



Strategic Ambiguity and the Deterrent Value of the Sino-Russian Partnership

By Elizabeth Wishnick

The ever deepening Sino-Russian partnership has attracted considerable attention, especially in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Although the partnership was outlined first in a 2001 20-year agreement and recently extended in 2021, its parameters remain opaque. In particular, it remains unclear whether Russia and China are developing an issue-specific alignment or a broader political-military alliance. This paper argues that the strategic ambiguity inherent in the Sino-Russian partnership contributes to its deterrent value, making an alliance unnecessary. Much of the analysis of the impact of the Sino-Russian partnership on deterrence focuses on the military equipment Russia sells to the PRC which contribute to anti-access and area denial for U.S. and allied forces, such as the S-400 surface-to-air missile defense system. This paper will focus instead on the communication strategies Russian and Chinese officials use to create ambiguity about the parameters of their strategic alignment, especially whether or not it constitutes an alliance.

The Deterrent Value of Partnerships

Deterrence involves dissuading an adversary from taking a specific action by increasing its costs, the assumption being that the adversary will or may take a negative action in the absence of such a threat. Traditionally U.S. strategists have distinguished between *primary deterrence*, which prevents a threat to the deterrer's home territory and *extended deterrence* which prevents a threat to a third party, such as an ally or a partner.¹ According to the U.S. Department of Defense Joint Doctrine Note 2-19:

Deterrence may be accomplished by threat of punishment or threat of denial. In the case of the former, the coercer threatens to inflict pain on the target if it takes an action proscribed by the coercer. In the case of the latter, the coercer threatens to deny (through the use of military force) the enemy's ability to achieve its objective. For instance, during the Cold War the United States sought to deter a Russian attack on Western Europe by threatening pain in the form of nuclear retaliation. But it also sought to deter such an attack by relying on North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces (including a large U.S. contingent) to deny Russia victory in such a circumstance.²

In deterrence by denial, reliance on allied military capabilities plays a key role in demonstrating the credibility of the threat to use force. Under the Biden Administration, U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin has emphasized the concept of “integrated deterrence,” which takes into account the potential asymmetric advantage the U.S. would have in acting in concert with allies and partners.³

Both PRC and Russian concepts of deterrence involve displays of force, in addition to threats of force. For the PRC, military deterrence (*junshi weishe*; 军事威慑) is described as a means to contain or avoid war. At the same time, military deterrence may involve the threat or use of force to compel the adversary to yield, thereby blurring the distinction made by U.S. strategists between deterrence and compellence.⁴ Dr. Brendan Mulvaney and Lieutenant Colonel Kyle Marcum note that PRC military experts distinguish between offensive deterrence, which might involve the use of limited strikes to demonstrate resolve and capabilities, and defensive deterrence. The latter is closer to the U.S. definition, while offensive deterrence is closer to coercion. Both offensive and defensive deterrence are two sides of the PRC concept of strategic deterrence.⁵

For Russia, the concept of strategic deterrence (*strategicheskoe sderzhivanie* стратегическое сдерживание) “is a holistic concept that envisions the integration of nonmilitary and military measures to shape adversary decision-making.”⁶ Like the U.S. concept, deterrence can be preventive—a means of avoiding or containing conflict—but like the PRC approach, also can involve the use of force (*silovoe sderzhivanie* силовое сдерживание) or coercion through intimidation (*ustrashenie* устрашение). Deterrence can be used in peacetime to contain conflict and in wartime to manage escalation.⁷ Russian strategists believe that strategic deterrence encompasses a spectrum of non-military and military tools with the purpose of demonstrating a credible threat to use military force.⁸

PRC military writers state that military alliances, displays of force in military exercises, and surveillance patrols contribute to the development of credible deterrence.⁹ However, since the Deng Xiaoping era, China has claimed to pursue the three nos (*san bu* 三不), i.e. a policy of non-alliance, non-confrontation, and no targeting third parties (*bu jiemeng* 不结盟, *bu duikang* 不对抗, *bu zhendui disanfang* 不针对第三方).¹⁰ The PRC’s 2019 White Paper on defense further explains that “China advocates partnerships rather than alliances and does not join any military bloc.”¹¹

Official Russian documents similarly reject alliances. The 2008 Foreign Policy Concept called traditional military and political alliances “cumbersome” and unable to address current transnational security threats, a point that was also made in the 2015 National Security Strategy.¹² The 2016 Russian Foreign Policy Concept reiterated that “Existing military and political alliances are not capable of countering the full range of challenges and threats the world is currently facing.”¹³ Russia’s 2021 National Security Strategy rejects “bloc approaches” in favor of multilateral interaction, especially under the auspices of the United Nations.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the 2020 Basic Principles of State Policy of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Deterrence does mention unspecified allies in terms of discussing potential threats to Russia (and/or its allies).¹⁵

The Sino-Russian Partnership: An Alliance?

