAMEO) codes to classify events in news articles. The algorithmic basis of GDELT, known as TABARI, extracts information about actors, actions, and locations from the news article's text. CAMEO codes are then assigned to the news article based on the extracted information. In our analysis, we used CAMEO codes related to cooperation and diplomatic activity.

⁷ GDELT sentiment analysis uses multiple emotional analysis tools to capture the affective content of news stories ([The GDELT Project, 2015](#)).

⁸ GDELT stories are selected based on the actors and actions in the stories – in our case, cooperative and diplomatic activities by China with respect to Ukraine.

⁹ For the purpose of this analysis, Global North countries include all G7 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK and US).

¹⁰ In this analysis, Global South countries include Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates.

¹¹ The timeframe is between July 2022 and October 2023. A key reference point/intermediate date is 18 February 2023, when China's top diplomat Wang Yi announced the imminent release by China of proposals for a political settlement of the war in Ukraine. The plots before the key reference are therefore the baseline against which we assess the changes in mentions and sentiment post-reference. The announcement will have stimulated not only articles about the proposal, but also articles related to China more generally.

¹² Moving average time series make the assessment and comparison of changes in volume and sentiment of news stories over time clearer and easier to interpret.

¹³ The deal, which was brokered by the UN and Turkey in July 2022, allowed the export of Ukrainian grain via the Black Sea. It stabilised global food prices and brought relief to the developing countries reliant on Ukrainian exports.

¹⁴ Particularly, exports of some items, such as potash from Belarus and anhydrous ammonia from Russia, saw significant reductions during 2022 (Glauber & Laborde, 2022).

¹⁵ The initiative includes eight proposals: strengthening the coordination role of the UN, in particular the work of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the international Fund for Agricultural Development and the UN World Food Programme (WFP); not imposing export restriction on humanitarian food purchases by the WFP; entry of Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian agricultural products into the international market; easing tight food supplies by reducing, among others, trade and technical barriers; ensuring that the emergency measures taken by countries for food trade conform to the rules of the World Trade Organization; supporting the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and the innovation and cooperation on agricultural science and technology among countries; reducing food loss and waste; and helping developing countries enhance their capacity of food production, storage and loss reduction.

References

- Abb, P. and Polianskii, M. (2022). "With friends like these: the Sino-Russian partnership is based on interests, not ideology". *Zeitschrift für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42597-023-00090-2>
- Aizhu, C. and Xu, M. (2023). "China saves billions of dollars from record sanctioned oil imports". Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/china-saves-billions-dollars-record-sanctioned-oil-imports-2023-10-11/?rpc=401&>
- Al-Kassab, F. (2023). "From Beijing to London, Blinken pushes for Ukraine peace deal and recovery". *National Public Radio (NPR)*. <https://www.npr.org/2023/06/20/1183160238/blinken-pushes-ukraine-peace-deal-recovery>
- Allen-Ebrahimian, B. (2022). "Ukrainian MP: "China is not our friend"". *Axios*.
- Bachulka, A. and Leonard, M. (2023). "China and Ukraine: the Chinese Debate about Russia's war and its meaning for the world". *European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR)*. <https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/China-and-Ukraine-The-Chinese-debate-about-Russias-war-and-its-meaning-for-the-world.pdf>
- Bekkevold, J. I. (2023). "China's 'Peace Plan' for Ukraine Isn't About Peace". *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/04/04/china-xi-ukraine-russia-peace-plan-diplomacy-global-south/>
- Bell, C. (2022). "Options for a Peace Settlement in Ukraine: Option Paper VII – Multilevel Peace Agreement Design: Dealing with Geopolitical Support". *OpinioJuris*. <https://opiniojuris.org/2022/06/14/options-for-a-peace-settlement-in-ukraine-option-paper-vii-multilevel-peace-agreement-design-dealing-with-geopolitical-support/>
- Bennon, M. and Fukuyama, F. (2023). "China's Road to Ruin". *Foreign Affairs*. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/belt-road-initiative-xi-imf>
- Bet, M. (2023). "Liz Truss leads Tory calls to designate China as a threat to UK". *The Independent*. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/iaian-duncan-smith-liz-truss-bernard-jenkin-oliver-dowden-china-b2409376.html>
- Bloomberg. (2023). "Russia Expects to Sell Gas to China at Half the Price for Europe". <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-09-08/russia-expects-to-sell-gas-to-china-at-half-the-price-for-europe#xj4y7vzkg>
- Bo, H. (2023). "Implications of the Ukraine war for China: can China survive secondary sanctions?". *Journal of Chinese Economic and Business Studies*. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14765284.2022.2136933>
- Bondarenko, M. (2023). "Beijing wants to play along with Russia: Arakhmia calls China's 'peace plan' unacceptable" (Пекін хоче підігравати РФ: Арахамія назвав неприйнятним "мирний план" Китаю). *Fakty ICTV*. <https://fakty.com.ua/ua/ukraine/polituka/20230224-pek-in-hoche-pidigravaty-rf-arakhmiya-nazvav-nepryjnyatnym-myrnyj-plan-kytayu/>
- Borodyna, O. (2023). "Geopolitical risks to Ukraine's reconstruction: what to watch". *Overseas Development Institute (ODI)*. <https://odi.org/en/insights/geopolitical-risks-to-ukraine-reconstruction/>
- Borrell, J. (2023). "The world is demanding a just peace for Ukraine". *European Union External Action Service*. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/world-demanding-just-peace-ukraine_en

