

# COMPARATIVE

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## C O N N E C T I O N S

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### CHINA-RUSSIA RELATIONS

# TRILATERAL POLITICS: TRUMP STYLE

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US relations with Russia and China flip-flopped in the first few months of 2017 as newly-inaugurated President Donald Trump injected fresh dynamics into the Washington-Beijing-Moscow triangle. In just one strike (the missile attack on Syria) with nearly “perfect” timing in early April, the Washington “outsider” surprised the visiting Chinese president, minimized the “Russian factor” in US domestic politics, and assumed the moral high ground while sending a strong signal to a still defiant North Korea. While the long-term effect of Trump’s action has yet to be determined, it did set in motion diplomatic maneuvering and mind games between Washington, Moscow, and Beijing. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, Washington, or more precisely Trump, was actively and dramatically pulling the strings of this “[not-so-strategic triangle](#).” However, before anything substantial happened to the triangle, the Korean nuclear crisis deepened and broadened, and Pyongyang assumed the characteristics of China’s “[rogue ally](#).” To defuse this time-bomb in Northeast Asia, the three geostrategic players may need to go beyond the traditional “great games” in the age of WMD.

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US relations with Russia and China flip-flopped in the first few months of 2017 as newly-inaugurated President Donald Trump injected fresh dynamics into the Washington-Beijing-Moscow triangle. In just one strike (the missile attack on Syria) with nearly “perfect” timing in early April, the Washington “outsider” surprised the visiting Chinese president, minimized the “Russian factor” in US domestic politics, and assumed the moral high ground while sending a strong signal to a still defiant North Korea. While the long-term effect of Trump’s action has yet to be determined, it did set in motion diplomatic maneuvering and mind games between Washington, Moscow, and Beijing. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, Washington, or more precisely Trump, was actively and dramatically pulling the strings of this “[not-so-strategic triangle](#).” However, before anything substantial happened to the triangle, the Korean nuclear crisis deepened and broadened, and Pyongyang assumed the characteristics of China’s “[rogue ally](#).” To defuse this time-bomb in Northeast Asia, the three geostrategic players may need to go beyond the traditional “great games” in the age of WMD.

### **Mar-a-Lago summit: substance and surprises**

The Trump-Xi summit on April 6-7 in Mar-a-Lago, Florida was the earliest in the history of US-China summits (excluding those on the sidelines of multilateral occasions). The two leaders spent more than seven hours discussing “a wide range of topics,” according to China’s official news service, [Xinhua](#). The immediate outcome of this “fruitful” summit was to set up four separate dialogues between the two governments in the areas of economics, diplomacy and security, law enforcement and cyber security, and social and cultural issues.

Much of the summit outcome was the result of months of behind-the-scenes diplomacy. The unofficial and relaxed environment at Mar-a-Lago for “the most important bilateral relationship in today’s world” ([Xinhua](#)), however, was not without surprises. Most of the Chinese were thrilled by Trump’s granddaughter (Arabella) and grandson (Joseph), who sang the Chinese folksong “Jasmine” and recited verses from the “Three-Character Classic” and Chinese classic poetry for China’s first couple.



Photo by Xinhua, 9 April 2017.

Perhaps the most dramatic turn of events in this otherwise relaxing and informal environment was the US cruise missiles impacting a Syrian air base while the Chinese visitors were enjoying “the most beautiful piece of chocolate cake that you’ve ever seen” ([Trump](#)) at the dinner party on April 6. In what the Chinese media described as “a big episode” (很大的“插曲”), Trump pulled Xi Jinping aside as dinner was winding down, telling his guest “the number of missiles that were launched and explained the rationale behind it” according to Secretary of State Rex [Tillerson](#). [Xi](#) reportedly paused for 10 seconds before telling Trump that when dealing with “anybody that was so brutal and uses gases to do that to young children and babies, it’s OK” to respond with force.

In its first round of the post-summit coverage, [Xinhua](#) did not mention the “big episode.” Instead, it stressed that the summit “set a constructive tone for the future development of China-U.S. relations” while the two leaders “cultivated a sound working relationship and personal rapport between the two leaders.”