Despite their own policy documents which argue against alliances, Russian and Chinese officials equivocate on whether or not the Sino-Russian strategic partnership constitutes an alliance. Since 2019 they have called their relationship a “comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era,”¹ indicating multifaceted cooperation, including in the technology and military sectors. In the PRC’s hierarchy of foreign policy partnerships, this ranks highest and only the relationship with Russia merits this designation.¹⁶ As Su Hao of Foreign Affairs University (affiliated with the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs) explains, “In Chinese foreign relations, the attributes used to modify a “partnership” often decide the status and degree of development of relations between China and these countries.”¹⁷ Because Russia and China are both major powers and UN Security Council permanent members, their relationship gets top billing, Su Hao argues.¹⁸

Russian journalist and foreign affairs expert Fyodor Lukyanov emphasizes the flexibility of the arrangement and explains its appeal to both Russia and China. Lukyanov writes, “New strategic relations, such as those Russia and China are trying to build, do not presuppose strict hierarchy or full political and security coordination.”¹⁹ In Lukyanov’s view, neither country wants a binding sort of relationship because this type of bond would limit their freedom of maneuver and presupposes greater shared interests and values than he believes they have.

Foreign policy experts may see through official rhetoric, but Russian and Chinese officials have not always been clear about the nature of the Sino-Russian relations. At times Russian President Vladimir Putin and other top officials, such as Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, have referred to Russia’s partnership with China as alliance-like or an allied relationship. However, on other occasions these same officials (including Putin) have rejected the existence of an alliance. In his end-of-year press conference on December 19, 2019, for example, Putin unequivocally stated (in reply to a Japanese journalist) that “We do not have a military alliance with China and we do not plan to create one.”²⁰ However, in another comment on October 22, 2020 Putin left the door open. “It is possible to imagine anything.... We have not set that goal for ourselves. But, in principle, we are not going to rule it out, either.”²¹

Lavrov was equally unwilling to provide a clear answer. He told a Russian TV station that “If allied relations imply a military alliance, then neither Russia nor China are planning to set up such an alliance.” However, Lavrov went on to say that “if allied relations are interpreted as joint efforts to defend international law and the fundamentals of the world order built on the United Nations Charter, to counter attempts at meddling with domestic affairs of other nations, the more so with the use of force, then, yes, we are unconditional allies with China in defending these principles.”²²

PRC officials have been similarly obfuscatory—Xin Zhang of East China Normal University points out that the PRC Foreign Ministry has been promoting a view that the Sino-Russian partnership transcends traditional alliance relations, while PRC academics emphasize the domestic sources—what they term the “endogenous drivers”—of the partnership that make it

¹ In Mandarin the partnership is called: *xin shidai quan mian zhanlue hezuo huo ban guanxi* 新时代全面战略合作伙伴关系 and in Russian: Всеобъемлющее стратегическое партнерство новой эры *vseob'emlyushchee strategicheskoe partnyorstvo novoy ery*

impervious to external maneuvering.²³ Thus PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated in January 2021 that “The Sino-Russian strategic cooperation has no end, no restricted area, no upper limit.”

Although Xin Zhang contended that Xi Jinping had spoken of these enduring forces, by June 2021, on the 20th anniversary of the Signing of the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation between China and Russia, the Sino-Russian joint statement sought to square the circle, declaring that “The Sino-Russian relationship is not similar to the military and political alliance during the Cold War, but transcends this model of state relations,” and also highlighting that it has “endogenous power.”²⁴ In his analysis of this statement, leading PRC Russia expert Feng Shaolei highlighted that, for Sino-Russian relations to fully develop their potential, “it is necessary to further promote the improvement of bilateral relations from “external” to “endogenous”, fully tap the “endogenous driving force”, and open up development space. In other words, Sino-Russian cooperation should not only be non-conflicting, non-confrontational, and not targeting third parties, but must also tap its own potential to deal with internal and external challenges.”²⁵ Nevertheless, by February 4, 2022 the “no limits” view seems to have taken the upper hand when Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin signed a joint statement—popularly termed the “no-limits agreement” in Western media—reaffirming “that the new inter-State relations between Russia and China are superior to political and military alliances of the Cold War era. Friendship between the two States has no limits, there are no “forbidden” areas of cooperation...”²⁶

