

ASSESING THE LEVEL OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION IN THE SINO-RUSSIAN
DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP

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A research study submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Global Security Studies

Baltimore, Maryland
December 2020

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Abstract: China and Russia's bilateral defense relationship has strengthened significantly in recent years. The steady growth in Sino-Russian military ties has sparked a considerable debate in the academic and policymaking communities over whether the Sino-Russian defense relationship has become a de-facto military "alliance." However, largely absent from this discussion are assessments of the level of institutionalization in China and Russia's defense relationship. This study utilizes Alexander Korololev's framework for measuring alliance institutionalization to determine the level of institutionalization between China and Russia's militaries, concluding that Beijing and Moscow's armed forces are on the verge of "deep institutionalization."

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Introduction

China and Russia's growing defense relationship has generated significant consternation in the United States, which cited both Beijing and Moscow as long-term strategic competitors in its 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS). Both states pose serious security challenges to the United States, its allies and partners, and the U.S.-supported liberal international order. As defense ties between China and Russia deepen, a debate has emerged in the academic and policy communities over whether the relationship has become a military alliance. A Chinese-Russian military alliance - or something approximating one - would pose a severe threat to global security and stability. Understanding the extent to which China and Russia's defense relationship meets the criteria of a military alliance is critical for the security of the United States and its allies. The following study will specifically examine the level of institutionalization in China and Russia's defense relationship.

A Growing Sino-Russian Entente

China and Russia's bilateral relationship has strengthened considerably in recent years, driven by both countries' "mutual understanding that their respective core interests are better served by closer cooperation."¹ Beijing and Moscow both have a vested interest in promoting the legitimacy of their regimes, the primacy of state sovereignty in

¹ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Chapter 4, Section 2, "An Uneasy Entente: China-Russia Relations in a New Era of Strategic Competition with the United States," in *2019 Annual Report to Congress*, November 14, 2019. <https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2019-11/Chapter%204%20Section%202%20-%20An%20Uneasy%20Entente%20-%20China-Russia%20Relations%20in%20a%20New%20Era%20of%20Strategic%20Competition%20with%20the%20United%20States.pdf>.

international affairs, and the unacceptability of Western ‘interference’ in their domestic affairs.² Most importantly, China and Russia share a mutual perception that the United States poses an existential threat to their respective political regimes. Since 2014, the convergence of China and Russia’s geopolitical interests has been accelerated by the deterioration in U.S.-Russia relations following Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea and increasing tensions between Washington and Beijing and over China’s increasing assertiveness in the Asia-Pacific as well as economic and human rights issues.³

China and Russia have strengthened ties across nearly every aspect of their relationship. The bilateral relationship is now stronger than at any point since the Sino-Soviet “unbreakable friendship” in the mid-20th century.⁴ At a June 2018 summit in Beijing, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced bilateral relations are at “an all-time high,” while General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party Xi Jinping described the relationship as “the highest-level...and strategically most significant relationship between major countries in the world.”⁵ In June 2019, General Secretary Xi and President Putin further growth in China and Russia’s bilateral ties, announcing an

² Bobo Lo, *A Wary Embrace: What the China-Russia Relationship Means for the World*. Penguin Random House Australia, 2017, 17.

³ Alexander Gabuev, “Why Russia and China Are Strengthening Security Ties,” *Foreign Affairs*, September 24, 2018. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2018-09-24/why-russia-and-china-are-strengthening-security-ties>.

⁴ Bobo Lo, “Introduction,” in Jo Inge Bekkevold and Bobo Lo, eds., *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, 2.

⁵ *People’s Daily*, “Xi Jinping: Pushing Forward the China-Russia Relationship and Keeping Up with the Times,” June 9, 2018. Translation. http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrhwb/html/2018-06/09/content_1860334.htm; Bloomberg, “Putin, Xi Hail Partnership as Trump’s North Korea Summit Looms,” June 7, 2018. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-08/putin-xi-to-meet-in-china-as-trump-s-north-korea-summit-looms>.

upgrade of the Sino-Russian relationship to a “comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination in a new era.”⁶

Deepening Defense Ties

The most important component of China and Russia’s growing ties is their bilateral defense relationship. Beijing and Moscow have prioritized strengthening bilateral military-to-military ties by bolstering high-level defense contacts, conducting bilateral and multilateral military exercises, and increasing defense industrial cooperation.⁷ In October 2018, General Secretary Xi highlighted the growth in Sino-Russian defense ties during a meeting with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, observing that, “cooperation between the two militaries has been deepened continuously and positive achievements have been made in areas including joint drills, real combat training and military competition in recent years.” General Secretary Xi further emphasized the importance Sino-Russian defense ties have for the broader bilateral relationship, stating that “both militaries can work to deal with common security threats, create a benign external environment for their respective state development and national rejuvenation, continue to improve cooperation, and provide a solid foundation for the development of China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination.”⁸ In

⁶ China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang’s Regular Press Conference on June 6, 2019*,

https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/t1670288.shtml.

