

U.S. foreign policy priorities: China

ARVAK Center comment, July 09, 2025¹

Annotation

The comment analyzes the strategic position of the PRC in the context of current global conflicts and changing U.S. foreign policy priorities. It focuses on the statement by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi about the disadvantage of Russia's defeat in the Ukrainian conflict, as well as the identification of Beijing's true interests: prolonging the Ukrainian conflict to exhaust the resources of all parties involved. The analysis also covers the shift in emphasis in American strategy from direct pressure on Russia to the destabilization of the Middle East and South Asia through the Iranian-Israeli and Indo-Pakistani confrontations. It is noted that these actions are aimed at weakening China's strategic partners, such as Iran and Pakistan, and its geoeconomic initiatives, including the "One Belt – One Road" project. The intensification of American policy towards Pakistan and the "Organization of Turkic States" as instruments of pressure on the continental interests of the PRC is emphasized. In conclusion, a conclusion is made about the transition of the USA to frontal pressure on China through destabilization of its "rear" and potential reorientation from the "Taiwan issue" to a continental containment strategy.

Keywords: U.S. foreign policy, China's strategy, Russian-Chinese relations, Iran-Israel conflict, Indo-Pakistan confrontation, OTG, BRICS, Taiwan issue.

1. Introduction: the Chinese stand on the Ukrainian conflict

According to the *South China Morning Post*, which refers to some "informed sources", during a meeting in Brussels with Kaja Kallas, the head of the European Union (EU) diplomacy, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC) Wang Yi stated that "*Beijing would not benefit from Russia's defeat in the Ukrainian conflict*"². He explained this position by the fact that otherwise the U.S. would gain free rein for a full-scale confrontation with China. This revelation was made during the non-public segment of the talks, which was closed to media coverage. At the same time, Wang Yi categorically rejected accusations against China about its alleged support for Russia in the Ukrainian war, claiming that if CPR had provided such assistance to Russia, it would have won long ago.

The statement issued by the head of Chinese diplomacy caused a significant resonance in the international political and diplomatic arena, as well as in global media outlets. However, in essence, Wang Yi did not say anything sensational regarding Chinese interests in the Ukrainian conflict. The probable sensationalism consisted in the public announcement of this position, if we assume that it was the Chinese side who contributed to the leak of the transcript of confidential negotiations to *South China Morning Post*. The fact that the defeat of the Russian Federation does not correspond to the strategic interests of the PRC has long been widely discussed in analytical circles. Forecasts indicated that after Moscow's defeat on the Ukrainian track, the United States and its allies would focus on the "Chinese agenda",

¹ The original (in Rus.) was posted on our website on 10.07.2025.

² "China tells UE it does not want to see Russia lose its war in Ukraine: sources". *South China Morning Post*, 03.07.2025, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3316875/china-tells-eu-it-cannot-afford-russian-loss-ukraine-war-sources-say> (download date: 06.07.2025).

with the prospect of using the “Ukrainian experience” to turn the Taiwan crisis into a factor of military defeat and financial and economic decline of the PRC.

2. Transformation of the U.S. strategy: from Ukraine to Iran & Pakistan

The ARVAK Center has consistently observed, through an analysis of events in Ukraine and the Middle East, that Washington’s foreign policy views the situations in Ukraine, Gaza, and Iran as intermediary steps toward a primary objective: containing China. This containment strategy is aimed at maintaining the United States’ military-political and economic global hegemony against its principal rival.

While the Joseph Biden Administration sought to dismantle the Moscow–Tehran–Beijing axis through military pressure on Russia and potential agreement with Iran, the Donald Trump team, adhering to the same strategic objective, adopted a contrasting approach. This involved the easing of pressure on the Russian Federation and encouraging the Israeli-Iranian conflict. This conceptual shift stemmed from the Republican administration's belief that extensive economic sanctions and military aid to Ukraine had inadvertently strengthened the Russian-Chinese partnership rather than weakening Russia³. At the same time, any attempts to reach an agreement with Iran merely provided Tehran time to develop its “*nuclear program*” and further radicalized his position towards the West, which also corresponds to the interests of China, the main trade and economic partner and creditor of the Islamic Republic.

Based on this, Donald Trump’s Administration has dramatically changed priorities, assessing Iran as a more vulnerable target for military pressure from Western allies, and Russia as more interested in establishing a dialogue with the United States on Ukraine, even to the detriment of the prospects for its relations with China. In sum, the goal remains the same – the destruction of the Moscow–Tehran–Beijing axis, and in a broader sense – the elimination of the preconditions for the transformation of BRICS into something more significant than a declarative and formal alliance⁴.