Prior to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, Vasily Kashin, a senior scholar at the Institute of the Far East in Moscow, saw evidence of alliance-like behavior on security issues and an expanding menu of military exercises, despite the apparent rejection of the term “alliance.” The 2019 PRC White Paper on Defense outlined a deepening military relationship “that continues to develop at a high level, enriching the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era and playing a significant role in maintaining global strategic stability.” The White Paper details that “The Chinese and Russian militaries have continued the sound development of exchange mechanisms at all levels, expanded cooperation in high-level exchanges, military training, equipment, technology and counterterrorism, and realized positive interaction and coordination on international and multilateral occasions.”²⁷

For a true alliance to be created, Kashin conceded that the two countries would need to demonstrate interoperability, technological cooperation, and economic interdependence. Moreover, he noted that neither side would gain from moving towards a formal alliance; to the contrary each would lose its freedom of maneuver.²⁸ For Kashin, who saw the worsening of U.S.-Russia and U.S.-China relations as irreversible, strategic cooperation between Russia and China, now covering missile launch detection systems, was facing fewer barriers to expansion.

Nonetheless, Kashin notes that Russia was moving forward with areas of cooperation (naval forces, anti-ballistic missile defense) that were unlikely to harm Russian security in the event of future tensions with China.²⁹ Dmitry Trenin, a former director of the Carnegie Moscow Center who served previously in the Soviet and Russian military, saw a Russo-Chinese entente or alignment, not an alliance. In his view, alliances were Cold War relics which lack the flexibility needed for the current globalized world. Writing prior to the Russian war on Ukraine, Trenin contended that “Russia and China will never be against each other, but they will not necessarily always be with each other.”³⁰ This meant that both countries would cooperate as needed without sacrificing their independence or sovereignty. Like Kashin, Trenin saw limits to military cooperation, particularly in terms of interoperability, but argued that areas of progress,

such as Sino-Russian collaboration in early warning systems, would be beneficial for the international community as a whole.³¹ After the Russian invasion, critics of Putin's war like Alexander Gabuev see Russia necessarily drawing closer to China for economic reasons,³² while supporters like Trenin credit geopolitical factors for the deepening partnership, though he still calls an alliance unnecessary.

In China, discussion of an alliance is not a mainstream view among academic analysts and most officials reject this characterization, though there is some evidence that discussion of the merits of a future Sino-Russian alliance is reaching a broader audience,³³ despite the highly sensitive nature of the topic. Yan Xuetong, a leading scholar of International Relations and a dean at Tsinghua University, has been the most prominent advocate of an alliance with Russia, but even his concept of an alliance is a limited and defensive one, focusing on strategic security.³⁴ Wang Haiyang, a former Chinese military attaché to Russia, has advocated a special type of military relationship called 'special friendly forces' to enhance transparency and trust.³⁵

Much of the academic discussion centers on reasons why a Sino-Russian alliance would not be appropriate or desirable. Thus Ying Liu, a professor at Foreign Affairs University highlighted the difference in the national identities of the two countries that would make an alliance impractical.³⁶ Feng Yujun, a dean and scholar at Fudan University (formerly an analyst at the Ministry of State Security's China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, known as CICR) and Shang Yue, an analyst at CICR, argued that such an alliance would be undesirable, as it would fail to help the two countries to address their pressing domestic priorities. They further highlight that the Sino-Russian strategic partnership has failed to reduce U.S. power or pressure appreciably to date and that upgrading it to an alliance would not only violate longstanding Sino-Russian agreements not to target third parties, but also would be unlikely to be effective.³⁷

Strategic Ambiguity and the Sino-Russian Partnership

In the U.S. and other countries the depth and extent of the China-Russia relationship is the subject of major debate. Some analysts assess that the strategic relationship that has emerged essentially constitutes a *de facto*, albeit undeclared, alliance.³⁸ Alexander Korolev of the University of New South Wales, Sydney, assesses that the Sino-Russian partnership is "on the verge of an alliance" based on his analysis of the deepening institutionalization of their military cooperation.³⁹ Certainly the partnership has characteristics of an alliance such as participation in joint exercises and patrols, shared conception of threat and some shared values, regular dialogue, arms sales and co-production. However, there is no formal alliance treaty or mutual defense clause, and there are many outstanding questions about the parameters of the Sino-Russian partnership.

