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China Rejects New EU Sanctions Against Russia as Counterproductive

By The Moscow Times

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Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang.

China opposed additional sanctions against Russia on Monday over accusations Moscow was sending troops into Ukrainian territory, saying the European Union's push to draw up more measures would only complicate the crisis.

The EU on Sunday threatened Russia with new trade sanctions, but sharp divisions among leaders at a summit in Brussels left the timing of any measures uncertain.

"A political solution is the only way out, sanctions do not help to solve the underlying problems in Ukraine," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said at a daily news briefing. "It may lead to new and more complicating factors."

China has adopted a cautious response to the crisis, not wanting either to alienate key ally Russia or comment directly on the referendum in which Crimea voted overwhelmingly to join

Russia, lest it set a precedent for its own restive regions, like Tibet.

But China has also said it would like to continue to develop "friendly cooperation" with Ukraine and that it respects the ex-Soviet state's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, China has used its veto power many times over the imposition of sanctions.

Qin called on the parties to remain calm and restrained and "avoid taking further actions that could lead to an escalation of tensions."

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