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CHINA-RUSSIA RELATIONS

Moscow and Beijing at the Dawn of A Grave New World of Trump 2.0

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The election of Donald Trump as the 47th US president changed the chemistry between Washington, Moscow, and Beijing so much and yet so little. It was so much because the war-ending rhetoric of the president-elect was in sharp contrast to his predecessor's steadfast support of Ukraine. It was so little because the war in Ukraine not only continued but even escalated after Trump's decisive electoral win in early November as the Biden administration rushed arms to Ukraine with much relaxed restrictions (on ATACMS, etc.). Meanwhile, Beijing-Moscow relations continued to broaden and deepen throughout 2024 despite Trump's repeated vows to split the Russia-China entente. Xi and Putin met three times in six months (May, July, and October). Their joint enterprises (SCO, BRICS, etc.) also expanded steadily while experiencing growing pains. Meanwhile, the two large powers considerably stepped up their mil-mil interactions with more exercises, exchanges, and joint patrols. It remains to be seen how Trump would operationalize his campaign rhetorics not just to capture a pivotal position within the Moscow-Beijing-Washington triangle, but more importantly, to avert the Kissingerian dark prophecy of a grave new world of WMD and AI racing toward World War III.

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Putin 5.0 and Russia's China-Pivot

In his first 2024 campaign rally in March 2023, [Trump](#) blamed Biden for the devastating war in Ukraine, “casual talk” about nuclear war with Russia, and a China-Russia unity to “carve up the world.” A year later, Putin won his fifth term and then found himself in China, the [first foreign visit](#) of his fifth term in the presidency. It was also his first official visit since the outbreak of the Ukraine War in February 2022 (his October 2023 trip was defined as a “[working visit](#)” for the annual BRICS summit). 2024 was also a time of the 75th anniversary of China-Russian/Soviet diplomatic ties.

Despite the war, Moscow and Beijing managed to maintain and even deepen their bilateral ties. This time, Putin brought with him almost the entire Russian government (except the prime minister) to China, including [six deputy prime ministers](#) and heads of various governmental departments (foreign affairs, defense, national security, finance, economics, nuclear power, aerial space, railroad, nuclear power, etc.). These senior officials and their staff, along with hundreds of Russian businesspeople, filled up more than [20 large aircraft](#).

In Beijing, Xi and Putin held several hours of “[sincere and cordial meetings](#) covering many topics.” A [joint statement](#) was issued after the meeting. The 10,000-word document stressed the principles of nonalignment and equality in bilateral relations for a world order of “multipolarity and democracy” (Part I). As two large powers who suffered the most in WWII, the two sides said they would strongly defend the post-WWII world order by opposing distortion of war history and any effort to revive Nazism/militarism.

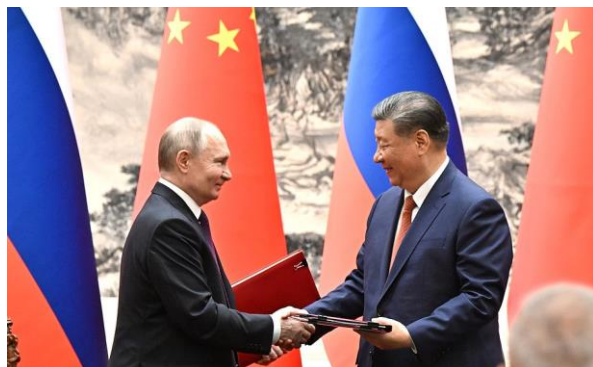


Figure 1 Following the talks, Putin and Xi signed a Joint Statement. Photo: Sergei Savostyanov

The statement covers nine functional areas for cooperation: security (parts II, VII, and X), economics (III), societal exchange (IV), multilateralism including the UN, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS (V, VI), the environment (VIII), and Ukraine (IV). Part III on economics listed 20 sub-areas for cooperation including the “Bilateral Investment Cooperation Planning Outline” (pending), the key to China’s large investment in Russia. The document has two noticeable additions: setting up an Arctic route cooperation subcommittee and a trilateral dialogue with North Korea regarding Chinese vessels’ access to the sea via the lower reaches of the Tumen River. While the former would open much of the Russia-controlled northern sea route and port facilities to China, the latter would play a key role in revitalizing China’s northeastern provinces.

The bulk of the joint statement (three parts) was about security. Part II, for example, called for “steady development for defense cooperation for both regional and global security.” The two sides needed to “deepen mutual trust and coordination,” and expand joint exercises and joint naval/aerial patrol. Communication and dialogue at various levels should be enhanced, the statement read, as well as coordination in multilateral forums (UN, SCO, BRICS) for anti-terrorism, law enforcement, and emergency management coordination. Part VII highlighted the danger of nuclear war, proliferation, militarization of outer space, weak international regulations on chemical/biological weapons, AI, and US deployment of intermediate-range missiles in the Asia-Pacific.

The emphasis on security was further underscored in Parts V (UN), VI (regional forums), VIII (environment), and IV (Ukraine) in which security issues were considered paramount for a just and enduring security for all. Lengthy joint statements between the two sides are not uncommon. The tone of the document, however, indicated a much stronger and more direct criticism of Washington’s “unilateralism” and rule-breaking behavior across all issue areas.