1. Mutual Economic Assistance

There are no stated requirements in Sino-Russian agreements for provision of mutual assistance, but the expectations of the two parties remain unknown. Since the invasion of Ukraine, Russian officials reportedly pressed China on at least two occasions for financial and technological support, leading to "tense discussions."⁴⁰ This indicates that Russia was hoping, if not expecting, economic (and perhaps military) aid from China. Although U.S. and EU officials have warned China repeatedly that providing such aid would result in sanctions there have been few violations by PRC companies, despite their country's longstanding position against sanctions. While seen as a major potential source of backfilling technology to Russia, for the

most part Chinese firms have prioritized their access to global markets and capital.⁴¹ Instead, we have seen Russia seek aid from Iran, already under sanctions itself for its violation of the global nuclear regime, in a very public way, with Putin traveling to Teheran to obtain needed drones.⁴² In April 2022, DJI (Da-Jiang Innovations), a privately owned PRC drone company that was accused of providing Russia with data from drones purchased by Ukraine, ceased sales to both Ukraine and Russia to prevent its drones from being used in combat.⁴³ Ukraine, nonetheless, continues to allege that Russia still uses DJI's AeroScope tracking system to target Ukrainian drones.⁴⁴ Despite this issue, given the PRC's overall compliance with sanctions, it is unclear whether Chinese officials would expect Russia to act any differently in the case of the imposition of sanctions on China if it invaded Taiwan.

2. Mutual Defense

As noted earlier, there is no specific mutual defense clause in the Sino-Russian agreements on strategic partnership. Chinese officials have been at pains to present their country as neutral and impartial, but it is unclear if they would remain so if there were a direct conflict between Russia and NATO countries. Similarly, in the event of a PRC attack on Taiwan that led to a direct conflict between PRC forces and U.S. and allied forces, it remains unclear what Russia's response might be, though Russia has paid lip service to the PRC's One China principle. Most recently, in the February 4th joint agreement, Russia reaffirmed its support for the One China principle, confirmed that Taiwan was an inalienable part of China, and stated its opposition to Taiwan independence.⁴⁵ It cannot be excluded that Russia might cooperate with China in some way as it staged an attack on Taiwan, for example, by staging or participating in a cyberattack on Taiwan, though this may be less likely if China continues to stay on the sidelines in Russia's war on Ukraine.

3. Strategic ambiguity

These uncertainties about the parameters for Sino-Russian cooperation beg the question about the strategic nature of the partnership's ambiguity. Strategic ambiguity typically is associated with U.S. Taiwan policy. This policy involves: a. Legal obligations under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act to provide defensive weapons to Taiwan; b. *De facto* but not *de jure* diplomatic relations; c. Official recognition of one China; d. No explicit guarantee that the U.S. would defend Taiwan militarily in case of a PRC attack.⁴⁶ This policy, known as "strategic ambiguity" is meant to be a deterrent to both PRC military action and a declaration of independence by Taiwan.

While successful for more than 50 years, critics of U.S. Taiwan policy argue that in view of China's increasing military power and belligerence in the Indo-Pacific region, greater "strategic clarity"⁴⁷ is needed to deter a PRC military attack on Taiwan, legalized by a 2005 PRC law in the event Taiwan declares independence. Supporters of strategic ambiguity, by contrast, argue that this policy is better suited to deal with the grey zone tactics they believe the People's Liberation Army is likely to employ against Taiwan.⁴⁸ As an article by Taiwan scholars notes, "Strategic ambiguity... means that the red lines that would trigger a U.S. response are difficult to discern, thus preventing China from exploiting loopholes in existing promises. Given the ever-changing dynamics of the Strait, it affords the United States more flexibility and freedom from hand-tying guarantees."⁴⁹

The strategic ambiguity inherent in the Sino-Russian partnership works in a similar manner to U.S. Taiwan policy. By downplaying the alliance-like aspects of their relations, China

and Russia avoid two negative outcomes: a. They create disagreement among their opponents regarding the parameters of the partnership; and b. They prevent existing alliances from targeting the strategic partnership specifically as a hostile alliance, as was the case with NATO and the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War. The appearance (and reality) of policy differences between Russia and China on some issues also fuels efforts to create daylight between them. Although such strategies are unlikely to succeed due to the importance of domestic drivers for the partnership in both countries, such perceptions have led to efforts by the U.S. and its allies to engage with one or the other country, or at least to attempt to avoid an equally hostile relationship with both at the same time.

