



As of this moment, I'm convinced he's (Putin) made the decision. We have reason to believe that. ... We believe they will target Ukraine's capital Kyiv, a city of 2.8 million innocent people.

US President
Joe Biden



(China, Russia are trying to) replace the existing international rules -- they prefer the rule of the strongest to the rule of law, intimidation instead of self-determination.

EU chief
Ursula von der Leyen



If the Kremlin's aim is to have less Nato on its borders, it will only get more Nato.

Nto chief
Jens Stoltenberg



A man says goodbye to his daughter through a bus window during the evacuation of local residents to Russia, in the rebel-controlled city of Donetsk, Ukraine, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Trump can be prosecuted for US Capitol riot: judge

AFP, Washington

Donald Trump can be prosecuted for his role in the attack on the US Capitol by his supporters, a judge decided Friday, ruling that the Republican does not enjoy presidential immunity in this case.

The former president is the target of several lawsuits by elected officials and police who accuse him of being directly responsible for the violence perpetrated by his supporters when they stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

A judge in Washington, DC, ruled that these complaints were admissible on the grounds that Trump's actions that day were "unofficial acts" that "entirely concern his efforts to remain in office for a second term," which the judge said does not fall within the scope of presidential immunity.

"To deny a President immunity from civil damages is no small step," judge Amit Mehta wrote in findings that ran to 112 pages. "The court well understands the gravity of its decision."

The judge also said Trump's speech to thousands of supporters gathered in Washington before the assault could "reasonably" be perceived as a "call for collective action."

Trump is facing three lawsuits over the riot.

West voices fears of Russia-China axis

Experts say Beijing's support may blunt West's sanctions effects on Moscow

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Western leaders yesterday said Russia and China were seeking to "replace the existing international rules" with their own order, as Beijing backed Moscow over its showdown with Nato.

Russia has all but encircled Ukraine with its huge troop buildup and US President Joe Biden has warned that Vladimir Putin plans an invasion within days. Moscow is using the threat to invade Ukraine to demand a halt to Nato expansion and what it calls "Cold War" ideologies.

At a closely choreographed appearance in Beijing for the Winter Olympics, Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping had put up a united front against Nato expansion.

"For the first time we now see Beijing joining Moscow in calling on Nato to stop admitting new members," noted the alliance's chief Jens

Stoltenberg, speaking at the Munich Security Conference.

"It is an attempt to control the fate of free nations, to rewrite the international rulebook and impose their own authoritarian models of governance," he warned.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen had stronger words, accusing Moscow of a "blatant attempt" to rewrite the global order.

Cooperation between China and Russia has increased in recent years. The escalating tensions with the West have further bolstered ties between the world's most populous nation and the world's largest.

Experts say China would back Russia diplomatically and perhaps economically if it invades Ukraine, worsening Beijing's already strained relations with the West, but would stop short of providing military support.

A Russian invasion into Ukraine would test China's resolve, especially given that China's oft-

stated foreign policy principle of non-interference.

Although China and Russia have moved beyond "marriage of convenience" to a quasi-alliance, relations between the giant neighbours are far from a formal alliance requiring one to send troops should the other face threats, said Shi Yinhong, an international relations professor at Renmin

University. But experts believe China could expand economic cooperation with Russia that would blunt the impact of sanctions promised by the West if there is an invasion.

However, China would prefer that Russia not invade Ukraine.

"With the international world so polarised, it's possible the United States and the West



would be unified in isolating or sanctioning China together with Russia," said Shi.

Earlier this month, US State Department spokesman Ned Price said Chinese companies would face consequences if they sought to evade

any export controls imposed on Moscow in the event of a Russian invasion of Ukraine.

A person familiar with U.S. thinking told reporters the technology-related sanctions and export controls that Washington is planning with allies is beyond China's ability to backfill.

"We are prepared to take actions against any foreign country or entity that would circumvent those," said the person.

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