Is it Still the Economy...

Despite the war, Russia remained the world’s [4th largest economy](#) in 2023 in PPP terms, and 11th in nominal GDP. Meanwhile, massive Western sanctions on Russia led to a marked increase in Russia-China economic transactions. In 2023,

bilateral trade reached [\\$240 billion](#), up from \$108 billion in 2020. While China's [import of Russia's oil](#) increased by 24% to 107 million tons, China's [553,000 vehicles](#) exported to Russia accounted for [49%](#) of Russia's auto market, up from [19%](#) in 2022. Bilateral trade was "not only developing but also flourishing," remarked [Putin](#) in his meeting with visiting Chinese Premier Li Qiang on Aug. 21.

At the 29th prime ministerial meeting in Moscow, Li and Russian PM Mikhail Mishustin conducted "[a detailed discussion](#) on the entire range of trade, economic and humanitarian cooperation issues." Eighteen documents were signed, including one to upgrade the outline of an investment cooperation plan [to be finalized](#) by the yearend. For many Chinese business leaders, Russia's domestic law and regulations for foreign investment were quite "complicated," and the sweeping Western sanctions made it worse. A new version of the investment plan would facilitate China's 86 large investment projects in Russia totaling [\\$200 billion](#). While most of these projects would be [in the "traditional areas"](#) such as energy, transportation, agriculture, auto industry, and home electronics, Premier Li stressed the need to "explore [new areas](#) of technological and industrial cooperation," including [digital economy, biomedicine, green development](#), etc.

For decades, economic and trade relations were the weakest links between China and Russia, as both tried to integrate into the West-dominated global trading system. The Ukraine War and the tightening of their strategic space led to a marked broadening and deepening of their economic intercourse.

Moscow and Beijing had so far refrained from moving to a formal alliance. Yet for Washington, [Zbigniew Brzezinski's](#) 1997 warning regarding the emergence of a dominant and antagonistic Eurasian power is now descending across the vast Eurasian continent. The potential for a "marriage," [convenient](#) or not, between the world's energy/raw material and manufacturing giants seemed "unlimited" in both geoeconomic and geopolitical terms.

Multilateralism to Go

One key area of China-Russian cooperation in 2024 was to manage the "growing pains" of the SCO and BRICS against the ever-changing and more complex world. Xi and Putin met twice on

the sidelines of the annual summits of the SCO in Astana (July) and BRICS in Kasan (October).

In Astana, they [agreed](#) to enhance cooperation for regional security. While Xi called for more "[strategic coordination](#)," Putin echoed that Russian-Chinese cooperation in global affairs served as "[a main stabilizing factor](#)." Both vowed to strengthen the SCO for regional stability. Twenty-four [agreements](#) were inked, including a development strategy until 2035, several cooperation programs to combat terrorism, separatism, and extremism for 2025-2027, an anti-drug strategy for the next five years, and its corresponding action program. As for global issues, participants endorsed the "Initiative On World Unity for a Just Peace, Harmony and Development" proposed by Kazakhstan for a new, democratic, and equitable international order.

This global vision of the regional security group got an instant boost in Astana as Belarus officially ascended became the SCO's 10th member. A few days after the Astana summit, more than 100 PLA special forces were airlifted to Belarus for an 11-day "anti-terrorist" exercise (code-named "[Attacking Falcon 2024](#)," July 8-19) in areas close to Poland and Ukraine. Despite its label as anti-terrorist, it was carried out by the regular PLA unit from the [80th Group Army](#) of the Northern Theater Command at the time of heightened tension between Belarus and Ukraine.

Despite these institutional gains, there was a growing gap between the SCO's numerous adopted agreements/declarations and its ability to implement them, according to Professor [Pan Guang](#), a prominent scholar on Central Asia in China. Part of the problem was SCO's unanimity-based decision-making mechanism, which frequently led to inaction. SCO's small and weak institutional setup (Secretariat in Beijing and the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure in Tashkent, Uzbekistan), too, badly needs an update.

Perhaps more than anything else, Russia's influence in Central Asia steadily declined largely because of its preoccupation with the Ukraine war. A case in point was the final agreement [in June 2024](#) regarding the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan (CKU) railroad that had been put on hold for 30 years by disagreement over its finance and [Moscow's hesitation](#). With a projected annual capacity of 15 million tons of cargo, [CKU](#) represents the shortest route

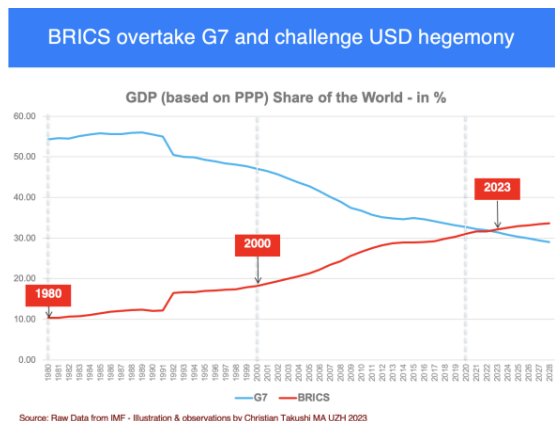
between Shanghai and Paris. In the foreseeable future, Russia may have to live with a [more proactive China](#) in its traditional backyard. Alternatively, Washington and its allies will make further inroads into the post-Soviet space where de-Russianization was already irreversible.