Is the strategic ambiguity in the Sino-Russian partnership by design or by default? The lack of clarity about the parameters of the partnership could be a form of deceptive communication,⁵⁰ intended to sow doubts in the minds of outside observers regarding the prospect for a Sino-Russian alliance. The tendency of observers to suspect the formation of such an alliance makes them all the more susceptible to read into the ambiguous information presented by Russia and China. Conversely, or perhaps simultaneously, there may be real policy differences between Russia and China that they seek to downplay through their absence of clarity on the prospects for their mutual assistance or mutual defense in particular scenarios. This type of thinking has made ambiguity a feature of many diplomatic agreements, not just of U.S. Taiwan policy.⁵¹

Conclusions

Both Russia and China have downplayed the existence of a military alliance—some of the time at least—while equivocating on the possibility of one forming in the future. This strategic ambiguity has a deterrent effect, enabling Russia and China to create uncertainty for their opponents who may be less likely to take action against one of them, if a two front war might be the eventual result. While both Russia and China claim to oppose forming alliances, the prospect of one supports their vision of deterrence. For China, the possibility of an alliance with Russia may increase the credibility of deterrence, designed to avoid war with the U.S. and its allies. The ambiguity of the Sino-Russian partnership also fits well with the Russian concept of deterrence as a means to shape adversary thinking.

The reality of an actual conflict in Ukraine has made this ambiguity more costly, for China at least. In the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, PRC officials have portrayed their country as impartial and neutral and chafed at the perception in other countries that China was enabling or supporting Russian aggression.⁵² *Nikkei Asia* has reported PRC reluctance to engage in simultaneous joint air and sea patrols near Japan in June 2022 for fear that the international community would read in greater unity of action between China and Russia than is the case.⁵³ The PRC Ambassador to the U.S. told the July 2022 Aspen Forum that Sino-Russian relations were misunderstood and there was no alliance between the two countries.⁵⁴ In his comments to the Shangri-La Dialogue on June 12, 2022, PRC Minister of Defense Wei Fenghe stated unequivocally the relationship with Russia was a partnership, not an alliance and China was not providing any material support to Russia's war on Ukraine.⁵⁵

Chinese critics of the Russian war on Ukraine have gone even farther. Zhou Bo, a retired Senior Colonel, wrote in *The Economist* “the war in Ukraine has inadvertently proved that Beijing and Moscow's rapprochement is not an alliance. China didn't provide military assistance

to Russia. Instead it provided humanitarian aid and money to Ukraine twice, including food and sleeping bags, and has pledged to continue to “play a constructive role.”⁵⁶

Nevertheless, for the first time all three services of the PLA participated in the September 2022 downsized iteration of the Vostok military exercises in eastern Russia. Two weeks later, Yang Jiechi, a Politburo member and China’s highest ranking diplomat, received Nikolai Patrushev, the head of the Russian Security Council, in Beijing. Yang hailed the “momentum” in Sino-Russian military cooperation and the two sides pledged to continue joint exercises and to increase contacts between their general staffs.⁵⁷

By contrast with efforts by Chinese leaders to avoid characterizing the Sino-Russian partnership as an alliance, Russian officials have taken to overstating the level of agreement between their country and China on Ukraine. The Russian readout of Xi’s birthday phone call had the PRC leader noting “the legitimacy of Russia’s actions,” while the PRC version highlighted how “China has always independently assessed the situation...” Nevertheless, Russian Asia experts reject the characterization of the partnership as an alliance and see the PRC has a largely self-interested partner. Most argue that Russia would do better to avoid excessive dependence on China and expand its partnerships.⁵⁸

In the short term, the ambiguity regarding the Sino-Russian partnership adds uncertainty for the U.S. and its allies. While it may have the deterrent effect that Russia and China seek, their ambiguous alignment also risks encouraging a perception in the U.S. of their likely joint action, potentially leading to the expansion of a US-China conflict (or a US-Russia conflict).

The author would like to thank Samuel D. Robertson for his excellent editing.

Elizabeth Wishnick is a Senior Research Scientist at CNA, on leave from her position as Professor of Political Science at Montclair State University. She is also a Senior Research Scholar at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Columbia University. The views stated here are her own.

Opinions, conclusions, and recommendations expressed or implied within are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of the Air University, the Department of the Air Force, the Department of Defense, or any other U.S. government agency. Cleared for public release: distribution unlimited.

Endnotes

¹Vesna Danilovic and Joe Clare, “Deterrence and Crisis Bargaining,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, November 20, 2017, <https://oxfordre.com/internationalstudies/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.001.0001/acrefore-9780190846626-e-78?rskey=iLzMa5&result=2>.

² *Joint Doctrine Note 2-19: Strategy, December 10, 2019*

https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/jdn_jg/jdn2_19.pdf?ver=2019-12-20-093655-890

³ Jim Garamone, “Austin Says Current Operations Give Hints of New National Defense Strategy,” February 18, 2022, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2940956/austin-says-current-operations-give-hints-of-new-national-defense-strategy/>

⁴ Alison A. Kaufman, Daniel M. Hartnett, *Managing Conflict: Examining Recent PLA Writings on Escalation Control* (Arlington, VA: CNA China Studies 2016), 54, https://www.cna.org/archive/CNA_Files/pdf/drm-2015-u-009963-final3.pdf.