- Borger, J. (2022). "UN votes to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine and calls for withdrawal". *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/02/united-nations-russia-ukraine-vote>
- Brumberg, D. (2023). "The Russia-Ukraine Jeddah Meeting: A Win for MBS in a Changing Global Order". *Arab Center Washington DC*. <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-russia-ukraine-jeddah-meeting-a-win-for-mbs-in-a-changing-global-order/>
- Cai, F. & Nolan, P., & Wang, L. (2023). "Routledge Handbook of the Belt and Road". *Routledge*.
- Center for International Security and Strategy (CISS). (2023). "External Security Risks for China in 2023". Tsinghua University.
- CGTN Africa. (2023). "South African foreign minister hails China's peace plan in resolving Ukraine conflict". *YouTube*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1_deyhleEw
- Chalyi, Oleksandr, Former First Deputy Foreign Minister of Ukraine. "Interview 9". 18 November 2023.
- Chaziza, M. (2018). "China's Approach to Mediation in the Middle East: Between Conflict Resolution and Conflict Management". *Middle East Institute*. https://www.mei.edu/publications/chinas-approach-mediation-middle-east-between-conflict-resolution-and-conflict#_ftn12
- Chen, G. (2023). "News analysis: Chinese special envoy's shuttle diplomacy on Ukraine". *CGTN*. <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2023-05-29/News-analysis-Chinese-special-envoy-s-shuttle-diplomacy-on-Ukraine-1kccOjUDrOg/index.html#:~:text=The%20Chinese%20special%20envoy%20set,Polish%20newspaper%20Trybuna%2C%20told%20CGTN>
- Chen, Q. (2023). "Wagner's revolt weakening Putin's authority 'wishful thinking' of the West: experts". *Global Times*. <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202306/1293134.shtml>
- Çolakoglu, S. (2023). "The Middle Corridor and the Russia-Ukraine War: the Rise of New Regional Collaboration in Eurasia?". *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute*. <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13744-the-middle-corridor-and-the-russia-ukraine-war-the-rise-of-new-regional-collaboration-in-eurasia?.html>
- Confidential interview, Chinese think tank expert. "Interview 4", November 2023.
- Confidential interview, Ukrainian civil society expert. "Interview 5", November 2023.
- Confidential interview, Ukrainian scholar. "Interview 6", November 2023
- Council of the European Union. (2023). "Infographic - How the Russian invasion of Ukraine has further aggravated the global food crisis". <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/how-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine-has-further-aggravated-the-global-food-crisis/>
- Da, Wei, Director of the Center for International Security and Strategy (CISS) at Tsinghua University. "Interview 1". 2 November 2023.

