

COMPARATIVE

CONNECTIONS

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-ASIA-PACIFIC

CHINA- RUSSIA RELATIONS

TALES OF TWO FRIENDS, TWO SUMMITS AND TWO DRILLS

YU BIN, WITTENBURG UNIVERSITY

China-Russia relations gained considerable traction mid-year when Russia's newly inaugurated "old" president embarked on his first foreign trip to China. In Beijing, the two "intimate" friends hammered out plans to elevate their already "best-ever" relationship against a backdrop of mounting pressures from the US. In Beijing, Putin became the first recipient of China's newly created "friendship medal" before the two leaders headed for two summits: the 18th SCO Summit in Qingdao in early June and the 10th BRICS Summit in Johannesburg in July. The first major expansion of the SCO was celebrated in Qingdao with an extravaganza. In late August, Russia hosted the biannual SCO *Peace-mission 2018* anti-terrorism exercise, while preparing with China, for the first time, for the *Vostok* series of strategic maneuvering exercises in Russia's East Military District. Enhanced cooperation between Beijing and Moscow occurred against a backdrop of pressure from the Trump administration.

This article is extracted from *Comparative Connections: A Triannual E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations*, Vol. 20, No. 2, September 2018. Preferred citation: Yu Bin, "China-Russia Relations: Tales of Two Friends, Two Summits and Two Drills" *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 20, No. 2, pp 111-120.

Putin in Beijing

A month after his inauguration for a fourth term as president of Russia, Putin traveled to China, which was his first foreign visit as the “new” president. Chinese counterpart President Xi Jinping was also strengthened by both the Chinese Communist Party’s 19th Congress in October 2017 and his appointment to a second presidential term at the March 2018 National People’s Congress, which also eliminated term limits for the position.

The chemistry between the two was as strong as their respective domestic standing. Prior to this meeting, Putin and Xi had met 25 times and five times in 2017 alone. Underlying their strong personal relationship is a shared strategic view of the world order as increasingly multipolar and recognizing the value of democratization of international relations. Mounting pressure from the Trump administration, too, helped cement the bond between the two.

The two leaders did [three things](#) in Beijing to take their “best ever” strategic partnership relationship to a higher level. In formal talks, Xi and Putin agreed to expand and deepen cooperation in all areas. Defining bilateral relations as “mature, stable, and strong” (成熟、稳定、牢固), Xi assured Putin that no matter how the international situation changes, China and Russia would always give the other top priority in their diplomatic relations. Putin, in turn, said deepening the Russia-China comprehensive strategic partnership is the priority of Russian diplomacy. Russia and China have taken each other’s core interests and major concerns into consideration in such areas as politics, the economy, people-to-people exchanges, and enhanced communication on global affairs, said Putin. “Myself and President Putin agreed, in the face of a complex international situation, that China and Russia will increase mutual support and coordination in international affairs, and deepen strategic cooperation,” Xi was quoted as saying. After the meeting, the two presidents signed a joint declaration. They also witnessed the signing of a number of cooperation documents and jointly met with the media.

The Joint Declaration summarized and reiterated almost all the key components of the Sino-Russian strategic partnership. Similar declarations were issued in the past following annual summits. Unlike the one in [2017](#), with an

opening on the importance of the UN and globalization issues, the current one begins with a statement that the Sino-Russian bilateral relationship is playing “an important role for world peace and stability” because of the high-level of political trust based on mutual respect and support for each other’s core interests, sovereignty, territorial integrity and developmental path. Against a backdrop of global instability and uncertainty, the two sides should continue close and regular reciprocity at various levels, including those between the offices of the head of state and heads of the government. Regular foreign and defense ministerial meetings are highlighted for both dialogue and coordination. “China and Russia intend to continue their mil-mil communication and coordination, to perfect the existing cooperation mechanism, and to expand practical cooperation in the military and military-related technology in order to cope with regional and global challenges,” said the document. The bulk of it is about “practical cooperation,” or economics and trade. That comes, however, only after bilateral political and security issues. The last part of the declaration addressed multilateral and regional issues, including Iran, Syria, and Korea. It appeared quite clearly that the 2018 summit had shifted to bilateral cooperation and coordination.