More “Breaks” onto BRICS

As the SCO moved beyond its regional confine, BRICS also added more strategic and global dimensions. Putin and Xi [met again](#) in Kazan (Russia) prior to the BRICS group summit. Their “in-depth exchange of views on major international and regional issues of common concern” was described as “a key moment” of the annual summit, said Chinese FM [Wang Yi](#). Both leaders spoke highly of the bilateral ties. While [Putin](#) described it as “a paradigm of how inter-state relations should be constructed,” [Xi](#) emphasized the principles of non-alignment, non-confrontation, and non-direction against third parties.

With the [theme](#) “Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security,” the Kazan summit was the first enlarged BRICS gathering with five new members (Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia). As BRICS’ rotating host, Russia organized more than 200 events. [Thirty-six countries](#), including 22 heads of government/state and UN Secretary-General [Antonio Guterres](#), joined the annual gathering. BRICS Business Forum also attracted more than [a thousand participants](#).

In his speech to the BRICS business forum, Putin noted that the [10-member group](#) now had 46% of the global population, 36% of the world’s landmass, and 45% of oil output. But even before its expansion, BRICS had overtaken the G7 in PPP terms ([37.4% vs 29.3%](#)).



The BRICS summit ended with the signing of the Kazan Declaration, a 134-clause document covering every conceivable area of global issues. The long document “is a declaration for a new global order,” according to [Andrey Kortunov](#) of the Russian International Affairs Council and Professor Zhao Huashen of Fudan University in Shanghai. BRICS did not merely add new members but was becoming a platform for the entire Global South, noted Kortunov and Zhao in a jointly penned article. Four areas of cooperation were emphasized: multilateralism (Articles 6–23), global/regional stability and security (Articles 24–56), economic/financial development (Articles 57–118), and societal exchange (Articles 119–132). Of these areas, security and development were highly interdependent, noted Kortunov and Zhao.

Ukraine was briefly mentioned in Article 26, stressing the need to comply with the UN principles and make all efforts to end the conflict. The bulk of the security section dealt with conflicts and challenges around the world, particularly in the Middle East including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which reflected the views of the BRICS four new Islamic members (Iran, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia).

While multilateralism was a platform, the three functional areas of security, development, and cultural/humanitarian exchanges largely reflected the three “proposals” outlined by Chinese President [Xi Jinping](#) in the past few years for global development (2021), global security (2022), and civilizational dialogue and coexistence. This was also the theme of [Xi’s speech](#) in Kazan. China’s vision for the BRICS future, therefore, was largely accepted by its diverse members.

BRICS' trajectory, however, was not to rival, but to parallel the existing global system dominated by the West. It does, however, serve the interests of the Global South, argued [Kortunov and Zhao](#). At a minimum, BRICS' highly diverse constituents are fundamentally different from the largely exclusive Western institutions such as G7, the European Union, and NATO, whose members are similar in political, economic, and cultural/religious construct. Hence the need for an interface for the diverse interests of its vastly different members.

Enhanced Mil-Mil Ties

In his meeting with Putin in Kazan, [President Xi](#) described the world undergoing “unprecedented tectonic transformation” and “serious changes and upheaval...unseen for centuries.” 2024 witnessed a significant increase in Russia-China mil-mil interactions. In July-September, for example, several large-scale joint exercises/operations even overlap with one another:

- July 2-16: Three Chinese naval ships and one Russian corvette conducted a [15-day joint patrol](#) of the Western Pacific and the South China Sea, the fourth joint patrol since 2021.
- July 12-17: the annual (since 2012) “[Exercise Joint Sea-2024](#)” was held off the Zhanjiang naval port in southern China. Seven Chinese and Russian naval vessels joined the drill for “maritime security threats.”
- In late July, Chinese naval ships were present in both [St Petersburg](#) and [Vladivostok](#) for the 328th anniversary of the Russian Navy.
- July 24: Russian and Chinese strategic bombers carried out a joint patrol of Far East Russia and the Bering Sea near Alaska, the [8th strategic aerial patrol](#) by the two militaries since 2019. For the first time, the joint patrol reached international airspace near [Alaska](#).

August was quiet with only one military exchange: commander of the PLA Ground Forces Gen. Li Qiaoming led a delegation to the annual “[Army-2024 Forum](#)” outside Moscow. He held talks with Russian Ground Forces' Commander-

in-Chief Oleg Salyukov. By September, the high-frequency exercise mode returned:

- On Sept. 10-15, China launched the [first phase of the annual “Northern/Interaction-2024”](#) naval exercises with Russia. Unlike the 2023 series primarily in the Sea of Japan, the 2024 version extended to the Sea of Okhotsk which had been carefully guarded as an “[internal sea](#),” or “Russia’s Great Lake,” by Soviet/Russian authorities since the end of WWII. The Chinese press referred to Russia’s “fortified waters” ([堡垒海域](#)) presumably for deploying Soviet/Russia’s strategic nuclear submarines for second/retaliatory strikes.
- On the same day (Sept.10), Russia began its “[Ocean 2024](#)” strategic command-and-staff exercises. Some 90,000 troops and more than 500 ships and aircraft drilled across the Pacific and Arctic Oceans, and the Mediterranean, Caspian and Baltic seas. China was the only country that participated in the exercise.
- The “recess” between the two phases of China’s “Northern/Interaction-2024” was not wasted. Between Sept. 16 and 20, Chinese and Russian coast guard ships held a joint drill near Peter the Great Bay off Vladivostok. This was followed by a [first-ever joint patrol](#) of the northern Pacific beginning Sept. 21. By Oct. 1, the patrol ships reached the [Arctic Ocean](#), which was a first for the Chinese Coast Guard ships.
- No sooner had the Coast Guard ships departed from the northern Pacific than the second phase of the Northern/Interaction-2024 joint exercise began on Sept. 21. This was immediately followed by the [5th joint patrol](#) of the northern Pacific by the same naval vessels of the two navies, which was the first time for the two sides to conduct [two joint maritime patrols within one year](#).

The high frequency and intensity of the Sino-Russian interactions occurred against a backdrop of heightened tension in the West Pacific. From

late June to early August, the US-led Rim of the Pacific 2024 exercises ([RIMPAC 2024](#)), the largest in the world, drilled around the Hawaiian Islands with 40 surface ships, three submarines, 14 national land forces, over 150 aircraft, and more than 25,000 personnel from 29 countries.

It was during the multi-nation “Sama Sama” exercises that the PLA launched a 13-hour massive [Joint Sword-2024B](#) drill around Taiwan on Oct. 14. The exercise was a simulated blockade of the island shortly after Lai Ching-te’s speech on Oct. 10 (ROC’s national day), which was deemed as “[provocative and dangerous](#)” and aimed toward nominal independence. On the same day, Russian Defense Minister [Andrei Belousov](#) traveled to Beijing and held talks with Chinese counterpart Dong Jun. Military cooperation between Russia and China was important in safeguarding global and regional peace and stability, said Belousov.

While exercises came and went, the US deployment of an intermediate-range missile system in Japan and the Philippines was considered a long-term grave threat [to China and Russia](#). “[L]and-based intermediate-range missiles in the Asia-Pacific region will pose the biggest security threat to the region,” TASS cited PLA’s Lt. Gen. [He Lei](#) on Sept. 12. The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty prohibited the deployment of intermediate-range missiles but Washington withdrew from it in 2019.

Amidst these heightened military activities in 2024 was China’s effort to elevate/demonstrate its nuclear capabilities, with or without Russian cooperation. On Sept. 25, China tested, for the first time in [44 years](#), an ICBM ([DF-31AG](#) with a range of 12,000 km) from Hainan Island to the South Pacific. To this, Russian Presidential Spokesman Dmitry [Peskov](#) remarked “[T]his is China’s sovereign right... We respect [this].” In the Nov. 29–30 ninth joint strategic aerial patrol with Russia, China dispatched, for the first time, two long-range H-9N strategic bombers with refueling capabilities for a combat radius of [6,500 km](#). The [nuclear-capable](#) bomber could carry YJ-12 supersonic antiship missiles, CJ-100 cruise missiles, and even an air-launched variant of the hypersonic (Mach 10) [DF-21 anti-ship ballistic missiles](#) (see photo below). Many in China viewed this as a crucial step toward China’s [first](#) credible and operational airborne strategic deterrence.



Figure 3 H-6N Bomber with Ballistic Missile Photo: [Military Watch Magazine](#)

Intensified China-Russian mil-mil interactions occurred when Russia continued to be bogged down on its western front. Its vast east and Pacific regions were increasingly exposed despite Putin’s 2023 [declaration](#) that “the Far East is Russia’s strategic priority for the 21st century.” Enhanced military interactions with China were therefore highly desirable given China’s growing military capabilities.

For the PLA, Russia remained the sole source of real combat experience regardless of Russia’s battle performance in Ukraine. At the operational level, interoperability between the two militaries in 2024 meant more access to each other’s facilities for refueling and resupply. In the case of the joint bomber patrols of the northern Pacific, the flying range was much shorter for China’s H-6 bombers to reach their intended area off Alaska as they took off from [an airfield in northeast Russia](#). Some Chinese [military experts](#) were speculating that a shorter route via Russia’s Arctic air space would make China’s strategic bombers a more viable and flexible deterrent than PLA’s land and sea options.

Embracing Trump “Shock-n-Awe” 2.0

Although Putin remarked [jokingly](#) in early September that he wanted the Democratic candidate Harris to win, he was clearly [avoiding comments](#) on Trump’s win at the annual Valdai Forum on November 7. The Russian president nonetheless said Trump “impressed” him as a “courageous man” in “extraordinary conditions” (the assassination). Meanwhile, Trump’s words about ending the Ukraine conflict and improving relations with Russia “deserve attention.”

As to Trump’s repeated rhetoric of splitting the Beijing-Moscow partnership, Putin said that

Russia would not team up with the US in dealing with China. Relations with China “have reached a historical high and are based on mutual trust, which is something we lack in our relations with other countries, above all with Western countries,” Putin replied to a question from [Prof. Feng Shaolei](#), a top Russologist in China. He further suggested that “everyone would win and there would be no losers if the United States ... treats both Russia and China by moving away from its double containment policy towards a trilateral cooperation framework.”