- de Brichambaut, M. P. (2010). "The Indivisibility of Euro-Atlantic Security". *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)*. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/f/41452.pdf>
- Ding, Xiaoxing, Director of Institute of Eurasia Studies, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR). "Interview 2". 2 November 2023.
- Donnellon-May, G. (2023). "Beijing's interest in the Middle Corridor". *The Lowy Institute*. <https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/beijing-s-interest-middle-corridor>
- Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). (2022). "Russia can count on support from many developing countries". <https://www.eiu.com/n/russia-can-count-on-support-from-many-developing-countries/>
- Eldem, T. (2022). "Russia's War on Ukraine and the Rise of the Middle Corridor as a Third Vector of Eurasian Connectivity". *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)*. <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2022C64/>
- Eruygur, B.; ul Khaliq, R.; and Erturk, N. A. (2023). "Ukraine criticizes Chinese envoy's 'absurd' statement on former Soviet states". *Anadolu Agency*. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/ukraine-criticizes-chinese-envoys-absurd-statement-on-former-soviet-states/2879791>
- Freeman, C.; Gill, B.; and McFarland, A. (2023). "China and the Reshaping of Global Conflict Prevention Norms". *United States Institute of Peace*. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/09/china-and-reshaping-global-conflict-prevention-norms>
- Freeman, C. (2022). "China's Ukraine Gambit: Beijing Plays Both Sides". *United States Institute of Peace*. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/04/chinas-ukraine-gambit-beijing-plays-both-sides>
- G7 2023 Hiroshima Summit. (2023). "G7 Leaders' Statement on Ukraine". https://www.g7hiroshima.go.jp/documents/pdf/230519-01_g7_en.pdf
- G20 India 2023. (2023). "G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration". https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty_new/document/G20-New-Delhi-Leaders-Declaration.pdf
- G20 Indonesia 2022. (2022). "G20 Bali Leaders' Declaration". https://www.g20.org/content/dam/gtwenty/gtwenty_new/about_g20/previous-summit-documents/2022-bali/G20%20Bali%20Leaders%27%20Declaration,%2015-16%20November%202022.pdf
- Ghiretti, F. (2023). "How China imposes sanctions". *Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS)*. <https://merics.org/en/report/how-china-imposes-sanctions>
- Glauber, J. and Laborde, D. (2022). "How sanctions on Russia and Belarus are impacting exports of agricultural products and fertilizer". *International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)*. <https://www.ifpri.org/blog/how-sanctions-russia-and-belarus-are-impacting-exports-agricultural-products-and-fertilizer>
- Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC) & Food Security Information Network (FSIN). (2023). "2023 Global Report on Food Crises". https://www.fsinfoplatform.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/GRFC2023_MYU_September2023.pdf