In Beijing, Putin also had a separate meeting with Chinese Premier [Li](#) Keqiang in Beijing to promote economic ties of the two countries.

As if the joint declaration itself was not sufficient, the Xi-Putin talks were followed by a grand ceremony (of 700 people) where Xi conferred the first-ever Friendship Medal (友谊勋章), the highest Chinese honor to foreigners, on Putin for his longstanding, prominent work in strengthening friendship and the partnership between China and Russia. Calling his Russian counterpart “an intimate friend” (最好的知心朋友), Xi said at the ceremony that Putin is an influential leader of a major country who has made frequent visits to China and is well-known and highly respected by the Chinese people. “It also shows the deep friendship between the Chinese and Russian nations,” added Xi.

Putin said he valued the medal greatly and saw it not only as a high personal honor, but also as evidence of the high level of the comprehensive strategic partnership between Russia and China, as well as the deep friendship between the two peoples, and that that he would work hand-in-

hand with Xi to achieve common prosperity for Russia and China.

The medal awarded in Beijing appeared to be reciprocation for Putin's presentation to Xi a year before of the Order of St. Andrew in the Kremlin. It took three and half years for China to award the Friendship medal to its first recipient (Putin) after its [inception](#) in December 2015. In contrast, the highest state award of Russia was established in 1689 by Tsar Peter the Great and was abolished in 1918. It was restored by President Yeltsin in 1998 and has been awarded to dozens of Russians. Xi was the third foreigner to receive the order, following the late Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev and Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev.



Figure 1 President Xi Jinping awards his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin the first-ever Friendship Medal of the People's Republic of China at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, June 8, 2018. Photo: Xinhua

After the award ceremony, Xi and Putin took a [high-speed train ride](#) to the port city of Tianjin where the two watched a friendship hockey game between Russian and Chinese youths. Putin reportedly said that he planned to discuss the implementation of a joint project to build a high-speed rail line between Moscow and Kazan with Russia's Chinese partners.



Figure 2 Before the beginning of hockey match between youth teams of Russia and China. Photo: Kremlin.ru

18th SCO Summit in Qingdao

While the Beijing summit seemed to have narrowed its focus to bilateral ties, the annual SCO Summit in the port city of Qingdao on June 9-10 considerably [expanded](#) its scope since its first summit in 2001. With the induction of India and Pakistan as formal members in Qingdao – their leaders attended for the first time as full-fledged members – the SCO extends to South Asia. Now the eight formal members of the SCO (China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, and Pakistan) cover 60 percent of the Eurasian continent (34 million sq km), 43 percent of global population (3 billion), and more than 20 percent of global GDP (\$16 trillion).



Figure 3 An expanded SCO with eight member states in Qingdao, June 9-10, 2018. Photo: SCO

In its lengthy [Qingdao Declaration](#) (about 8,000 words), the expanded SCO mapped out three specific areas for future cooperation: security, economics, and cultural exchanges. In addition to the original goal of combating “three evil forces” (terrorism, extremism, and separatism), member states now coordinate intelligence sharing and joint operations against drug trafficking, cross-border criminal activities, and cybercrimes.

With the inclusion of Pakistan and India, Afghanistan looms larger in the SCO's security outlook, not only because of their current involvement in the Afghan conflict, but also their shared history with the landlocked nation. India and Pakistan (then part of British India) were part of the century-long Afghan Wars waged by the British in most of the 19th century and early 20th century. Their rocky relationship in the post-colonial era has been conditioned largely by a series of wars (1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999). Finally, both became nuclear powers at the dawn of the 21st century. The US-led war on terror in Afghanistan in late 2001 has added more complexities to already difficult ties between the two nuclear states.

The SCO created the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group in [2005](#), but it was not until July 2017 that the Astana Summit finalized the ascendance of Indian and Pakistan to full SCO membership as the Contact Group was being revitalized to adjust to the expanded regional security group. In October 2017, the first Contact Group meeting was held in Moscow. Shortly before the Qingdao Summit, the SCO-Afghan Contact Group was convened in Beijing for the [second time](#).

