The Moscow Times
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

China Premier 'Respects Ukraine Integrity, Won't Be Drawn on Crimea'

March 15, 2015



Chinese Premier Li Keqiang

BEIJING — Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said on Sunday that his government respected the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, but would not be drawn on whether China considers Crimea to be Ukraine's or Russia's.

"On the issue of Ukraine, China has adopted an objective and just position. We respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity," Li told a news conference at the end of the annual meeting of parliament, adding that he had recently told this to Ukraine's president.

"At the same time, the Ukraine issue has added to the complexity of the geopolitical situation and has affected the process of the global economic recovery. We still hope that this issue can be resolved via dialogue, negotiations and consultations," Li added.

"As for Crimea, there are complicated contributing factors. We also hope that it can be resolved politically via dialogue and hope that neighbors can peacefully coexist," he said,

when asked about China's position on who owns Crimea.

⊠China and Russia see eye to eye on many international diplomatic issues, but Beijing has been careful not to be drawn into the struggle between Russia and the West over Ukraine's future, not wanting to alienate a key ally in Moscow.

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

⊠China has also shown little interest in getting involved in diplomatic efforts to end the crisis.

⊠Nonetheless, Chinese officials have said that Western powers should take into consideration Russia's legitimate security concerns over Ukraine.

⊠Russia annexed Crimea last year.

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