The following day, the two sides apparently [did not touch on the Syrian issue](#), judging from the media coverage in both countries. Instead, the Korean nuclear issue was the focus. Back home, China’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman [Hua Chunying](#) did not directly criticize the US use of force. In his briefing on April 9, China’s Foreign Minister [Wang Yi](#) did not mention Syria either.

### **Xi’s “one thousand reasons”**

There are several possible reasons for China’s reluctance to address the Syrian issue both during and immediately after the Mar-a-Lago summit. Perhaps the most important concern

was that Beijing did not want to see the Trump-Xi meeting derailed, overshadowed, or marginalized by the Syrian episode, which was an issue largely between the US and Russia. “There are a thousand reasons to make the China-U.S. relationship work, and no reason to break it,” *Xinhua* ended its first story immediately after the summit with this statement by the Chinese president. It is unclear if this implies a caution to Trump, or anyone else, not to rock the boat. (See US-China relations for more details on the summit.)

China’s concern was not unwarranted. Prior to the summit, there was a growing sense of strategic uncertainty resulting from [Trump’s Russia-warm-and-China-cold rhetoric](#) dating back to the early days of the campaign. That was in sharp contrast to his dismissive tone on the one-China policy of the US regarding his phone conversation (Dec. 2, 2016) with Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen shortly after the election. Indeed, in the 14 months from November 2015, when Trump declared his presidential candidacy, to his inauguration in January 2017, Trump criticized China 234 times, according to China’s [Phoenix media group](#). On the eve of the Florida summit, the two nations were said to be “on a collision course for war,” according to Harvard political scientist Graham Allison who sees an “irresistibly rising China ... challenging the United States’ accustomed dominance.”



Donald Trump seeks a grand bargain with Vladimir Putin: It is a terrible idea.

This “Russia-China asymmetry” ([中俄温差](#)) gave rise to a heated debate in China about the causes of US’ “strategic arrogance” ([战略傲慢](#)) toward China. In early January, the emerging consensus seemed to point to the sharp difference in the nuclear postures of the two countries. Accordingly, Trump’s deference to Russia was said to be due to Russia’s high-level of nuclear

inventory (高库存) and low threshold (核战略低门槛) in its nuclear strategy (first-use even if Russia is attacked by conventional weapons). In contrast, China found itself in a dangerous state of having nuclear weapons without meaningful deterrence because of the minimalism of its nuclear inventory (低库存) and its high-threshold (no-first-use) nuclear strategy (核战略“高门槛”). This asymmetry between Russia and China was said to have led the West to believe that any war with Russia would lead to catastrophe (战俄必亡) while conflict with China would lead to the West’s victory (战华必胜). The only way out of this precarious state of affairs was to significantly increase China’s nuclear arsenal, argued a [commentary](#) of the *Global Times* (环球时报).

By late January, photos of the DF-41s, China’s most powerful and mysterious mobile ICBMs with MIRV (multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle) warheads, started to appear on the Chinese internet. [Official media](#) seemed to have deliberately pasted photos of the DF-41 with the explicit description of its deployment location as China’s Helongjiang Province, the northernmost province of China bordering Russia, through which China’s ICBMs would have the shortest trajectory to North America.



Photo by Global Times, 24 January 2017.

A nuclear showdown, however, is unthinkable. The goal of enlarging China’s nuclear arsenal is to enhance deterrence, claimed *Global Times’* commentary. The “[fruitful](#)” outcome of the Trump-Xi summit, therefore, must be preserved and developed at all cost.

### Eyes on Russia: by both China and the US

The timing and circumstances of the US missile attacks on Syria created an awkward situation for China, whose foreign policy goal has been to develop and maintain good working relationships with both Washington and

Moscow. That means Beijing should avoid two “extreme” ends of the alliance–adversary spectrum in dealing with both countries. This maximizes China’s flexibility in the timeless geopolitical game between major powers. In this sense, what Xi achieved in Mar-a-Lago was a more [rational, stable, and predictable China-US relationship](#), which was badly needed after initial hurdles of the Trump presidency, making the China-US-Russian triangle more symmetrical with China occupying a more pivotal position.