- Government of South Africa. (2023). "African leaders seek a negotiated peace in Russia-Ukraine conflict". <https://www.gov.za/blog/african-leaders-seek-negotiated-peace-russia-ukraine-conflict>
- Guénette, J.-D.; Kenworthy, P.; and Wheeler, C. (2022). "Implications of the War in Ukraine for the Global Economy". *World Bank Group*. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/5d903e848db1d1b83e0ec8f744e55570-0350012021/related/Implications-of-the-War-in-Ukraine-for-the-Global-Economy.pdf>
- Harrell, P.; Rosenberg, E.; and Saravalle, E. (2018) "China's Use of Coercive Economic Measures". *Center for a New American Security (CNAS)*. https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/China_Use.pdf
- Honcharenko, A. (2023). "China's 'peace plan': Kuleba explains what Ukraine disagrees with (Мирний план" Китаю: Кулеба розповів, з чим не погоджується Україна). *Television Service of News - TSN* (Телевізійна Служба Новин – ТСН) <https://tsn.ua/politika/mirniy-plan-kitayu-kuleba-rozpoviv-z-chim-ne-pogodzhuyetsya-ukrayina-2272654.html>
- Ignatius, D. (2023). "The U.S. warms to a role for China in resolving the Ukraine war". *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/05/03/antony-blinken-ukraine-war-china-xi-mediation/>
- International Monetary Fund (IMF). (2023). "World Economic Outlook – A Rocky Recovery". <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO/Issues/2023/04/11/world-economic-outlook-april-2023>
- Капнік, О. (2023). "Danilov warned of a 'challenge for the whole world' and named the countries as threats (Данілов попередив про "виклик для всього світу" і назвав країни-загрози). *Television Service of News - TSN* (Телевізійна Служба Новин – ТСН) <https://tsn.ua/politika/danilov-poperediv-pro-viklik-dlya-vsogo-svitu-i-nazvav-krajini-zagrozi-2454754.html>
- Kapoor, K. (2023). "Indonesia proposes demilitarised zone, UN referendum for Ukraine peace plan". Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/indonesia-proposes-demilitarised-zone-un-referendum-ukraine-peace-plan-2023-06-03/>
- Kazdobina, Julia, Security Studies Program Senior Fellow, The Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism". "Interview 7". 17 November 2023.
- Keuper, M. (2022). "The Implications of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine on the Future of Sino-European Overland Connectivity". *Austria Institut für Europa- und Sicherheitspolitik*. <https://www.aies.at/download/2022/AIES-Fokus-2022-06.pdf>
- Kozyulin, Vadim, Political Scientist, PIR Center Consultant. "Interview 8". 17 November 2023.
- Kraemer, R. (2022). "What role will China play in Ukraine's post-war transformation?". *The Middle East Institute*. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/what-role-will-china-play-ukraines-post-war-transformation>
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2022). "Text of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Mr. Sergey Lavrov's written message on Indivisibility of Security addressed to the Heads of Foreign / External Affairs Ministers / Secretaries of the US, Canada and several European countries".

- Le, Y. (2022). "Acting on the Global Security Initiative To Safeguard World Peace and Tranquility". *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjbxw/202205/t20220506_10682621.html
- Legarda, H. (2018). "China as a conflict mediator - Maintaining stability along the Belt and Road". Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS). <https://merics.org/en/comment/china-conflict-mediator>
- Mações, B. (2023). "An Insider's Perspective on China's Strategy in Ukraine". *Time*. <https://time.com/6264512/insiders-perspective-on-chinas-strategy-in-ukraine/>
- Mac Ginty, R. (2023). "The African Peace Mission and what it means for peace". *Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep)*. <https://peacerep.org/2023/06/24/african-peace-mission/>
- Malhotra, S. and Saran, S. (2023). "How to Reset Relations Between Europe and the Global South". *Observer Research Foundation (ORF)*. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/how-to-reset-relations-between-europe-and-the-global-south/>
- Mariani, B. (2023). "China's Peace Efforts in Ukraine". *The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)*. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/cff/2023/07/26/chinas-peace-efforts-in-ukraine/>
- Mariani, B. (2023). "The Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): Meeting the World's Infrastructure Gaps amid Geopolitical Competition". *Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep)*. <https://peacerep.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/BRI-PGII-Brief.pdf>
- Mariani, B. (2022). "China's Engagement in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings: The Quest for Stability". *Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep)*. <https://peacerep.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/China-Report-Digital.pdf>
- Mariani, B. (2022). "Sino-European relations amid the war in Ukraine". *Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform (PeaceRep)*. <https://peacerep.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Sino-European-Report-Digital-1.pdf>
- Mc Mahon, M. (2023). "'China has the biggest influence on Russia', says EU foreign policy chief". *Euronews*. <https://www.euronews.com/2023/05/08/china-has-the-biggest-influence-on-russia-borrell>
- Melkadze, A. (2022). "Value of Russian trade in goods (export, import, and trade balance) with China from 2007 to 2021". *Statista*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1003171/russia-value-of-trade-in-goods-with-china/>
- Melkozerova, V. (2023). "Call me anytime: Zelenskyy plays the long game with Xi Jinping". *Politico*. <https://www.politico.eu/article/volodymyr-zelenskyy-play-long-game-xi-jinping-ukraine-russia-war-china/>
- Mendez, A., Forcadell, F. J., & Horiachko, K. (2022). "Russia-Ukraine Crisis: China's Belt Road Initiative at the Crossroads". *Asian Business & Management* 21 (3). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41291-022-00195-1>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2023). "The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper". https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/202302/t20230221_11028348.html