The Afghan issue topped the agenda of the SCO summit seemed for at least two additional factors: one was the winding down of civil war in Syria. As Putin briefed other national leaders in Qingdao, now that the Syrian government controls 90 percent of the population, it is likely that international terrorists would shift their focus to Afghanistan. The second reason is [signs](#), or the possibility, that the US is scaling back its commitment in Afghanistan.

In his speech at the summit, Putin talked about the "[priorities](#)" in "assisting in the political and diplomatic settlement of conflicts near the external borders of the organization's member states," a reference to countries bordering or near Afghanistan such as India and Pakistan. For his part, [Xi](#) committed to training 2,000 law enforcement officers of all parties in the next three years through the China National Institute for SCO International Exchange and Judicial Cooperation and other platforms to enhance law enforcement "capacity building."

In economics, the Qingdao Summit publicly committed to a rule-based multilateral trading system (以规则为基础的多边贸易体制), a clear reference to the trade war between the US and China. For the SCO itself, however, economic

integration has been the weakest link, and a more sensitive issue for member states. For more than a decade, Beijing's call for an SCO free trade zone and a SCO bank has gone nowhere, thanks to Russia's delaying and deflecting efforts. Maybe because of this, the Qingdao Declaration, which was coordinated by China, called for deepening cooperation in the areas of trade, investment, finance, agriculture, connectivity, etc., which reflects China's priority for the SCO. In his [speech](#) at the summit, Xi reiterated the need to cooperate in promoting China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its linkage with economic strategies of other SCO members. He announced that China would set up an RMB 30 billion (\$4 billion) equivalent special lending facility within the framework of the SCO Inter-bank Consortium. Meanwhile, the city of Qingdao would be set up as "a demonstration area" for China-SCO local economic and trade cooperation, and would set up a committee of legal services for SCO member states to provide legal support for business cooperation.

Only a small part of Putin's speech in Qingdao was devoted to economic issues, and he emphasized coordination between Russia's EAEU and China's BRI. Putin also talked about the concept of "[Eurasian Economic Partnership](#)," a blueprint for all members of the SCO. Presumably, China's BRI would be part of this Eurasian umbrella structure.

The third area of SCO future operation was cultural and people-to-people exchanges. In Qingdao, Xi announced that China would in the next three years provide 3,000 training opportunities in human resources development for SCO member states to enhance public understanding of and support for the SCO family. China would also provide meteorological services to all parties using its *Fengyun-2* weather satellites.

It is unclear how the training of 3,000 human resource personnel would be allocated in an increasingly crowded SCO space. Cultural and societal exchanges have been a rapidly expanding area of interaction among SCO member states, given the already highly saturated and institutionalized government-government interactions (almost 20 annual meetings of various kinds at the official level on the annual basis). Since the 17th SCO summit in Astana (June 8-9, 2017), the following high-level events were held:

- SCO Council of Heads of Government (Prime Ministers) meeting (Sochi, Nov. 30-Dec. 1 2017);
- SCO National Security Council Secretaries meeting (May 21-22 2018);
- SCO Council of Foreign Ministers extraordinary and regular meetings (New York, Sept. 20 2017; Beijing, April 24, 2018);
- SCO Council of National Coordinators meetings (Yangzhou City, Moscow, Beijing, August 2017-June 2018);
- Council of the Regional Antiterrorist Structure meetings (Beijing, 17 September 2017; Tashkent, 5 April 2018);
- Heads of Border Services of Competent Authorities of SCO Member States meeting (Dalian, June 29, 2017);
- SCO Heads of Emergency Prevention and Relief Agencies meeting (Cholpon-Ata, Aug. 24-25 2017);
- Ministers of Justice of SCO Member States meeting (Tashkent, Oct. 20 2017);
- Chairpersons of the Supreme Courts of SCO Member States meetings (Tashkent, 25-27 Oct. 25-27 2017; Beijing, May 25, 2018);
- Heads of SCO Member States Services in Charge of Ensuring Sanitary and Epidemiological Wellbeing meeting (Sochi, Oct. 31 2017);
- SCO Ministers Responsible for Foreign Economic and Foreign Trade Activities meeting (Moscow, Nov. 15, 2017);
- Prosecutor Generals of the SCO meeting (St Petersburg, Nov. 29, 2017);
- Conference of the Heads of Ministries and Agencies of Science and Technology (Moscow, April 18-21, 2018);
- SCO Forum (Astana, May 4-5, 2018)
- Heads of National Tourist Administrations meeting (Wuhan, May 7-11, 2018);
- Defense Ministers' meeting (Beijing, April 24, 2018);
- Ministers of Culture meeting (Sanya City, May 15, 2018);
- Heads of the SCO Counter-narcotics Agencies meeting (17 May 2018);
- Board of the SCO Business Council meeting (Beijing, June 6, 2018); and
- Council of the SCO Interbank Association meeting (Beijing, 5-7 June 2018).