Despite China’s official “silence” on the Syrian “episode,” Trump’s missiles triggered a flood of commentaries in China’s public space about the intention, purpose, timing, and consequences of the US move. [Jin Canrong](#), a prominent America watcher in Beijing, did not rule out Trump’s intention to create distrust between China and Russia. Trump may well have achieved this goal by timing the missile attack to coincide with the Xi-Trump summit. Jin imagined that Russian President Vladimir Putin would be furious (很恼火) as he condemned the missile attacks as an act of aggression against a sovereign nation. Putin could not but suspect the chemistry between Trump and Xi. Russia’s suspicion may have further deepened when China did not publicly criticize the US missile attacks, but instead condemned the use of chemical weapons and insisted that the case should be thoroughly investigated. Jin’s view was widely shared by [others](#) in the rapidly growing public space driven by social media like WeChat (微信).

Jin’s assessment of President Trump’s intention was fully evidenced a few days later when National Security Adviser H.R. [McMaster told ABC News](#) that,

What we do know is that, in the midst of responding to the mass murder of the Syrian regime, the president (Trump) and the first lady hosted an extraordinarily successful conference, summit, with President Xi and his team. And not only did they establish a very warm relationship, but ... they worked together as well in connection with the response to the mass murder on the part of the Assad regime in connection with the U.N. vote. I think President Xi was courageous in distancing himself from the Russians, isolating really the Russians and the Bolivians...

Chinese officials and media did not directly respond to McMaster’s story. A day after the interview, China’s Foreign Ministry webpage uploaded a TV interview with Ambassador [Cui Tiankai](#) who said that “China would avoid a situation in which the Sino-US bilateral relations is hijacked by any single issue/event.” It is unclear if this is a general reference to some of the difficult issues between Beijing and Washington, such as the South China Sea, Trade, Taiwan, Korea, etc. Given the timing of the interview, however, one should not rule out Syria.

McMaster’s confidence in China may relate to the fact that China abstained from a UN Security Council (UNSC) draft resolution sponsored by the US, UK, and France on April 12 that condemned the Syrian government for alleged chemical attacks on April 4. The resolution garnered 10 votes in favor, Russia and Bolivia against, and China, Kazakhstan, and Ethiopia abstaining. China usually sides with Russia in the UNSC regarding Syria. Its abstention may have indicated a significant shift, at least from the US perspective. Shortly after the UN vote, [Trump](#) praised China for abstaining from the UN resolution, saying that it was “wonderful” that China abstained and the U.S. was “honored by that vote.”

Trump’s quick praise of China, however, may exaggerate the case. China’s neutral stand may well be motivated more by preserving the Mar-a-Lago “fruit” than going along with US policy regarding Syria. Meanwhile, Beijing did not want to totally disappoint Moscow. China’s Ambassador to the UN [Liu Jieyi](#) explained that the choice to abstain came from elements of the resolution that could have been “amended.”

Beyond this Syrian episode is the fact that China does not prioritize Syria on its foreign policy agenda due to its distance from the Middle East. Its sporadic participation in the Syrian issue including its participation in the 2013 destruction of Syrian chemical weapons broadly parallels Russia’s interests. That means Beijing supports a legitimate government and works for a [peaceful political settlement](#) of the conflicts between the government and rebel groups. Since 2016, China has provided some modest [humanitarian assistance](#) and limited [training](#) to the Syrian government.

While President Trump was encouraged by China’s UN abstention, China made its Syrian

policy clear in a less noticed but still significant manner thousands of miles away from UN headquarters. On April 12, when the UNSC voted on the Syrian issue, a [joint statement](#) was issued by the BRICS special representatives on the Middle East (at deputy foreign minister-level) nations in Visakhapatnam, India, saying that “Illegal” interference in the affairs of Syria is “unacceptable.”