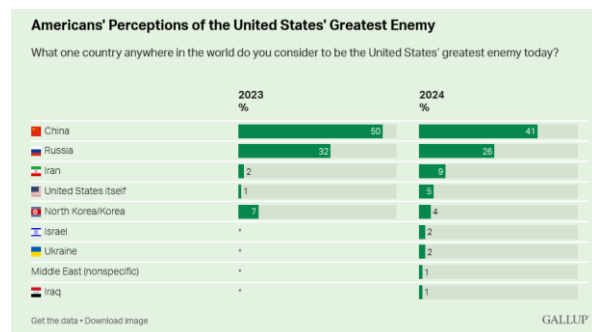
There were good reasons for Russia to be more careful with Trump’s huge win, given the highly charged US domestic chemistry and two assassination attempts against candidate Trump. “I believe he is still not entirely safe,” remarked [Putin](#) in late November. Meanwhile, Trump’s Cabinet picks reportedly received multiple [threats](#) against them. Even under the best circumstances, converting Trump’s campaign rhetoric into policies would be difficult.

While Russia could afford to adopt a wait-and-see posture regarding Trump, Beijing perceived Trump’s return with visible unease for at least four reasons. One was Trump’s solid record of “China-heavy-and-Russia-lite” in both words and deeds in the previous eight years. And there has been no indication of any deviation from that.

Second, Biden’s China policy, which was seen as bad enough—“endless trouble, endless frictions, and endless struggles” (麻烦不断 摩擦不断 斗争不断) according to [Wu Xinbo](#), director of American Studies Center of the prestigious Fudan University in Shanghai—would have to be interrupted if not disrupted given the gathering of China hawks under Trump. In this “you-go-low-I-go-lower” “China race,” Taiwan and the South China Sea could be the next flash points between Washington and Beijing.

Third, the US trade war with China, which was started by Trump in 2018, will likely escalate rapidly, further disrupting the already fragile supply chains of the world trading system. In contrast to Russia’s raw-material-based economic structure (oil, gas, grain, etc.), China’s globalized production chains, extensive energy supplies, and trading/shipping networks are [far more vulnerable](#) to sanctions and disturbances than [Russia](#) even under normal circumstances.

Last, a growing number of China’s [foreign policy analysts](#) came to see an eerily yet persistent “[civilizational](#)” factor permeating the Trump camp, in that white communism of the Soviet type and its post-Soviet variant were seen in a far more favorable light than “a great power competitor (China) that is not Caucasian” (words by [Kiron Skinner](#), director of policy planning at the State Department during Trump’s first term). To China’s surprise and perplexity, Skinner herself is African-American. No matter how much Russia is demonized, Putin, and particularly his “[healthy conservatism](#),” always has a strong appeal among [conservative segments](#) in the US/West. Such a sense of [racial hierarchy](#) may help explain why recent [polls](#) continuously show that more Americans view China as a greater enemy than Russia despite Russia’s war-prone propensity and China’s zero record of use of force in the past 45 years.



Moscow and Beijing, despite their long-term strategic partnership and being targets of Washington’s “[dual containment](#)” strategies, assume very different cultural/racial identities in the US domestic scene. It remains to be seen [how far](#) this genre of US identity politics will find its way to policies toward Moscow and Beijing under Trump 2.0.

End the War or the World?

Trump made his historic comeback a year after the passing of Henry Kissinger in November 2023. In their 2017 meeting in the White House, [Trump](#) described his “long-time” friend (Kissinger) as “a man of immense talent, experience, and knowledge.”

Despite the huge difference between the world’s most powerful salesman and the realpolitik thinker/practitioner, both men showed strong aversions to the Ukraine conflict. That said, the biggest difference between them is how the

conflict may end. For more than six months, Trump repeatedly promised to end it [in 24 hours](#).” Kissinger, however, warned that ending a conflict was far more difficult than starting one. “The test of policy is how it ends, not how it begins,” argued [Kissinger](#) shortly after the 2014 Crimea crisis.

For Beijing, the Trump-Kissinger discourse, regardless of the outcome, would put China between a rock and a hard place. As a profoundly conservative country, the ending of the Ukraine war, or any war, is good for China’s sprouting business around the world, particularly its [Belt and Road Initiative](#) now in its second decade with more than 150 countries. Such a prospect, however, would divert more attention and resources to America’s “China issue.”

Regardless, the Ukraine war was moving steadily toward a breaking point in the waning days of the Biden administration. On Nov. 17, [Biden authorized](#) Ukraine to use long-range ATACMS missiles (300-mile range) for deeper strikes into Russia, which [Ukraine did](#) two days later. On the same day, [Putin](#) approved changes to Russia’s [nuclear doctrine](#). Now an attack from a non-nuclear state, if backed by a nuclear power, would be treated as a joint assault on Russia. On Nov. 21, the Ukrainian city [Dnipro](#) was struck by Russia’s newest nuclear-capable intermediate-range hypersonic (Mach 10) ballistic missile code-named [Oreshnik](#) (or “Hazel Bush”) with six independently-guided warheads.