⁵ Kyle Marcum and Brendan S. Mulvaney, “To Deter the PRC...,” *APSI Strategic Insight* 164, June 2021, https://ad-aspi.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/2021-06/To%20deter%20the%20PRC_0.pdf?VersionId=xJRull.IDIaj25r2eU41bJ0MY18XgebL.

⁶ Michael Kofman, Anya Fink, and Jeffrey Edmonds, *Russian Strategy for Escalation Management: Evolution of Key Concepts* (Arlington, VA: CAN 2020), 5, https://www.cna.org/archive/CNA_Files/pdf/drm-2019-u-022455-1rev.pdf.

⁷ Kofman, Fink and Edmonds, 15.

⁸ Anya Loukianova Fink, “The Evolving Russian Concept of Strategic Deterrence: Risks and Responses,” *Arms Control Today*, July-August 2017, <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2017-07/features/evolving-russian-concept-strategic-deterrence-risks-responses>

⁹ Kaufman and Hartnett, 73.

¹⁰ Jing Xiang and Yao Yao (eds.), *Di Sandai Lingdao Waijiao Shilu* (The Diplomatic Records of China’s Third Generation Leaders), Beijing: Zhongguo Yanshi Chubanshe, 1997, p.90; cited in Joseph Yu-Shek Cheng And Franklin Wankun Zhang, “Chinese Foreign Relation Strategies Under Mao and Deng: A Systematic and Comparative Analysis,” *Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* 14(3) 1999:102.

¹¹ *China’s National Defense in a New Era*, July 24, 2019,

https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/201907/24/content_WS5d3941ddc6d08408f502283d.html

¹² Ecaterina Locoman and Mihaela Papa, “The Transformation of Alliances: Mapping Russia’s Close Relationships in an Era of Multivectorism,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 43(2) 2022: 10.

¹³ “The Foreign Policy Concept Of The Russian Federation,” November 30, 2016,

http://www.rusemb.org.uk/rp_insight/.

¹⁴ Ukaz Prezidenta Rossii: O strategii natsional’noi bezopasnosti Rossiyskoy Federatsii [Decree by the President of Russia: Regarding The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation], July 2, 2021,

