

# Two Different Kettles of Fish: Russia and China

By [Walter E. Block](#) (April 2025)



Overseas Guests (Nicholas Roerich, 1901)

**There are two European-Asian** actual and potential military conflagrations. One is the Russian-Ukraine war, now happily (hopefully) being brought to a close by US President Donald Trump. The other is the possible of invasion of Taiwan by China.

Most people who take sides regarding these two dangers to world peace either support both Russia and China, or oppose

each of them, in favor of Ukraine and Taiwan. I take a different position: support for Russia but not China. Why? The issues are very different. The situations are the polar opposite of each other.

First, let us examine the Russia-Ukraine state of affairs. When the Cold War ended in 1991 with the reunification of Germany, what should have then occurred? Both NATO and the Warsaw Pact should have disbanded and an era of peace prevailed. The latter took place, but not the former. At the time, Russia was promised that at the very least, NATO would not move in an eastward direction.

You'll never guess what then happened. Yes, NATO moved east. And then once again in that direction. At one time this evil organization had 10 members. It [now has 32](#). Where did the additional 22 come from? Hint: it was not from a movement toward the west. Each time an accretion occurred, Russia protested. It kept on drawing red lines on the map. This far and no further it would continually threaten. And plead. To no avail. It continually erased these red lines in order to keep the peace. Finally, it could no longer ignore the threat to its sovereignty when Ukraine was about to join this imperialist organization along with European Union and American weapons.

The Russian are a weird people. A bunch of perverts. They don't much enjoy being invaded by western European countries. A while back it was France, courtesy of Napoleon. The US got into the act in 1917. Then there was Germany several times, most recently under what's his name (Hint: Donald Trump was castigated by this appellation by his friends in the Democratic Party). The Russians are so anti-social. They just want to be left alone; no more invasions, thank you very much. Then there was the point that a Ukraine government friendly to Russia was overturned in 2014 by NATO. As well, this new administration forbade the use of the Russian language in its eastern most provinces, occupied, mainly by Russian speakers.

In order to see the Russian point of view on this matter, let us recall the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. At that time, the US had some 800 foreign military bases, dozens of them ringed around Russia. There was [talk of](#) “lobbing one into the mens’ room in the Kremlin.”

Whereupon the Soviets had the temerity to engage in a little bit of payback (I told you they were weirdos); they placed some military hardware in Cuba, only 90 miles offshore from Florida (just remember Ukraine is contiguous to Russia, not separated by 90 miles of ocean). At this point, the US went apoplectic. They set up a blockage around Cuba, which in and of itself is an act of war (undeclared, as per usual). Happily the Soviets proved statesmanlike and withdrew their missiles, averting a nuclear exchange, which would have ruined the entire day of an awful lot of people. Can we now see, just a little bit, how the Russians feel threatened by NATO with its weapons placed in Ukraine?

The situation in the Far East is very different. Taiwan poses no threat whatsoever to China. Taiwan never came within a million miles of being any danger of invading its large neighbor. Taiwan, unlike Ukraine, never mistreated any of its citizens in any of its provinces. The Taiwanese wish, only, to trade with China, to be at peace with China, to be a good neighbor to China.

How does the People’s Republic react? With all sorts of threatening maneuvers in the South China Sea. It vociferously objects to Taiwan’s stance, which may be interpreted as in effect a secession from the mainland.

But secession is a libertarian right. It stems from the right of free association: no one should be compelled to associate with anyone else against their will.

The two scenarios are entirely different. Russia is in the right, China in the wrong. Ukraine is in the wrong, Taiwan in

the right.

What about the fact that Taiwan was invaded in 1949 by the remnants of the Chiang Kai-shek army after its loss to Mao Zedong? Chiang was responsible for imposing political repression, called the White Terror, and martial law. The former lasted until 1987 and the latter only ceased in 1992.

But this is a mere drop in the bucket compared to the mass deaths for which the Chinese communists were responsible. In any case, Taiwan is now a democracy, which indicates at least some sort of acquiescence on the part of the populace. In sharp contrast, the People's Republic can make no such claim.

No one asserts that Taiwan is a perfect society. Far from it. The only question is, given that the majority wishes not to become a part of China, do they have a right to stay on their own? To that question, there can be only one answer.

As for the greater economic freedom in Taiwan than China, the citizens of the former quite reasonably fear being done to them what occurred in Hong Kong. The latter was one of the freest political entities in the world, but not anymore.

I do not say that the US should get involved in the Chinese situation. Except, perhaps, as a mediator, similar to the role Saint Donald Trump is now playing in trying to bring about peace between Russia and Ukraine. But we should at least keep in mind that the two scenarios are very, very, different.

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**Walter E. Block** is Harold E. Wirth Endowed Chair and Professor of Economics, College of Business, Loyola University New Orleans, and senior fellow at the Mises Institute. He earned his PhD in economics at Columbia University in 1972. He has

taught at Rutgers, SUNY Stony Brook, Baruch CUNY, Holy Cross and the University of Central Arkansas. He is the author of more than 600 refereed articles in professional journals, three dozen books, and thousands of op eds (including the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* and numerous others). He lectures widely on college campuses, delivers seminars around the world and appears regularly on television and radio shows. He is the Schlarbaum Laureate, Mises Institute, 2011; and has won the Loyola University Research Award (2005, 2008) and the Mises Institute's Rothbard Medal of Freedom, 2005; and the Dux Academicus award, Loyola University, 2007. Prof. Block counts among his friends Ron Paul and Murray Rothbard. He was converted to libertarianism by Ayn Rand. Block is old enough to have played chess with Friedrich Hayek and once met Ludwig von Mises, and shook his hand. Block has never washed that hand since. So, if you shake his hand (it's pretty dirty, but what the heck) you channel Mises.

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