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2023). "US Hegemony and Its Perils". https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/202302/t20230220_11027664.html
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2023). "China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis". https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202302/t20230224_11030713.html
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2023). "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson's Remarks on the Wagner Group Incident". https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/202306/t20230625_11103407.html
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2023). "Special Representative of the Chinese Government on Eurasian Affairs Li Hui Holds Meetings and Talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Others". https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/202305/t20230530_11085801.html
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2023). "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin's Regular Press Conference on February 13, 2023". https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/202302/t20230213_11024546.html
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2023). "Making the World a Safer Place - Keynote Speech by Director Wang Yi - Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs - At the 59th Munich Security Conference". https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202302/t20230219_11027215.html
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2023). "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference on May 29, 2023". https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/202305/t20230529_11085429.html
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2022). "Wang Yi Puts Forward China's Cooperation Initiative on Global Food Security". https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx_662805/202207/t20220709_10717974.html
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2021). "Global Development Initiative — Building on 2030 SDGs for Stronger, Greener and Healthier Global Development". https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/topics_665678/GDI/wj/202305/P020230511396286957196.pdf
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. (2014). "China's Initiation of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence". https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/200011/t20001117_697812.html
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2023). "Comment by Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova on China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis". https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1855483/?lang=en

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. (2023). "Візит до України спеціального представника уряду Китайської Народної Республіки Лі Хуея (Visit to Ukraine by the special representative of the government of the People's Republic of China Li Hui)". <https://mfa.gov.ua/news/vizit-do-ukrayini-specialnogo-predstavnika-uryadu-kitajskoyi-narodnoyi-respubliki-li-hueya>
- Ministry of Infrastructure of Ukraine. (2021). "Ukraine and China sign a cooperation agreement in infrastructure development". <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-ta-kitaj-pidpisali-ugodu-pro-spivpracyu-u-galuzi-budivnictva-infrastrukturi>
- Nigh, V. (2022). "Ukraine, Russia, Volatile Ag Markets". *American Farm Bureau Federation*. <https://www.fb.org/market-intel/ukraine-russia-volatile-ag-markets>
- Nong, R. (2023). "Jointly Implementing the Global Security Initiative For Lasting Peace and Security of the World—Keynote Speech by H.E. Nong Rong Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs At the 10th Beijing Xiangshan Forum". *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/202311/t20231102_11172214.html
- Ostiller, N. (2023). "US Ambassador: 100th ship passes through Black Sea humanitarian corridor". *The Kyiv Independent*. <https://kyivindependent.com/100th-ship-passes-through-black-sea-humanitarian-corridor/>
- Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Vienna. (2023). "President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin Sign Joint Statement of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on Deepening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination for the New Era and Stress Settling the Ukraine Crisis Through Dialogue". http://vienna.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/zgbd/202303/t20230322_11046088.htm
- President of Russia. (2023). "Press statements by President of Russia and President of China". <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/70750>
- President of Russia. (2022). "Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development". <http://www.en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5770>
- President of Russia. (2022). "Address by the President of the Russian Federation". <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67843>
- Qiu, S.; Gu, H. and Munroe, T. (2022). "China's business and economic interests in Ukraine". *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/business/autos-transportation/chinas-business-economic-interests-ukraine-2022-02-23/>
- Radio Svoboda. (2023). "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs initiates a ban on entry to Ukraine for all Chinese touring artists" (МЗС ініціює заборону в'їзду до України для всіх китайських гастролерів). <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-mzs-kytay-spivachka-mariupol/32583714.html>
- Ramzy, A. (2022). "Russia says that a senior Chinese official expressed support for the invasion of Ukraine". *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/11/world/russia-says-that-a-senior-chinese-official-expressed-support-for-the-invasion-of-ukraine.html>