<http://scrf.gov.ru/media/files/file/14wGRPqJvETSkUTYmhepzRochb1j1jqh.pdf>

-
- ¹⁵ “Fundamentals of Russia’s Nuclear Deterrence State Policy,” New Defense Order Strategy, June 6, 2020, <https://dfnc.ru/en/russia-news/fundamentals-of-russia-s-nuclear-deterrence-state-policy/>.
- ¹⁶ Helena Lagarda, “From marriage of convenience to strategic partnership: China-Russia relations and the fight for global influence,” MERICS, August 24, 2021, <https://merics.org/en/short-analysis/marriage-convenience-strategic-partnership-china-russia-relations-and-fight-global>.
- ¹⁷ Su Hao, “Harmonious World: The Conceived International Order in Framework of China’s Foreign Affairs,” National Institute of Defence Studies Report, http://www.nids.go.jp/english/publication/joint_research/series3/pdf/3-2.pdf, 2008, 27, 37.
- ¹⁸ Su Hao, 39.
- ¹⁹ Fyodor Lukyanov, “Fuzzy Alliances, Flexible Relations,” *Russia in Global Affairs*, January 2018, 25, https://archive.transatlanticrelations.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ch02_Luyanov.pdf. Fyodor Lukyanov is editor-in-chief of *Russia in Global Affairs*, chairman of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, and research director of the Valdai International Discussion Club.
- ²⁰ “Putin’s End-of-the-Year Press Conference, in Quotes,” *The Moscow Times*, December 19, 2019, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/12/19/putins-end-of-year-press-conference-in-quotes-a68686>; Путин: Россия не планирует создание военного союза с Китаем [Putin: Rossiya ne planiruet sozdanie voennogo soyuza s Kitaem/Putin: Russia Does Not Plan to Create a Military Alliance with China] *EurAsia Daily*, December 19, 2019, <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2019/12/19/putin-rossiya-ne-planiruet-sozdanie-voennogo-soyuza-s-kitaem>.
- ²¹ Vladimir Isachenkov, “Putin: Russia-China Military Alliance Can’t Be Ruled Out,” APNews, October 22, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/beijing-moscow-foreign-policy-russia-vladimir-putin-1d4b112d2fe8cb66192c5225f4d614c4>.
- ²² “Russia, China Not Seeking Military Alliance—Lavrov,” TASS, November 1, 2019, <https://tass.com/politics/1086654>.
- ²³ Xin Zhang, “‘Endogenous Drives’ with ‘No Limits’: Contrasting Chinese Policy Narratives on Sino-Russian Relations since 2014,” *Russian Analytical Digest* No. 265, 7, <https://css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD265.pdf>.
- ²⁴ “Joint Statement of the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation on the 20th Anniversary of the Signing of the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation between China and Russia,” *Xinhua*, June 28, 2021, https://www.guancha.cn/internation/2021_06_28_596184.shtml.
- ²⁵ Feng Shaolei, “从全球转型看中美俄关系与欧亚秩序构建 Cóng quánqiú zhuǎnxíng kàn zhòng měi é guānxì yǔ ōu yà zhìxù gòujiàn [China-US-Russian Relations and the Construction of the Eurasian Order from the Perspective of Global Transformation], *当代世界 [Shidai Shijie Contemporary World]* (9)2021, 45.
- ²⁶ “Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development,” <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/5770>.
- ²⁷ *China’s National Defense in a New Era*.
- ²⁸ Vasily Kashin, *The Current State of Russian-Chinese Defense Cooperation*, CNA August 2018, 23-25, <https://www.cna.org/reports/2018/08/state-of-russian-chinese-defense-cooperation>.
- ²⁹ Vasily Kashin, “Tacit Alliance: Russia and China Take Military Partnership to New Level,” October 22, 2019, <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/80136>.
- ³⁰ Dmitry Trenin, “Russia, China Are Key and Close Partners,” June 5, 2019, <https://carnegie.ru/2019/06/05/russia-china-are-key-and-close-partners-pub-79262>; Dmitry Trenin, “Russia Analyst: Russia, China are partners, but not quite allies,” December 2, 2019, <https://www.defensenews.com/outlook/2019/12/02/russia-analyst-china-and-russia-are-partners-but-not-quite-allies/>.
- ³¹ Dmitry Trenin, “How Cozy Is Russia and China’s Military Relationship?” November 19, 2019, <https://carnegie.ru/2019/11/19/how-cozy-is-russia-and-china-s-military-relationship-pub-80363>.
- ³² Alexander Gabuev, “China’s New Vassal: How the War in Ukraine Turned Moscow Into Beijing’s Junior Partner,” *Foreign Affairs*, August 9, 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/chinas-new-vassal>; Dmitry Trenin, “How Russia Must Reinvent Itself to Defeat the West’s ‘Hybrid War,’” *Modern Diplomacy*, July 25, 2022, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2022/07/25/how-russia-must-reinvent-itself-to-defeat-the-west-s-hybrid-war/>.
- ³³ Yu Bin, “Beautiful Relationship in a Brave/Grave New World,” *Comparative Connections* 21(2) September 2019, <https://cc.pacforum.org/2019/09/beautiful-relationship-in-a-brave-grave-new-world/>.