3. Chinese strategy: maintaining conflict & rapprochement with EU

Given China’s understanding of the intensive US–Russia dialogue, potentially leading to concrete agreements following Donald Trump’s return to power, the Chinese chief diplomat’s admission regarding the undesirability of Russia’s defeat has lost its immediate relevance and intrigue. China has historically adopted this strategy. However, it seems improbable that Wang Yi would have permitted such a statement to be issued and subsequently leaked to the media during the Biden Administration. This is due to Washington’s extreme sensitivity regarding any potential support from Beijing for Moscow concerning the Ukrainian conflict.

³ “Why Trump Won’t Quit the Ukraine Crisis Resolution Process”. “Rossiya v Globalnoy Politike” (in Rus.), 20.05.2025, <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/tramp-ne-vyidet-bibi/> (download date: 06.06.2025).

⁴ V. Zharikhin, “Russia, Iran, and Further – China”. “Literaturnaya Gazeta” (in Rus.), <https://lgz.ru/article/russia-iran-and-far-away-china/> (download date: 06.07.2025).

More interestingly, a statement by the head of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, largely overlooked by international media, upon careful study, fundamentally alters the interpretation of Wang Yi's entire discourse and its underlying messages. When the Chinese diplomat spoke of “*the disadvantages of defeat*” for Russia, he did not imply that Beijing would benefit from a Russian victory. He asserted that if China had provided Russia with weapons and financial aid, Russia would have long since triumphed over Ukraine. However, the minister stated that China refrained from doing so, which should be understood as Beijing's disinterest in a Russian victory. Therefore, China would be equally disadvantaged by either Russia's defeat or its victory. Apparently this is exactly what the head of Chinese diplomacy meant when he made it clear to Brussels that Beijing would not be against maintaining the policy of non-intervention in the Ukrainian war on the condition that the EU continues to support Kyiv and does not abandon attempts to convince D. Trump to resume U.S. military and financial aid to Ukraine. This means that China needs to continue the Ukrainian war without establishing a winner, while maintaining the dynamics of exhaustion and depletion of resources of all parties engaged in the conflict.

Beijing fears that Washington and Moscow may reach an agreement on a so-called “*exchange*” of Ukraine for Iran, according to the terms of which the United States will cease large-scale military-technical and financial support for Kyiv, while the Russian Federation will continue its policy of non-interference against the backdrop of military pressure from the American-Israeli tandem on Iran. In fact, the situation that has developed around Ukraine and Iran already indicates a high probability of such a deal. Several months ago, Trump's Administration revised the entire system of allocating gratuitous financial aid and lending to Ukraine, and the Pentagon has already resorted to a sharp reduction in military supplies to Kyiv⁵. In turn, Moscow, against the backdrop of harsh assessments from virtually all BRICS members and even some European countries regarding the bombing of Iran, reacted rather passively to this event, which was noted even by its Western opponents⁶. No information is available in open sources regarding any practical assistance provided by Moscow to Tehran during the “12-Day War”.

Beijing may distrust Moscow's actions, which inadvertently free the United States to focus on the Middle East, Iran, and subsequently China. This context reveals China's strategy to foster closer ties with the EU, contrasting with any potential US-Russian agreement. Beijing leverages existing US–EU disagreements—concerning Ukraine, NATO funding, trade sanctions, and energy security—to expand its trade, economic, and political influence in Europe. These disagreements are prompting European nations to seek new international partnerships, further benefiting China. Washington has already noticed this trend, considering it especially unfavorable for itself that China is successfully conquering new levels of political and economic interaction with the United States' traditionally close European ally, the Great Britain⁷.

⁵ “Pentagon halting some promised munitions for Ukraine”. Politico.com, 01.07.2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/07/01/pentagon-munitions-ukraine-halt-00436048?s=09> (download date: 07.07.2025).

⁶ “Doesn't want and is not able. The reasons why Russia didn't stand up for Iran after the Israeli attack”. BBC (in Rus.), 19.06.2025, <https://www.bbc.com/russian/articles/cy9x4lr0qw40> (download date: 07.07.2025).

⁷ “And you, Brit? The U.S. has warned Great Britain against cooperation with China”. “Kommersant” (in

Thus, based on the above, it can be concluded that Beijing is definitely conducting political and diplomatic work to prolong the Ukrainian conflict as much as possible and prevent the U.S. from fully withdrawing from it. For the same purpose, it will continue to provide assistance to Russia, especially in terms of providing the Russian military-industrial complex with high-tech sanctioned products⁸, despite statements by Chinese politicians rejecting such a practice. The essence of China's actions boils down to synchronous and balanced support for the West and Russia, thus excluding the possibility of a quick resolution of the results of the confrontation in Ukraine in anyone's obvious favor.