Moscow and Beijing reacted very differently to this escalation. For Russia, it was “a qualitatively new round of escalation of tensions and a qualitatively new situation...in this conflict,” remarked the Kremlin spokesman [Dmitry Peskov](#). Meanwhile, [Beijing](#) urged all sides to de-escalate and find a political solution. The strongest reaction came from Trump’s supporters who almost unanimously depicted the ATACMS reversal as an “[escalation move](#)” toward WWII. “It’s another step up the escalation ladder and nobody knows where this is going,” said Trump’s incoming national security adviser, Florida [Rep. Mike Waltz](#).

Just a few days after Biden’s ATACMS decision, the [New York Times](#) reported that some officials of the Biden administration floated the idea of returning nuclear weapons to Ukraine as a deterrent against Russia. Although this was dismissed a few days later by National Security Adviser Jake [Sullivan](#), the 21st-century version of

the 1983 made-for-TV film [The Day After](#) was rapidly unfolding as *Newsweek* published a series of simulated impacts of nuclear blasts on major metropolitan centers in [Europe](#), [North America](#), [Russia](#), [China](#), and [North Korea](#).

Russia’s reaction, or lack of reaction, to the *Newsweek* extravaganza may be uncharacteristic. Or it was exactly what Russia wanted. In contrast, China’s netizens [erupted](#) with disbelief and anger at *Newsweek*’s “coldblooded calculation” “reducing the untold human cost to lifeless statistics.”

For incoming US President Donald Trump ending the war in Ukraine is now a far more complex and difficult, if not impossible, issue. Meanwhile, time is limited for Trump, and perhaps for all other world leaders, to avert what [Henry Kissinger](#) warned, 11 months before his passing, was a global catastrophe (WWIII) in a grave new world of WMD and AI.

CHRONOLOGY OF CHINA-RUSSIA RELATIONS

MAY-NOVEMBER 2024

May 3-9, 2024: China's special envoy for the Ukraine crisis Li Hui conducts his [3rd shuttle diplomacy](#) by traveling to Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

May 16-17, 2024: Russian President [Putin](#) pays official visit to China. He and Chinese President Xi Jinping hold “a sincere and cordial meeting covering many topics.” The two sign a joint statement on deepening the comprehensive strategic partnership between their two nations. After Beijing, Putin visits China's northernmost provincial city [Harbin](#), the most Russianized city in China. He co-chairs the opening ceremony of the 8th Sino-Russian Expo, visits a Chinese tech university and Saint Sophia Cathedral (built in 1907), the largest Russian Orthodox church in the Far East.

May 20, 2024: Chinese FM Wang Yi and Russian FM Lavrov [meet](#) on the sideline of SCO's annual foreign ministerial meeting in Astana of Kazakhstan.

May 30-31, 2024: China and Russia hold a “[high-level think tank forum](#)” in Moscow. More than 100 representatives join. It was launched in 2018 by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) and the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC).

June 10, 2024: Foreign Ministers Wang Yi and Lavrov [meet](#) on the sidelines of the BRICS foreign ministers meeting in Nizhny Novgorod of Russia.

July 2-16, 2024: Chinese and Russian navies conduct [15-day joint patrol](#) of the Western Pacific and the South China Sea. Three Chinese naval ships and the Russian corvette *Sovershenny* of the Pacific Fleet participate in the 4th joint patrol. Unlike the previous two patrols, which were an extension of the annual “Northern/Interaction” series, this was a separate operation.

July 3, 2024 : Presidents Xi and Putin [hold a meeting](#) ahead of the 24th SCO summit in Astana.

July 8-19, 2024: China and Belarus conduct an 11-day joint anti-terrorist exercise code-named “[Attacking Falcon 2024](#)” in Belarus close to borders with Poland (5 klm) and Ukraine (60 klm).

July 9-13, 2024: China's top legislator [Zhao Leji](#) pays official goodwill visit to Russia and attends 9th meeting on parliamentary cooperation. Putin meets Zhao in St Petersburg on July 11.

July 12-17, 2024: Chinese and Russian navies conduct a joint naval exercise “[Exercise Joint Sea-2024](#)” at a military port in Zhanjiang in south China's Guangdong Province. The Joint-Sea exercise series started in 2012. This time, the seven Chinese and Russian vessels focus on “joint response to maritime security threats.”

July 21-23, 2024: Chinese Vice Premier [Ding Xuexiang](#) visits Moscow for: the 11th meeting of the China-Russia Investment Cooperation Committee, the 21st meeting of the China-Russia Energy Cooperation Committee, and the sixth China-Russia Energy Business Forum.

July 22-24, 2024: BRICS member states hold [9th Counter-Terrorism Working Group Session](#) in Moscow at the departmental/bureau level, the first enlarged meeting with new members (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates). Prior to this, Director of the External Security Bureau of China's Foreign Ministry Bai Tian chairs the “de-radicalization” session of the meeting.

July 23, 2024: SCO member states conduct the “[Interaction-2024](#)” joint counter-terrorism exercise in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. This is the first time all SCO

member states participate in a joint counter-terrorism live drill.