- ³⁴Yan Xuetong, “Eluosi keyi chengwei wei Zhongguo kekao de mengyou ma? [Can Russia become a reliable ally for China? *International Relations Forecast*, June 6, 2019, mp.weixin.qq.com; Yan Xuetong, “为什么现在大国都不重视结盟了? [Weishemma xianzai daguo dou bu zhongshi jiemeng le/Why Do Major Power Not Pay Attention to Alliances Now?] *Guancha.com* [Observer Network], August 23, 2019, <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1642614753723313553&wfr=spider&for=pc>, Yan Xuetong, “He понимая, почему Россия не настаивает на формировании альянса с Китаем,” [I don’t understand why Russia doesn’t insist on forming an alliance with China], *Kommersant*, March 17, 2017, <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3243633>.
- ³⁵ “Wang Haiyang: Military Relations Reflect 70 Years of China-Russia Diplomatic Relations,” *Global Times*, June 3, 2019, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnKkN1s>.
- ³⁶ Ying Liu, “Strategic Partnership or Alliance? Sino-Russian Relations from a Constructivist Perspective” *Asian Perspective* (42) 2018, 348.
- ³⁷ Feng Yujun and Shang Yue, “New Developments of US-Russia Relations and China’s Policy Choices,” *China International Studies*, September/October 2018, 20-22.
- ³⁸ For example, Stephen Blank, “The Russo-Chinese Alliance: What Are Its Limits?” Submitted for Testimony before the U.S. China Economic and Security Review Commission Session on March 21, 2019, “An Emerging China-Russia Axis? Implications for the United States in an Era of Strategic Competition” https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Blank_Testimony.pdf.
- ³⁹ Alexander Korolev, “On the Verge of an Alliance: Contemporary China-Russia Military Cooperation,” *Asian Security* 15, no. 3 (September 2, 2019): 233–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2018.1463991>.
- ⁴⁰ Kate Cadell and Ellen Nakashima, “Beijing Chafes at Moscow’s Requests for Support, Chinese Officials Say,” *Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/06/02/china-support-russia-ukraine/>.
- ⁴¹ Martin Chorzempa, “Export Controls against Russia Are Working—with the Help of China,” PIIE, June 27, 2022, <https://www.piie.com/blogs/realtime-economic-issues-watch/export-controls-against-russia-are-working-help-china>.
- ⁴² Rob Picheta, Anna Chernova, Uliana Pavlova and Chris Liakos, “Putin Visits Iran in First Trip Outside Former Soviet Union since Invading Ukraine,” CNN, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/19/middleeast/putin-iran-visit-russia-ukraine-intl/index.html>.
- ⁴³ David Kirton, “China’s DJI Halts Russia, Ukraine Sales to Prevent Use of Its Drones in Combat | Reuters,” accessed July 22, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/technology/chinese-drone-maker-dji-suspends-business-activities-russia-ukraine-2022-04-26/>.
- ⁴⁴ This led Ukraine to develop an indigenous drone and take other countermeasures to avoid surveillance by the DJI AeroScope. See RFE/RL, “Drone Wars: Ukraine’s Homegrown Response To ‘Deadly’ Chinese Detection Tech,” July 14, 2022, <https://www.rferl.org/a/drone-detection-war-ukraine-china-russia/31943191.html>
- ⁴⁵ “Joint Statement of the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development.”
- ⁴⁶ Peter R. Mansoor “Strategic Ambiguity and the Defense of Taiwan,” June 30, 2021, <https://www.hoover.org/research/strategic-ambiguity-and-defense-taiwan>.
- ⁴⁷ Richard Haass and David Sacks, “American Support for Taiwan Must Be Unambiguous,” December 7, 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/american-support-taiwan-must-be-unambiguous>.
- ⁴⁸ Nien-chung Chang-Liao and Chi Fang, “The Case for Maintaining Strategic Ambiguity in the Taiwan Strait,” *The Washington Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (April 3, 2021): 45–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2021.1932088>.
- ⁴⁹ Chang-Liao and Fang.
- ⁵⁰ Sergei Samoilenko, “Strategic Deception in the Age of ‘Truthiness,’” in Innocent Chiluwa, ed., *Deception and Deceptive Communication: Motivations, Recognition Techniques and Behavioral Control*, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2017), 129–68.
- ⁵¹ Pehar Drazen, “Use of Ambiguities in Peace Agreements,” 2001, <https://www.diplomacy.edu/resource/use-of-ambiguities-in-peace-agreements/>.
- ⁵² “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on July 19, 2022,” https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/202207/t20220719_10723456.html.
- ⁵³ Katsuji Nakazawa, “Analysis: China Feels Slight Unease in Intimidating Japan with Russia,” *Nikkei Asia*, accessed June 16, 2022, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Editor-s-Picks/China-up-close/Analysis-China-feels-slight-unease-in-intimidating-Japan-with-Russia>.
- ⁵⁴ *Fireside Chat with Ambassador Qin Gang*, The Aspen Institute, June 19-22, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6eIYXbkISpU>.

⁵⁵ Hwee Young, “‘Partnership, Not Alliance’: China Downplays Relationship with Russia,” *www.efe.com*, June 12, 2022, <https://www.efe.com/efe/english/world/partnership-not-alliance-china-downplays-relationship-with-russia/50000262-4829651>.

⁵⁶ By Invitation: Zhou Bo, “Senior Colonel Zhou Bo Says the War in Ukraine Will accelerate the Geopolitical Shift from West to East,” *The Economist*, May 14, 2022, <https://www.economist.com/by-invitation/2022/05/14/senior-colonel-zhou-bo-says-the-war-in-ukraine-will-accelerate-the-geopolitical-shift-from-west-to-east>.

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Wishnick, “Still ‘No Limits’? The China-Russia Partnership After Samarkand,” *Russia Matters*, September 22, 2022, <https://www.russiamatters.org/analysis/still-no-limits-china-russia-partnership-after-samarkand>.

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Wishnick, “Strategic Partner or Strategic Player? RussianAsia Experts Assess China’s Ukraine Policy,” *China Leadership Monitor*, June 1, 2022, <https://www.prcleader.org/wishnick>.