4. The Chinese strategy: Iran & Pakistan

China acts more freely and openly on the Iranian and Central Asian tracks, which probably indicates Beijing's concerns about the vulnerability of the Iranian and Pakistani authorities, who have found themselves under strong political and military pressure from the United States and its allies. This explains why China has spoken out quite harshly against the unleashed anti-Iranian military campaign and initiated the transfer of military equipment to Iran, as was the case during the Indo-Pakistani escalation in April-May, 2025.

According to international sources, since the first Israeli air strike on Iran, Beijing has sent at least three China Air Force military transport aircrafts to Iran with military cargo on board⁹. Military experts suggest the deployment of this unidentified equipment during the final phase of the "12-Day War" significantly enhanced the effectiveness of Iranian air defense and the precision of missile strikes on Israeli territory. Analysts say that despite the Israeli-Iranian truce, China's supply of special purpose equipment likely continues. This is attributed to the high probability of a swift return to hostilities between Tel Aviv and Tehran.

There is also information about a deal concluded between Tehran and Beijing to supply Iran with 36 units of the Chinese *J-10* military jet export version, belonging to the generation of 4++ family fighters¹⁰. If China previously thwarted the deal due to its reluctance to sell the jets to Iran on a barter basis (aircraft in exchange for crude oil), then the current readiness to this kind of payment indicates Beijing's extreme concern about the state of the Iranian Air Force and its entire defensive potential in general.

China understands that Iran will not be able to hold out for long without significant Chinese support, as does Russia, and, due to the extreme deterioration of relations between the ruling regime there and the West, will not cooperate with the United States. And this, in turn, will prompt Washington and its allies to once again resort to an attempt to eliminate

Rus.), 05.05.2025, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/7696080> (download date: 07.07.2025).

⁸ N. Sher, "Behind the Scenes: China's Increasing Role in Russia's Defense Industry". "Carnegie Politika" (in Rus.), 06.05.2024, <https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2024/05/behind-the-scenes-chinas-increasing-role-in-russias-defense-industry?lang=en¢er=russia-eurasia> (download date: 07.07.2025).

⁹ S. Yan "China sends mystery transport planes into Iran". The Telegraph, 17.06.2025, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2025/06/17/china-sends-mystery-transport-planes-into-iran/> (download date: 07.07.2025).

¹⁰ "Su-35 postponed as a reserve". "Kommersant" (in Rus.), 26.06.2025, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/7835618> (download date: 07.07.2025).

the current political system in the country. In this case, two fundamental factors promoting the growth of the Chinese economy – the cheap oil imports from Iran and the trade and energy mega-project “One Belt – One Road” (which currently has its main highways run through Iranian territory) will be deactivated with all the ensuing consequences. If China’s main support in Western Asia in the form of Iran collapses, then the wave of destabilization will roll to the east, covering Pakistan, Central Asia and the northwestern territories of China itself, which are a zone of smoldering separatist threats for Beijing. Taken together, this will inevitably lead to a comprehensive decline of the PRC’s security system in the entire Asian region, as a number of international experts unanimously state¹¹.

Another significant signal to Beijing about Washington’s intentions to weaken its geostrategic position in the heart of the Eurasian continent could be the intensification of American policy towards Pakistan. As of the conclusion of June 2025, *Foreign Affairs* citing sources in the U.S. intelligence services claimed that Washington is concerned about Pakistan’s program to create intercontinental ballistic missiles that will be capable of reaching U.S. territory¹². According to the publication, Islamabad is reviewing its nuclear deterrence doctrine and is seeking to supplement its tactical nuclear weapons arsenal with strategic carriers and warheads. The leak of this information by American intelligence services may mean that Washington itself intends to review its own nuclear doctrine, including the Pakistani factor on a par with the Russian and Chinese factors in the list of its potential threats in Eurasia.

It is impossible to claim that the information provided by American intelligence services corresponds to reality, but it is noteworthy that the “leak” occurred immediately after threats from the Iranian military that Islamabad, in the event of an Israeli nuclear attack on Iran, would inflict similar strikes on Israel¹³. Apparently, this was the main impetus for Washington’s upcoming revision of its nuclear doctrine, since a threat to its ally Israel can already be considered a threat to the United States itself, regardless of whether Islamabad has plans to make US territory accessible to Pakistani strategic missiles.