⁷ Ethan Meick, “China-Russia Military-to-Military Relations: Moving Toward a Higher Level of Cooperation,” *U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission*, March 20, 2017.

<https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China-Russia%20Mil-Mil%20Relations%20Moving%20Toward%20Higher%20Level%20of%20Cooperation.pdf>.

⁸ *Xinhua*, “Xi Meets with Russian Defense Minister,” October 19, 2018.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-10/19/c_137544996.htm.

March 2018, Russian Defense Minister Shoigu remarked that, “Russian- Chinese [military] relations today has reached principally new unprecedented level, and have become a critical factor in keeping peace and international security.”⁹

Literature Review

A Sino-Russian Military Alliance?

The steady growth in Sino-Russian military-to-military relations has sparked considerable debate in the academic and policymaking communities over whether the Sino-Russian defense relationship has become a de-facto military “alliance”. Stephen Blank forcefully asserts that a Sino-Russian military alliance “is exactly what has come to be.”¹⁰ Graham Allison describes the relationship as a “functional military alliance,” while Nemetz describes Sino-Russo defense ties as an “ominous anti-American alliance.”¹¹

Others argue that long-held historical enmity between Beijing and Moscow as well divergence on key national interests, including economic differences and mutual concern over the potential military and geopolitical threat posed by the other, make Sino-Russo military alliance unlikely. Leon Aron writes that “the history of relations between the two countries is fraught, and they play vastly different roles in the world economy,

⁹ Russia’s Ministry of Defense, *Russian and Chinese Defense Ministries Emphasize Importance of Russian-Chinese Relations for International Security*, March 4, 2018. https://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12169612@egNews.

¹⁰ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *Hearing on An Emerging China-Russia Axis? Implications for the United States in an Era of Strategic Competition*, written testimony of Stephen Blank, March 21, 2019, 2. https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Blank_Testimony.pdf.

¹¹ Allison Graham, “China and Russia: A Strategic Alliance in the Making,” *National Interest*, December 14, 2018. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/china-and-russia-strategic-alliance-making-38727>.

making a divergence in their objectives all but unavoidable.”¹² Meick similarly assesses that, “the development of a formal alliance is unlikely due to continued policy and strategic differences as well as areas of distrust.”¹³ In September 2018, then-U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis remarked that “I see little in the long term that aligns Russia and China.”¹⁴

A Gap in the Discussion

Surprisingly, alliance theory itself has been glaringly absent from this discussion. Recent publications on Sino-Russian defense ties have largely evaluated specific aspects of the relationship, failing to provide a comprehensive alliance framework through which to assess the overall depth of China and Russia’s military relationship and identify it on the alliance spectrum. One scholar argues that, “while there have been many descriptions and examinations of the empirical dimensions to Russia-PRC strategic ties...few have focused specifically on developing an analytical framework for systematically explaining the specific cooperative-competitive contours of the relationship.”¹⁵ For example, a recent assessment of Sino-Russian defense relations authored by Ethan Meick examines three aspects of the relationship, high-level military contacts, military exercises, and military-technical cooperation, Watts, Leberd and Englebrekt examine two criteria,

¹² Leon Aron, “Are Russia and China Really Forming an Alliance,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 4, 2019. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2019-04-04/are-russia-and-china-really-forming-alliance>.

¹³ Meick, “China-Russia Military-to-Military Relations,” 20.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, Media Availability with Secretary Mattis at the Pentagon, September 11, 2018. <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/1628129/media-availability-with-secretary-mattis-at-the-pentagon/>.

¹⁵ Thomas S. Wilkins, “Russo – Chinese Strategic Partnership: A New Form of Security Cooperation?” *Contemporary Security Policy* 29:2 (2008): 358.

military exercises and arms sales.¹⁶ As Korolev notes, in both cases “the selection of the specific aspects that received consideration is rather ad hoc and does not sufficiently demonstrate how much, and how consistently, China-Russia military cooperation has increased since the end of the Cold War.”¹⁷ To better understand Sino-Russian defense ties, it is necessary to ground evaluations of the relationship within alliance theory.

Towards an Alliance Framework

The concept of “alliances” is central to the discipline of international relations in both practice and theory. As Ken Booth notes, “Alliances have been pervasive features in both the theory of international politics and in the practice of foreign policy.”¹⁸ Accordingly, alliance theory has received significant attention from both scholars and foreign policy practitioners alike.