In fact, the press briefing by China’s Foreign Ministry spokeswoman [Hua Chuning](#) on April 7 (immediately after the summit) revealed a consistent policy regarding Syria. Although Hua did not directly criticize the missile attacks, she did reiterate Beijing’s longstanding position that China respects the choice of the Syrian people. She said, “China never interferes in the internal affairs of other countries. President of Syria Assad was elected by the Syrian people, we respect the choice of the people of Syria in choosing their own leader, in choosing their own path of development,” adding that the Chinese government hopes to strengthen coordination of international cooperation in connection with the worsening situation around Syria.

### **Beijing’s “three strikes” overture to Moscow**

The Syrian “episode” did create a dramatic effect at Mar-a-Lago where the media was unprepared for, and then obsessed by, the missile attacks in the midst of the summit. Many expressed surprise, disbelief, and even anger over the apparent start of another “war” that Trump had repeatedly claimed during his campaign he would avoid while in office. The change of mood was so complete that at the [post-summit assessment session](#) sponsored by the Carter Center and China’s Intellisia Institute (海国图智研究院), no media outlets were present except those from Greater China (the mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong).

Functional exchanges between Russian and Chinese officials had been steady and routine over a wide range of issues prior to the US-China summit, including:

- Sixth China-Russia consultation at the deputy foreign minister level on security situation in the Northeast Asia on Jan. 12.
- Consultation on the Middle East at the foreign military bureau level on Jan. 13.
- Meeting at deputy foreign minister level on the SCO affairs on Jan. 19.
- Second six-party Moscow consultation on Afghanistan on Feb. 15.
- Lavrov-Wang Yi meeting in Bonn on the sidelines of the G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting on Feb. 16.
- Second round of anti-terror consultations in Moscow at the deputy foreign minister level on Feb. 27.
- Consultation at the deputy foreign minister level in Beijing on security situation in Northeast Asia on Feb. 28.
- Interior/public security minister meeting in Beijing on March 21.
- Sixth session of the inter-party dialogue between the United Russia political party and the CCP in Russia on March 21-23.
- Joint submission of a draft resolution to the UNSC aimed at preventing poisonous substances from falling into the hands of terrorists in Syria and Iraq.

The last joint Russia-China action was less than two weeks before the US missile attacks on the Syrian air base on April 6. There was no question that Trump’s move jolted the normal procedures of Sino-Russian interactions. However, it is highly unlikely that the shock and awe of the Trump missiles would interrupt official exchanges between the two bureaucracies that have been in place for the past three decades. To the contrary, the post-Mar-a-Lago world witnessed a flurry of China’s diplomatic overtures to Russia. In two weeks (April 12-25), three top Chinese officials visited Russia and all of them met President Putin.

On April 11-12, China’s Vice Premier [Zhang Gaoli](#) visited Moscow to co-chair with Russian First Deputy Prime Minister [Igor Shuvalov](#) the fourth Bilateral Investment Cooperation Commission and to prepare for the Putin’s May visit to attend China’s Belt & Road International Forum. In his meeting with Putin, [Zhang](#) described the Russian president as “a long-time great friend

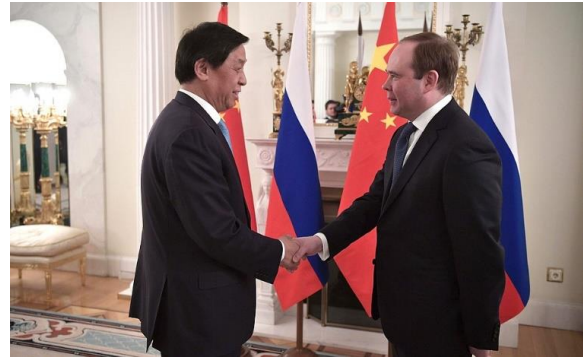
of China,” a reference seldom used for leaders of Beijing’s other “strategic partners.”

Five days after Zhang Gaoli’s Moscow visit, China’s top legislative leader Zhang Dejiang was in town (April 18-20) for the third meeting of the Sino-Russian Parliamentary Cooperation Committee. Putin also met the second Zhang.



Putin and Zhang Gaoli. Photo by Xinhua, 12 April 2017.