- Reinhart, C., Trebesch, C., & Horn, S. (2022). "China's overseas lending and the war in Ukraine". *VOX EU*. <https://voxeu.org/article/china-s-overseas-lending-and-war-ukraine>
- Ruta, M. (2022). "The Impact of the War in Ukraine on Global Trade and Investment". *The World Bank*. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/8a37c7fb-5fd8-56aa-bb7e-2a0970c468d9>
- Saul, J. (2023). "Ukraine grain corridor should not replace broader deal, UN trade chief says". Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-grain-corridor-should-not-replace-broader-deal-un-trade-chief-2023-09-27/>
- Schweitzer, A. (2023). "Profound differences" remain between U.S. and China, Secretary Blinken tells NPR". *National Public Radio (NPR)*. <https://www.npr.org/2023/06/19/1183053024/profound-differences-remain-us-and-china-beijing-blinken>
- Shi, H. (2023). "Xinhua Headlines: Russia endeavors to defuse Wagner rebellion". *Xinhua*. http://www.china.org.cn/world/Off_the_Wire/2023-06/25/content_89310842.htm
- Singh, P. & Reva, D. (2023). "African peace mission: one step forward, one step back?". *Institute for Security Studies (ISS)*. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/african-peace-mission-one-step-forward-one-step-back>
- Skrypchenko, M. (2023). "Ukraine's Delicate Balancing Act With China". Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/07/20/ukraine-s-delicate-balancing-act-with-china-pub-90237#:~:text=China%20has%20provided%20a%20vital,with%20China%20on%20the%20table>
- Sociological Group "Rating" (Rating Group). (2023). "Ukrainians' perception of other countries' friendliness towards Ukraine". https://ratinggroup.ua/en/research/ukraine/ukrainians_perception_of_other_countries_friendliness_towards_ukraine_june_1-2_2023.html
- Steiner, A. (2023). "Ukraine Recovery Conference". *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*. <https://www.undp.org/speeches/ukraine-recovery-conference-0>
- Stent, A. (2023). "China, Russia, and the War in Ukraine". *Internationale Politik Quarterly*. <https://ip-quarterly.com/en/china-russia-and-war-ukraine>
- Subianto, P. (2023). "20th Asia Security Summit – The Shangri-La Dialogue". *International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS)*. <https://www.iiss.org/globalassets/media-library---content--migration/files/shangri-la-dialogue/2023/provisional-transcripts/p-3/general-ret-d-prabowo-subianto-minister-of-defense-indonesia---as-delivered.pdf>
- Sun, Y. (2022). "The War in Ukraine: China as the Mediator?". *The Stimson Center*. <https://www.stimson.org/2022/the-war-in-ukraine-china-as-the-mediator/>
- TASS. (2022). "Russia cannot ignore US' free interpretation of indivisible security principle — Putin". https://tass.com/politics/1403861?utm_source=google.com&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=google.com&utm_referrer=google.com