July 23-27, 2024: Ukrainian FM [Dmytro Kuleba](#) visits Guangzhou. He and Chinese FM meet on July 24 for [three hours](#).

July 23-29, 2024: [Two Chinese naval ships](#) (Jiaozuo and Honghu) visit the St Petersburg Port for the 328th founding anniversary of the Russian Navy.

July 24, 2024: Four Russian and Chinese strategic bombers carry out [a five-hour joint patrol](#) of Far East Russia and the Bering Sea near Alaska, the 8th since 2009. The two Tu-95MS and two Chinese H-6 bombers are “intercepted” by US F-35, F-16, and Canadian F-18 fighters in international airspace near Alaska.

July 25, 2024: A [trilateral foreign ministerial meeting](#) is held in Vientiane, Laos between Lao Deputy Prime Minister and FM Saleumxay Kommasith, Chinese FM Wang Yi, and Russian FM Sergey Lavrov, representing ASEAN, SCO and BRICS, respectively. It is held on the sidelines of the [57th ASEAN foreign ministerial meeting](#) chaired by Laos. Wang and Lavrov express support for ASEAN centrality of ASEAN. Wang and Lavrov then hold [a separate meeting](#).

July 26-29, 2024: A [Chinese naval task force](#) comprised of the comprehensive landing ship *Longhushan* and training ship *Zheng He* visit Vladivostok for the 328th anniversary of the Russian Navy. A total of 1,100 sailors and [naval cadets](#) from China’s Naval Aviation University in Yantai (Shandong Province) participate.

July 28-Aug. 7, 2024: China’s special envoy for the Ukraine crisis [Li Hui](#) conducts his 4th round of shuttle diplomacy by traveling to Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia.

Aug. 7-8, 2024: Director-General of the Department of Treaty and Law of the Foreign Ministry Ma Xinmin holds talks on “international law issues of mutual interest and concern” in Moscow with Director of the Legal

Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry [Musikhin Maksim Vyacheslavovich](#). Ma then has a [first-ever consultation](#) on the peaceful uses of outer space with Special Coordinator of the Russian Foreign Ministry for the International Cooperation Sergey Sergeevich Belousk.

Aug. 12-14 2024: Russia holds annual “[Army-2024 Forum](#)” at the Patriot Congress and Exhibition Center. The theme of the forum is Russia’s “special military operation experience.” About 100 militaries around the world join the close-door forum along with more than 120 foreign arms manufacturers. China, Belarus, India, and Iran [bring in their display items](#). Gen. Li Qiaoming of the PLA Ground Forces leads a delegation to the forum and holds talks with Russian Ground Forces' Commander-in-Chief Oleg Salyukov on [issues of “military cooperation.”](#)

Aug. 17, 2024: Vice FM [Ma Zhaoxu](#) holds consultations in Beijing with Russian Deputy FM Ryabkov Sergey Alexeevich. The two exchange views on bilateral relations, global strategic stability, BRICS cooperation, and other issues.

Aug. 20-21, 2024: Chinese Premier [Li Qiang](#) visits Moscow for the 29th annual prime ministerial meeting with Russian counterpart Mikhail Mishustin. The focus is to update the bilateral investment protection agreement signed in 2006 for the pending [¥1.4 trillion yuan](#) (about \$700 billion) China’s investment in 86 large projects in Russia. Li’s trip is his first official visit to Moscow as premier. [Putin](#) meets Li in the Kremlin after the regular PM meeting.

Sept. 4-6, 2024: Chinese Vice President [Han Zheng](#) visits Vladivostok for the 9th Eastern Economic Forum (EEF, Sept. 3-6). He is received by [Putin](#) on Sept. 4.

Sept. 10-12, 2024: BRICS’ Senior security officials meet in St. Petersburg for [14th annual session](#) chaired by Russian Security Council Secretary Sergey Shoigu. Chinese FM Wang Yi meets [Shoigu](#) and Russia’s Secretary of the Security Council on Sept. 10 prior to joining the

session. This is the first time new BRICS members (Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates) participate in the annual session. They also hold a session with security officials representing 13 “[Global South](#)” countries. Putin meets the BRICS participants on Sept. 12. [He](#) then holds a separate meeting with Chinese FM Wang Yi.

Sept. 10–15, 2024: China conducts the [first phase of the “Northern/Interaction-2024”](#) naval exercises with Russian naval and air forces in the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk. A China-Russia [joint commanding headquarters](#) is set up on Sept. 8 in Vladivostok.

Sept. 10–16, 2024: Russia conducts “[Ocean 2024](#)” strategic command-and-staff exercise involving some 90,000 troops and more than 500 ships and aircraft across the Pacific and Arctic Oceans, as well as the Mediterranean, Caspian and Baltic seas. Fifteen “friendly nations” send observers and China is the only one to participate in the exercise.

Sept. 13, 2024: [Geng Shuang](#), China's deputy permanent representative to the UN, says that “China has not supplied weapons to either party, and we have consistent and rigorous controls over dual-use items. We maintain normal trade and economic cooperation with all countries around the world, including Russia and Ukraine.”