The same day that Zhang Dejiang arrived in Moscow, China announced that Director of the General Office of the Communist Party of China [Li Zhanshu](#) would visit Russia April 25-27 at the invitation of his counterpart, head of the Presidential Administration in the Kremlin Anton Vaino. Li’s position, as well as Vaino’s, is equivalent to that of the US White House chief of staff. “It is only with Russia that the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee’s apex organ (which comes directly under party General Secretary Xi Jinping) has such an institutional arrangement of annual consultations – although Russia is not a communist country,” noted India’s veteran diplomat/analyst [M.K. Bhadrakumar](#). The two Zhangs’ Russia trips were likely arranged months ahead, but Li’s trip was announced without prior notice. The hasty arrangement of Li’s Moscow trip indicated its importance. In meeting his Chinese counterpart on April 26, Vaino stressed the importance of continuing regular contact between the Russian and Chinese leaders. In response, Li pointed to the “special trust-based nature of Russian-Chinese relations.”



Chief of Staff of the Presidential Executive Office Anton Vaino and Director of the General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Li Zhanshu.

In his meeting with Putin, Li also pointed out the unprecedented nature of the relationship between his office (General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China) and the Russian Presidential Executive Office. Li stressed that the two countries should continue to support each other’s core interests and vital issues of mutual concerns. “No matter how the international situation changes, the two sides will never change their policies of consolidating and deepening their comprehensive strategic partnership; never change their goals of joint development and national rejuvenation; and never change their determination to safeguard international equality, justice, and stability,” [Li was quoted](#) as saying.



Putin and Li Zhanshu. Photo by Xinhua, 27 April 2017.

### **Trump’s Russia lost again ? So what?!**

Ten days before Trump’s missile attacks on Syria, [Henry Kissinger](#) was quoted as saying that US-Russian relations were “in the worst shape in half-a-century.” He was both right and wrong. Kissinger was right because of the

ubiquitous Russia bashing by both the media and Washington establishment, which was not seen even at the height of the Cold War. He was wrong because the worst (missile attacks 10 days later) was yet to occur. In the highly charged US domestic politics, Trump's single-mindedness in improving relations with Russia produced exactly the opposite effect, at least for the time being. Now with his re-election in mind, any significant effort to pursue pragmatic ties with Russia will have to be put off until his second term, if ever.

Trump's Russian interlude, however, did test the resilience of the Russian-China strategic partnership. In both countries, significant parts of their political and intellectual elite question the scope and substance of their partnership. And the lure of the pivotal position within the triangle is inherently dynamic and destabilizing. The Sino-Russian partnership, however, seemed to have escaped Trump's forceful and dramatic play of triangular politics without any visible damage. Even at the most promising stage of "[Trump mania](#)" in Russia (after Trump's inauguration and before Michael Flynn was fired in mid-February 2017), top Russia officials remained sober and pragmatic about the prospect of a Russia-US detente.

In his response during a Jan. 21 *Rossiya 1 TV* interview to a question about if Donald Trump was "our man," Russian presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov categorically stated "No. He is not our man, he's America's man. Thinking that he is our man is probably the biggest mistake of Western analysts and some of our political scientists." Peskov continued, "It's probably a big mistake to indulge in some illusions about the future of our relations along the lines that the future of our bilateral relations will be free of contradictions, free of disagreements. That cannot be the case." Successful development of bilateral relations, according to the Kremlin press czar, depended on the extent to which the nations resolve these differences through dialogue. Putin and his associates seemed more interested in a different conceptual framework, rather than a certain individual leader, for managing bilateral relations.

Peskov's vision was spelled out more specifically a few days later. In his speech to Russia's State Duma, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov [spoke](#), with his Chinese and US audience in mind:

We believe that as Russia, the US and China build their relations, this triangle should not be closed or directed toward some projects that could worry other states. [They should be] open and fair. I am convinced that the economic structure of Russia, the US and China is such that there is a great deal of complementarity in the material and economic sphere.

As for international security problems, these three countries play a very important role. Russia and China have restrained attempts to introduce confrontational, force-based solutions into world politics. We expect that Donald Trump, who has confirmed his commitment to focus primarily on US [domestic] problems and to abandon interference in the internal affairs of other states, will do the same.