- The GDELT Project. (2015). "GDELT 2.0: Our Global World in Realtime". <https://blog.gdeltproject.org/gdelt-2-0-our-global-world-in-realtime/>
- The Kyiv Independent*. (2023). "Zelensky: China's interest in securing peace a promising 'first step'". <https://kyivindependent.com/zelensky-chinas-interest-in-securing-peace-a-promising-first-step/>
- The Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC). (2023). "Ukraine-China". <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-country/ukr/partner/chn?redirect=true&dynamicBilateralTradeSelector=year1995>
- The Presidential Office of Ukraine. (2023). "President of Ukraine had a phone call with the President of the People's Republic of China". <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/vidbulasya-telefonna-rozмова-prezidenta-ukrayini-z-golovoyu-82489>
- The State Council of the People's Republic of China. (2017). "China, Ukraine vow to boost cooperation". http://english.www.gov.cn/state_council/vice_premiers/2017/12/06/content_281475967044878.htm
- The World Bank. (2023). "Ukraine Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment: February 2022 - February 2023". <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099184503212328877/P1801740d117f03c0ab180057556615497>
- Tocci, N. (2023). "War in Ukraine is revealing a new global order – and the 'power south' is the winner". *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/sep/20/war-ukraine-new-global-order-power-south-india-china?CMP=share_btn_link
- Ukraine, Russian Federation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America. (2014). "Memorandum on security assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons". *United Nations*. <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%203007/Part/volume-3007-I-52241.pdf>
- Ukrinform - Ukrainian National News Agency. (2023). "Podoliak about China's "peace plan": It lacks logic and contains contradictions" (Подoliaк про «мирний план» Китаю: Не має логіки й містить протиріччя). <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-politics/3684661-podolak-pro-mirnij-plan-kitau-ne-mae-logiki-j-mistit-protiricca.html>
- United Nations. (2023). "UN chief regrets Russia's decision to withdraw from grain deal". <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/07/1138752>
- United Nations. (2022). "Global Actors Add to Growing Calls for Global Action on Food Security". <https://china.un.org/en/201419-global-actors-add-growing-calls-global-action-food-security>
- United Nations. (2022). "Beacon on the Black Sea". *Black Sea Grain Initiative Joint Coordination Centre*. <https://www.un.org/en/black-sea-grain-initiative>
- U.S. Department of State. (2023). "Secretary Antony J. Blinken on the 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices". <https://www.state.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-on-the-2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/>

- White, E. (2022). "China's Belt and Road spending in Russia drops to zero". *Financial Times*. <https://www.ft.com/content/470e2518-410b-4e78-9106-cf881dd43028>
- Wishnick, E. (2022). "Ukraine: China's Burning Bridge to Europe?". *The Diplomat*. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/02/ukraine-chinas-burning-bridge-to-europe/>
- Woo, R. (2023). "China's cooperation with Europe 'unlimited' as with Russia - Chinese envoy". *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/chinas-cooperation-with-europe-unlimited-with-russia-chinese-envoy-2023-04-24/>
- World Food Programme. (2022). "War in Ukraine Drives Global Food Crisis". https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000140700/download/?_ga=2.209062098.1726492551.1700571471-1572244386.1700571471
- Xinhua. (2023). "China proposes cooperation initiative on global food security at G20 meeting". <https://english.news.cn/20220708/d0e86c46b7764a38b2320a62b72864dd/c.html>
- Xinhua. (2017). "China, Ukraine sign slew of agreements, including on Belt and Road". http://xinhuanet.com/english/2017-12/05/c_136802960.htm
- Yabi, G. (2022). "Climate Change Is More Important for Africa than the War in Ukraine Interview with Gilles Yabi". *Institut Montaigne*. <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/expressions/climate-change-more-important-africa-war-ukraine>
- Zelenskiy/Official. (2023). Telegram. https://t.me/V_Zelenskiy_official/6006
- Zhan, S. (2022). "China and Global Food Security". *Cambridge University Press*. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/elements/abs/china-and-global-food-security/FDC47A172C36ECE6D7BE5795D75A7658>
- Zhao, H. & Yu, J. (2022). "Understanding China's Diplomatic Stances Vis-À-Vis the Russia-Ukraine Crisis." Ed by. Tim Haesebrouck, Servaas Taghon, and Hermine Van Coppenolle. GIES Occasional Paper. *Ghent University*. <https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/8764072>
- Zhao, Long, Deputy Director of Institute for Global Governance Studies, Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS). "Interview 3". 13 November 2023.

About Us

PeaceRep is a research consortium based at Edinburgh Law School. Our research is rethinking peace and transition processes in the light of changing conflict dynamics, changing demands of inclusion, and changes in patterns of global intervention in conflict and peace/mediation/transition management processes.

PeaceRep.org

PeaceRep: The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform | @Peace_Rep_ | peacerep@ed.ac.uk

University of Edinburgh, School of Law, Old College,
South Bridge, EH8 9YL

PeaceRep is funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth
and Development Office (FCDO) UK



PeaceRep: The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform
peacerep@ed.ac.uk | <https://peacerep.org> | @Peace_Rep_

University of Edinburgh, School of Law, Old College, South Bridge EH8 9YL

PeaceRep is funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), UK