Sept. 16–20, 2024: Chinese and Russian coast guard ships hold a joint drill near Peter the Great Bay off Vladivostok. This is followed by a [first-ever joint patrol](#) of the northern Pacific on September 21. On Oct. 1, the patrol ships reach the [Arctic Ocean](#). This is the first time that Chinese Coast Guard ships patrol the Arctic waters.

Sept. 21–27, 2024: The Northern/Interaction-2024 joint exercise conducts its [2nd phase](#) in the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk. This is followed by the [5th joint patrol](#) of the northern Pacific by the two navies.

Sept. 27, 2024: Chinese FM Wang Yi and Brazilian special presidential advisor Celso Amorim launch

a “[Friends of Peace](#)” platform on the Ukraine crisis at the UN headquarters in New York. Fifteen other countries from the Global South join the platform including Algeria, Bolivia, Columbia, Egypt, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Mexico, South Africa, Turkey, and Zambia. [France and Switzerland](#) join the meeting as observers. A joint statement is issued. Russian FM [Lavrov](#) urges the group to produce a specific action plan for achieving peace and “fully take into account... the root causes of the crisis.” Ukrainian President Zelensky criticized the plan as “destructive.”

Sept. 27, 2024: Chinese FM Wang Yi and Russian FM Lavrov attended the [third informal meeting](#) of the foreign ministers of China, Russia, Pakistan, and Iran on the Afghan issue on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session in New York. A joint statement was issued calling for greater cooperation in dealing with security and economic challenges in Afghanistan.

Oct. 2, 2024: Russian and Chinese heads of state exchange greetings for the 75th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations.

Oct. 4, 2024: Sixth regular meeting (Moscow format) on [Afghanistan](#) is held in Moscow. Senior officials from Russia, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan attend. Acting FM of Afghanistan Amir Khan Muttaqi takes part as the main guest. [A joint statement](#) is issued calling for cooperation on the security and development of Afghanistan. Russia is reportedly removing Afghanistan from its list of [terrorist states](#).

Oct. 14–15, 2024: Russian Defense Minister [Andrei Belousov](#) travels to Beijing and holds talks with Chinese counterpart Dong Jun. Belousov says that military cooperation between Russia and China is important in safeguarding global and regional peace and stability. Belousov is also received by [Zhang Youxia](#), deputy chairman of the military commission of the CCP.

Oct. 22–24, 2024: BRICS holds its annual summit in [Kazan](#), Russia. President Putin and President

Xi Jinping meet on October 22 on the sideline of the BRICS summit.

Oct. 29, 2024: Assistant FM [Liu Bin](#) holds consultations with Russian Deputy FM Rudenko Andrey Yurevich in Beijing. The two discuss SCO and other regional issues.

Oct. 30, 2024: Chinese FM [Wang Yi](#) meets Russian Deputy FM Andrey Rudenko in Beijing. The two exchange views on the Ukraine crisis.

Nov. 7, 2024: Putin speaks highly on relations with China during the annual [Valdai Forum](#) in Sochi, Russia. Mentioning China more than 30 times in his three-hour speech and Q&A session, Putin also affirms Russia's support for China's claim over Taiwan, while blaming the US and Taiwan for "instigating a crisis in Asia" similar to that of Ukraine.

Nov. 11-14, 2024: Russian Security Council Secretary [Sergey Shoigu](#) pays a working visit to China. Shoigu holds "strategic security consultations" with Chinese FM Wang Yi on Nov. 12 and meets CCP's Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission overseeing national security and intelligence Cheng Wenqing. Shoigu also visits the Airshow China 2024 in Zhuhai, Guangdong Province.

Nov. 18, 2024: Chinese FM Wang Yi and Russian counterpart Lavrov hold talks in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro on the sidelines of the G20 annual summit. They discuss issues of [Korea, Ukraine](#), etc

Nov. 22, 2024: Assistant FM [Liu Bin](#) meets Russian Ambassador to China Igor Morgulov in Beijing. They exchange views on China-Russia relations, high-level exchanges and practical cooperation.

Nov. 27, 2024: China's Assistant FM [Liu Bin](#) holds consultations with Russian Deputy FM Galuzin Mikhail Yuryevich in Beijing. They discussed CIS and other regional issues. Yuryevich also meets with Chinese Assistant FM [Miao Deyu](#).

Nov. 29-30, 2024: Two Russian Tu-95MS and two Chinese H-6N ([nuclear capable](#)) strategic bombers conduct the [9th joint strategic patrol](#) of the East China Sea and Western Pacific. They are escorted at various stages of the patrol by Su-30SM, MiG-31 and J-16 fighters of the two air forces. A Chinese oil tanker (Y-20A) and [two Chinese Y-9](#) electronic surveillance/warfare planes also join the operation. During the two-phase joint patrol, Russian bombers land and take off from a Chinese airfield.

Dec. 1, 2024: Chinese FM [Wang Yi](#) chairs the 5th China-Central Asian Foreign Ministerial meeting in Chengdu, China. They discuss the work for the 2nd China-Central Asian summit in Astana, Kazakhstan in 2025. A [joint communique](#) was issued after the meeting.

Dec. 2, 2024: China's special envoy for Middle Eastern affairs [Zhai Jun](#) meets Russian Deputy FM Sergei Vershinin on the sidelines of the Urgent Humanitarian Response for Gaza Conference.