Chinese media counted some [160 events/activities](#) by the SCO during the 2017-18 period when China chaired the SCO. Most of these items were for cultural, sports and education purposes, including the SCO Marathon, movie festival, food festival, etc. Prior to Qingdao, a few more items were added, such as the SCO political party forum, women's forum, and people's forum, media summit, "Model SCO-2018" Youth Conference, to name a few.

It is a [cliché](#) to say that Sino-Russian interaction within the SCO are characterized by cooperation and competition, which I [defined](#) 12 years ago. The first major expansion of the SCO in 18 years means more complexities ahead. Despite all these challenges, the SCO has moved forward in institutionalizing broadened and deepened interactions at various levels largely because China and Russia have managed their differences.

For Putin, the Qingdao Summit was a sharp contrast to the G7 meeting held on the same day in La Malbaie, Quebec of Canada. Russia was kicked out of the G7 in 2014 following the Ukraine and Crimea crises. The 2018 [G7](#), however, was deeply divided as President Trump confronted the other six members of the Western club over trade and alliance issues. "[T]hey should let Russia come back in because we should have Russia at the negotiating table," [tweeted](#) Trump prior to the G7. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov responded that "Russia is focused on other formats, apart from G7." Between Russia's pride and the West's prejudice, Qingdao was a much more pleasant place for Putin.



The West/US has a long way to go to re-anchor Russia back in the West. Meanwhile, the SCO, which has largely been a joint venture between Beijing and Moscow, is not just for show and lavishment. By late August, the SCO conducted its biannual anti-terror exercises *Peace Mission 2018* in Russia's Central Military District. More than 3,000 soldiers participated in the joint drill, along with 500 pieces of large ground and air equipment. 2,000 Russian and 700 Chinese participated, along with a few hundreds of troops from other SCO member states. The [chiefs](#) of staff of the SCO militaries observed the drills.

This was also the first time for India and Pakistan to join SCO drills, which may help alleviate their decades-long conflict. This was not the first time that the two South Asian states cooperated in a multilateral framework. Their militaries have on many occasions worked together in UN peacekeeping missions. Moreover, both have working a relationship with Washington, which provides a significant amount of military and economic assistance to the two. With full SCO membership, India and Pakistan now obtain another platform for reciprocity, and possibly, reconciliation as neighbors, partners, and competitors – the trajectory of Sino-Russian relations over the past 30 years.

***Vostok 2018* and September 11...**

In late August, the Chinese Defense Ministry announced that China will join Russia's massive *Vostok-2018* (*Восток 2018*, *东方-2018*) military exercises in the Baikal region of Russia's Eastern Military District. About 3,200 Chinese elite troops (a brigade level), 30 helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft, and more than 900 pieces of large land equipment will join some 300,000 Russian troops starting from Sept. 11. Although

the number of Chinese troops is a fraction of the Russian forces, it is by far the largest overseas deployment of the PLA in peacetime.

The exact number of Russian troops in *Vostok 2018* has not been revealed. Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu, however, used the word "unprecedented" for the drill with the Chinese. *Vostok 2014*, the last massive exercise of this kind, involved 150,000 troops. Unlike those "anti-terror" drills within the SCO framework, exercises of this type and scale by the Russian military belong to the "strategic" category and used to be joined only by "insiders," or members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). China's participation in *Vostok 2018* indicates a move toward closer strategic and military-to-military ties between Moscow and Beijing at a time when both are facing growing pressure from the Trump administration.