Aside from assuring China about the much-anticipated "honeymoon" with Washington, Lavrov's suggestion to Trump to stop interfering in other countries' domestic affairs was what Russia and China have done to each other since the normalization of relations. Removing ideology from Moscow-Beijing ties has been the most important stabilizing factor in their bilateral relations since the end of the Cold War.

It is unclear whether Lavrov's words had an impact on his US counterpart, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. In his first major policy speech, [Tillerson](#) seemed to echo Lavrov's non-interference concept when he advocated separation of US values, which are stable and enduring, from its foreign policies, which should adapt to reality. "Our values around freedom, human dignity, the way people are treated – those are our values. Those are not our policies," said Tillerson to State Department diplomats and staff on May 3.

Has Tillerson's pragmatism derived from his long experience in dealing with the real world on business issues? For a Washington establishment dominated by liberal interventionists and neocons, however, Tillerson's effort to divorce US policies from its values did not go well. Many of them are still recovering from a distant and somewhat "minor" "[Tillerson shock](#)" in mid-March when he surprised his Chinese hosts by saying that the

US-China relationship should be guided by “nonconflict, nonconfrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation,” which was exactly the Chinese script (不冲突不对抗、相互尊重、合作共赢) for a “new type of major power relationship” (新型大国关系) proposed by [Xi Jinping](#) in his February 2012 visit to the US as China’s vice president. The Obama administration never accepted it, and instead launched its highly militarized Asia-Pacific “rebalancing” and geo-economic instrument (TPP) to counter China’s rise.

Many in China are still digesting Tillerson’s China-friendly gesture and are waiting to see what shape it will take. For both Russia and China, the “new thinking” in the US State Department is a welcome and badly needed turn in US foreign policy toward pragmatism and away from Obama’s antagonizing of both Russia and China

Tillerson’s speech also reveals an unambiguous signal regarding US policies toward North Korea. For the first time in recent history, the US clearly stated its policy goals and approaches for a peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue:

We are clear – we’ve been clear to them this is not about regime change, this is not about regime collapse, this is not about an accelerated reunification of the peninsula, this is not about us looking for an excuse to come north of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. So we’re trying to be very, very clear and resolute in our message to them that your future security and economic prosperity can only be achieved through your following your commitments to denuclearize (emphasis added).

At a time when the Korean nuclear crisis is heading toward a showdown of catastrophic proportions, and when China’s “rogue ally” is trying to passionately, persistently, and blindly assert its own interests, even at the expense of the “big brother” by exploiting differences between major powers at the expense of regional and global stability ([this author’s definition of a “rogue ally”](#) in 2007), Tillerson’s initial and daring departure from the Washington establishment and its self-

contradictory policies (denuclearization and regime change at the same time) offers a rare moment in history not only for the final solution of this time-bomb in Northeast Asia, but a much more symmetrical, and perhaps healthier, trilateral relationship in the age of WMD for a simple reason: the alternative is far more costly and even unthinkable. In this regard, Trump’s “win” or “loss” of Russia is trivial and inconsequential. It remains to be seen how the Trump administration operationalizes the “Tillerson doctrine,” which deserves patience and respect from both Beijing and Moscow.



# CHRONOLOGY OF CHINA-RUSSIA RELATIONS

## JANUARY - APRIL 2017

**Jan. 12, 2017:** Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov and China's Assistant Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou co-chair sixth China-Russia consultation on the security situation in Northeast Asia in Moscow. They agree on further countermeasures in response to the proposed deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in South Korea.

**Jan. 13, 2017:** Director of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Middle East and North Africa Department [Sergey Vershinin](#) meets Chinese Government's Special Envoy for Syria Xie Xiaoyan in Moscow. They discuss current military and political situation in Syria.

**Jan. 17, 2017:** President Xi Jinping meets Ukraine President Petro Poroshenko on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos. Xi reportedly says that China is willing to play a constructive role in seeking a political resolution to the crisis over Ukraine.