Thus, the behavior of the United States shows all the signs of a strategy to destabilize another geopolitical axis – Iran–Pakistan–China, which was finally formed during the events in Kashmir and the “12-Day War”. The Indo-Pakistani clashes and the Iranian-Israeli confrontation are links in one large military-political campaign against China, which is aimed at dismembering and neutralizing China’s main partners and allies in Asia. In this context, the incident that took place in January 2024 also takes on logic, when Tehran and Islamabad, who had never fought before and had no claims against each other, after a provocation by a radical Islamist group “*Jaish al-Zolm*” found themselves on the brink of a

¹¹ “The U.S. is hitting China through Iran. Experts on the Iran–Israel war and its consequences”. Ukraine.RU (in Rus.), 17.06.2025, <https://ukraina.ru/20250617/ssha-bt-po-kitayu-cherez-iran-eksperty-ob-irano-izrainskoy-voyne-i-its-posledstviyakh-1063934154.html> (download date: 07.07.2025).

¹² “Pakistan Developing Intercontinental Missile Capable of Reaching U.S.”. “Vostochniy Ekspress” (in Rus.), 26.06.2025, <https://asia24.media/news24/pakistan-razrabatyvaet-mezhkontinenttalnuyu-raketu-sposobnuyu-dostich-ssha/> (download date: 07.07.2025).

¹³ ““Pakistan will strike Israel with nuclear weapons if it uses them against Tehran”, Iranian regime officer says”. “Gazeta Express” (in Rus.), 16.06.2025, <https://bit.ly/44v5avD> (download date: 08.07.2025).

full-scale war¹⁴. However, the conflict was quickly exhausted, apparently due to the parties' understanding of the fact that some third forces urgently needed to create friction and hostility between traditionally friendly neighbors. It is no coincidence that in those days Beijing was the first to respond to this escalation and offered the parties its mediation services to defuse the situation and establish peace between them¹⁵. Even then, Beijing, Islamabad and Tehran quickly got their bearings in what was happening, and therefore, without any particular complications, they eliminated all the contradictions in the Pakistani-Iranian political and diplomatic case. The same activity was shown by China during the last Indo-Pakistani conflict, when Beijing, on the one hand, provided all possible assistance to Islamabad in the field of intelligence and military supplies, but, on the other hand, made effective political and diplomatic efforts to stop the hostilities¹⁶. Their further dynamics threatened the final destabilization of the region, with a high probability of the loss of China's strong economic and geopolitical positions in Pakistan, which is considered, along with Iran, Beijing's most important ally¹⁷ and providing it with military containment of India and the possibility of China's access to the Indian Ocean.

Along with the threats posed by the Iranian and Pakistani problems, Beijing also has to reckon with the factor of the activation of the "*Organization of Turkic States*" (OTS), which forms the agenda of arranging "*Turan*" into a supranational geopolitical and defense alliance that threatens not only to harm China's interests in Central Asia, but also to give new impetus to separatist sentiments in the Uighur-populated northwest of China.

5. Conclusion: new U.S. strategy & challenges for China

In total, all of the above elements, which have proven to be problematic for China, indicate that Beijing is dealing with something that has already been sanctioned by the Trump Administration as a broad pressure against its main geostrategic and economic rival in the world. In this way, Washington is trying to take the RF out of the game by reaching agreements with it on Ukraine and by means of military pressure on Iran and Pakistan, and by consolidating the Turkic factor in Central Asia – to weaken the geostrategic positions of the PRC along the perimeter of its western continental borders and to destabilize the zones on the main trade routes of the "*Great Silk Road*".

It is clear that the U.S. has revised its initial strike plan against China, which envisaged an escalation around the "*Taiwan issue*", which was constantly discussed by the American administration during D. Trump's first term. The "*Ukrainian experience*" could force the Republicans to reconsider this option, finding it ineffective and dangerous for the United

¹⁴ "What is happening between Iran and Pakistan and will there be a war". PUAMO (in Rus.), 24.01.2024, <https://riamo.ru/articles/aktsenty/chto-proishodit-mezhdu-iranom-i-pakistanom-i-budet-li-vojna/> (download date: 08.07.2025).

¹⁵ "Pakistan and Iran agreed to a truce after mutual strikes". RBK (in Rus.), 19.01.2025, <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/19/01/2024/65aa95c69a7947c6af1cef44> (download date: 08.04.2025).

¹⁶ "China has declared its readiness to play a constructive role in the Indo-Pakistani settlement". Interfax (in Rus.), 10.05.2025, <https://www.interfax.ru/world/1024919> (download date: 08.07.2025).

¹⁷ "The Chinese-Pakistani axis 'struck' India". "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" (in Rus.), 10.06.2024, https://www.ng.ru/world/2024-06-10/6_9026_india.html (download date: 08.07.2025).

States and its Pacific allies. Apparently, Washington considered it proper to concentrate on the continental zone of interests of the PRC and only after creating centers of destabilization in its “rear”, at a certain stage, perhaps, to aggravate the situation in the Pacific region.

This represents a novel challenge for China and a new reality, according to which it must reorganize its priorities and properly distribute its forces to contain global threats.