At a minimum, *Vostok 2018* may have finally reversed China "role" as an unspoken target of the *Vostok* exercise series, according to an independent Chinese military [expert](#), who cited foreign assessments of the early *Vostok* drills. For those who are accustomed to the rhetoric of Sino-Russian friendship in the 21st century, it is almost absurd to learn that China had been Russia's target, said the writer. This may well reflect the anxiety of many in Russia in the late 1990s and early 2000s when the decaying Russian military was considered unable to cope with PLA forces in the Shenyang military region.

Who will replace China as the imagined target for *Vostok 2018* remains guesswork, as both sides denied it targeted any third party. Russia seemed less evasive when the authoritative defense analyst Vasily [Kashin](#) depicted China's participation in *Vostok-2018* as an open declaration of a Russo-Chinese military alliance. The Chinese Defense Ministry, however, defined Sino-Russian military-military ties as one of "[partnership without alliance](#)" (结伴不结盟), and that China's participation in future *Vostok* drills would depend on consultations between the two sides. Meanwhile, the Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman looked forward to a series of mil-mil exchanges with the US in the next few months, a balancing gesture to alleviate US anxiety about closer Sino-Russian military-military ties.

The size of the Chinese contribution to *Vostok 2018* is insignificant. The opportunity to practice with more seasoned Russian motorized infantry for mobile defense and attacks at such a level,

however, will be rewarding for the PLA. Interoperability, too, will be an item for the two militaries at various levels of exercises. Staff members of the PLA's Northern Theater (北部战区) and Russia's Eastern Military District will form a joint command for strategic conceptualization and scenario-formation, campaign simulation, and actual exercises. Perhaps the most "useful" role to be played by the PLA's integrated brigade could be its unique fast-moving wheeled armored vehicles (APCs and self-propelled howitzers), which the Russians do not have. Their Western partners, or potential adversaries, have a lot, however. The Chinese brigade may be the "blue team" for the Russians, [speculated](#) a Chinese observer.

Vostok 2018 will kick off Sept. 11 – perhaps only a coincidental reference to the fateful 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, that led to a series of "Empire-Strikes-back" acts in the Greater Middle East region. Both Russia and China were the first to pledge support to the United States in the "war on terror" – even ahead of US allies. Putin actually warned President Bush two days before the terror attacks that something may happen to the US (Angela Stent, *Limits of Partnership*, 2014, pp. 62-3). Ironically, they are now officially "strategic competitors," and just a few steps from being defined as "enemies" of the US.

Far away in Syria, government troops are positioning themselves for the final assault on Idlib, the last rebel-held enclave in Syria. Meanwhile, various forces are positioning themselves in and around Syria: for the [final ending](#) of the Syrian civil war for Russia, Syria and Iran; [a looming humanitarian disaster](#) for the rebels and Western forces; or the beginning of a wider and bigger conflict for everybody. Already, a US observer of *Vostok 2018* depicted the massive drill as "[a rehearsal for global war](#)," which could be very different, and certainly more destructive, than President Trump's destruction of the global trading system.

CHRONOLOGY OF CHINA-RUSSIA RELATIONS

MAY – AUGUST 2018

May 3-4, 2018: An “International Conference on Countering Terrorism and Preventing Violent Extremism” is held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

May 7, 2018: Vladimir Putin is inaugurated as Russian president for the fourth time since 2000.

May 8, 2018: Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey [Ryabkov](#) meets Chinese Ambassador Li Hui in Moscow.

May 14-17, 2018: Astana and Almaty (Kazakhstan) host 38th session of the [Joint Control Group](#) monitoring implementation of the Agreement between Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and China on Confidence Building in the Military Field in the Border Area (1996) and the Agreement on Mutual Reductions of Armed Forces in the Border Area (1997).

May 16, 2018: Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) holds first [Women Forum](#) in Beijing.

May 17, 2018: Eighth Meeting of Heads of the SCO Member States' Counter-Narcotics Agencies is held in [Tianjin](#).

May 21-22, 2018: Thirteenth meeting of [SCO National Security Council Secretaries](#) held in Beijing.

May 22-23, 2018: Moscow hosts 16th Trilateral Academic Conference on “RIC: Opportunities and Challenges in the Context of International Changes and Dynamics of Bilateral Relations.” Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor [Morgulov](#) meets conference participants.

May 23, 2018: SCO [anti-terror meeting](#) is held in Islamabad. India sent a delegation.