**Jan. 19, 2017:** Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov and China's Foreign Minister's Assistant Li Huilai meet in Moscow and discuss issues regarding the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

**Feb. 15, 2017:** Russia hosts a six-party consultation on the Afghan issue in Moscow involving Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Iran, and India. Participants agree to step up efforts to promote the intra-Afghan peace process and that Central Asian countries may join the next round of negotiations.

**Feb. 16, 2017:** Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey [Lavrov](#) and China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi meet in Bonn on the sidelines of the G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting. They discuss Putin's visit to China's One Belt, One Road international forum and Xi Jinping's visit to Russia in July.

**Feb. 27, 2017:** Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Oleg Syromolotov and China's Assistant Foreign Minister Li Huilai co-chair second round of Russian-Chinese consultations on the fight against terrorism in Moscow.

**Feb. 28, 2017:** China's Assistant Foreign Minister of China Kong Xuanyou and Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov co-chair in Beijing the Russia-China Dialogue on Security in Northeast Asia.

**March 21, 2017:** Russia's Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev and China's Public Minister Guo Shengkun sign in Beijing a Protocol on Law Enforcement Cooperation for 2017-2018. After the meeting in Beijing, Kolokoltsev visits the tourist police office in Sanya.

**March 21-23, 2017:** Sixth session of the inter-party dialogue between the United Russia political party and the Chinese Communist Party is held in Kazan, Russia. Chinese delegation is led by Song Tao, head of the International Liaison Department, and the Russian side represented by Boris Gryzlov, Chairman of the United Russia Supreme Council.

**March 25, 2017:** Russia and China submit to the UN Security Council a draft resolution aimed at preventing poisonous substances from falling into the hands of terrorists in Syria and Iraq. Russia initiated the move in light of media reports of chemical attacks in the Mosul area in Iraq by militants of the Islamic State terror group.

**April 6, 2017:** US naval destroyers, the *USS Porter* and the *USS Ross*, launch 59 *Tomahawk* cruise missiles from the eastern Mediterranean at Syria's Shayrat Air Base. President [Trump](#) informs visiting President Xi Jinping of the action toward the end of the official dinner at Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate shortly before the missiles fall on their targets.

**April 11, 2017:** Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov and China's Deputy Foreign Minister Li Huilai co-chair a meeting of the joint interagency working group on the convergence of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB).

**April 11-12, 2017:** Third consultative meeting of [BRICS special representatives](#) on the Middle East is held in Visakhapatnam, India. Participants issue a communiqué confirming “firm support of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, the need for a peaceful resolution of the conflict by the Syrians themselves,” and that “any military intervention not sanctioned by the Security Council is incompatible with the UN Charter and is unacceptable.”

**April 12-13, 2017:** China's Vice Premier [Zhang Gaoli](#) visits Moscow and co-chairs with Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister *Igor* Shuvalov the fourth bilateral Investment Cooperation Commission and to prepare for the forthcoming summit in May. President [Putin](#) meets Zhang.

**April 14, 2017:** China's Foreign Minister [Wang Yi](#) and Russian counterpart Lavrov hold a phone conversation on the Korean Peninsula and Syria.

**April 18-20, 2017:** Zhang Dejiang, Chairman of the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress visit Russia for the third meeting of the Sino-Russian Parliamentary Cooperation Committee. He meets President Putin on April 19.

**April 20-21, 2017:** Shanghai Cooperation Organization holds annual foreign minister meeting in Astana. They submit draft decisions to admit India and Pakistan as full members of the SCO, which will become official at the upcoming SCO summit in June.

**April 21, 2017:** Foreign Minister [Lavrov](#) meets Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of a meeting of the Council of SCO Foreign Ministers in Astana.

**April 25-27, 2017:** Director of the General Office of the Communist Party of China [Li Zhanshu](#) visits Russia at the invitation of Presidential Administration Chief Anton Vaino.

**April 26, 2017:** Chinese and Russian armed forces hold the third joint press release on the global and regional anti-missile situation during the Moscow Conference on International Security. The previous two joint briefings were held at the 7th Xiangshan Forum in Beijing in October 2016 and the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva in March 2017.