May 24, 2018: President Putin meets Vice President Wang Qishan at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum. Wang delivered a speech at the forum.

May 24, 2018: Second [SCO-Afghan Liaison Group meeting](#) (at the deputy foreign ministerial level) is held in Beijing.

May 26, 2018: First SCO Forum of Political Parties is held in [Zhenzhen](#), China.

May 28, 2018: Beijing hosts second meeting of [SCO-Afghanistan](#) Contact Group at the level of deputy foreign ministers.

May 29-30, 2018: Beijing hosts fourth [Sino-Russian Think Tank Senior Forum](#) (中俄智库高端论坛) “Russia and China: Cooperation in a new era” co-sponsored by Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Russia’s Council of International Affairs. Retired Chinese senior diplomat Dai Bingguo, former Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Igor [Morgulov](#) join the forum.

June 1, 2018: SCO’s first Media Summit is held in Beijing.

June 2, 2018: SCO’s first “Model SCO-2018” Youth Conference is held in Beijing.

June 3, 2018: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov meets Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in [Pretoria](#) prior to the BRICS foreign ministerial meeting.

June 4-6, 2018: Moscow hosts the [22nd session](#) of Joint Russian-Chinese Border Commission.

June 8-10, 2018: President Putin visits [China](#) for a state visit and to participate in the SCO Summit.

June 9-10, 2018: China hosts 18th annual SCO Summit in Qingdao. Heads of state issue the Qingdao Declaration and a “Joint Statement of SCO Member States for Streamlining Trade Procedures.” They approve a five-year plan for implementing the “Treaty on Good-Neighborly Relations, Friendship and Cooperation between the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.”

June 20, 2018: Special Presidential Representative for the Middle East and Africa and Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov meets China's Special Envoy for the Middle East Gong Xiaosheng on the sidelines of the [BRICS](#) consultative meeting on the Middle East and North Africa in Pretoria. They discuss Syria and agree to closely coordinate approaches and practical steps in a national capacity and within BRICS to contribute to the peace, security, and development of the Middle East and North Africa.

July 4, 2018: Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou and Russian counterpart Igor Morgulov [co-chair](#) the Russian-Chinese Regular Dialogue on Northeast Asia Security.

July 6, 2018: Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov meets Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the ministerial meeting of the Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action ([JCPOA](#)) on the Iranian nuclear program in Vienna.

July 25-27, 2018: The 10th BRICS Summit is held in Johannesburg.

July 26, 2018: China reportedly receives its first Russian [S400](#) air defense system, becoming the first foreign country to receive the system.

July 28-Aug. 11, 2018: The fourth International Army Games 2018 are held in Russia. A total of 207 teams from 33 countries join the games.

Aug. 2, 2018: Foreign Minister Lavrov meets Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on the sidelines of the ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting [in Singapore](#).

Aug. 20, 2018: Russian Special Presidential Representative for the Middle East and Africa and Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail [Bogdanov](#) meets in Moscow with Chinese Ambassador Li Hui.

Aug. 20, 2018: China's defense minister [reveals](#) that 3,200 Chinese troops, 30 helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft, and more than 900 pieces of large land equipment will join Russia's month-long *Vostok 2018*.

Aug. 22, 2018: China opens [Kazan Consulate General](#), the sixth in Russia (others are in Vladivostok, Yekaterinburg, Irkutsk, St Petersburg. and Khabarovsk). The Kazan office covers 14 regions of the Volga Federal District.

Aug. 22-29, 2018: SCO conducts [Peace-mission 2018](#) exercise at Russia's Chebarkul training ground. More than 3,000 troops and 500 pieces of equipment participate, including those from India and Pakistan for the first time. China dispatches more than 700 troops.

Aug. 24, 2018: Indian city of [Cholpon-Ata](#) hosts sixth SCO Ministers of Justice of the Member States meeting.

Aug. 26, 2018: [Gen Li Zuocheng](#) (李作成), chief of the PLA's General Staff, visits Russia for fifth meeting of the chiefs of general staff for the SCO member states. The chiefs also observe the SCO *Peace-mission 2018* exercise.

Aug. 27, 2018: Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov [meets](#) Deputy Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou in Moscow. They discuss the Korean Peninsula.