Definitions of military alliances vary across the body of alliance theory literature. Some scholars espouse narrow definitions of alliances, arguing that a necessary feature of an alliance is a formal treaty explicitly outlining security commitments between two or more states. Leeds and Anac simply define alliances as “a formal agreement among independent states to cooperate militarily.”¹⁹ Morrow argues that “an alliance entails a formal commitment between the parties wherein certain specific obligations are written

¹⁶ Meick, “China-Russia Military-to-Military Relations”; John Watts, Sofia Ledberg, Kjell Engelbrekt, “Brothers in Arms, Yet Again? Twenty-First Century Sino-Russian Strategic Collaboration in the Realm of Defense and Security,” *Defense Studies* 16:4 (2016): 427-429.

¹⁷ Alexander Korolev, “On the Verge of an Alliance: Contemporary China-Russia Military Cooperation,” *Asian Security* 15:3 (2018); 2.

¹⁸ Ken Booth, “Alliances”, in John Baylis et al., eds., *Contemporary Strategy I* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1987), 258.

¹⁹ Brett Ashley Leeds and Sezi Anac, “Alliance Institutionalization and Alliance Performance,” *International Interactions* 31:3 (2005):185.

out.”²⁰ Snyder defines alliances as “formal associations for the use (or nonuse) of military force, in specified circumstances, against states outside their own membership.”²¹

Other scholars define alliances more broadly. Tertrais contends that “A broader definition of military alliances would include those that do not imply a security guarantee,” and are instead defined by “the recognition of common security interests as well as provisions for strong military cooperation to various degrees.”²² Walt advances a similar but slightly more precise definition of alliance – “a formal or informal commitment for security cooperation between two or more states.”²³ Walt asserts that the principal feature of any alliance, formal or informal, “is a commitment for mutual military support against some external actor(s) in some specific set of circumstances.”²⁴ Weitzman broadly defines alliances as “bilateral or multilateral agreements to provide some element of security to the signatories.”²⁵

Typologies of military alliances also vary widely, reflecting sharp differences in the nature of alliance commitments and intra-alliance military cooperation. When forming an alliance, states make decisions regarding both the military obligations they are willing to incur as well as the depth and parameters of peacetime military cooperation.²⁶ As Leeds and Anac note, “Leaders choose a level of formality and

²⁰ Ibid, 64.

²¹ Glenn Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 4.

²² Bruno Tertrais, “The Changing Nature of Military Alliances,” *Washington Quarterly* 27:2 (Spring 2004), 136.

²³ Stephen M. Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse,” *Survival* 39:1 (1997): 157.

²⁴ Ibid, 157.

²⁵ Patricia Weitsman, “Alliance Cohesion and Coalition Warfare: The Central Powers and the Triple Entente”, *Security Studies* 12:3 (2003), 7.

²⁶ Leeds and Anac, “Alliance Institutionalization and Alliance Performance,” 185, 186.

peacetime military coordination when committing to an alliance.”²⁷ Benson and Clinton similarly assert that “Alliances vary in the breadth of the circumstances to which the obligations of a military alliance have application...as well as the costliness of the obligations to which the signatories commit themselves when they join the alliance.”²⁸ Alliance theorists agree that the form and substance of military alliances vary along these two axes, hereafter referred to as the “scope” and “institutionalization” of an alliance. Scope refers to “the breadth of the circumstances to which the obligations of a military alliance have application,” while institutionalization refers to “the degree to which the alliance agreement imposes peacetime and related costs on the signatories.”²⁹

Alliance theory accounts for variance in the scope of military alliances. As Walt notes, “The form of collaboration and the nature of the commitment varies widely, however. An alliance may be either offensive or defensive, for example, intended either to provide the means for an attack on some third party or intended as a mutual guarantee in the event that another state attacks one of the alliance members.”³⁰ Particularly useful in categorizing the obligations that determine the scope of military alliances is the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions Project (ATOP). ATOP identifies five primary alliance obligations: “promises to aid a partner in the event of military conflict - which ATOP further differentiates between commitments to defensive and offensive support, promises to remain neutral in the event of a conflict, promises to refrain from military conflict with one another, or promises to consult/cooperate in the event of

²⁷ Ibid, 186.

²⁸ Brett V. Benson and Joshua D. Clinton, “Assessing the Variation of Formal Military Alliances,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60:5 (2016): 868.

²⁹ Ibid, 870.

³⁰ Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse,” 157.

international crises that create a potential for military conflict. ATOP labels these obligations DEFENSE, OFFENSE, NEUTRAL, NONAGG, and CONSUL. These obligations are not mutually exclusive. Thus, an alliance agreement that includes a non-aggression clause as well as a mechanism for mutual consultations in the event of war would be a NONAGG/CONSUL agreement.”³¹

Alliance theorists also acknowledge that military alliances vary in their level of institutionalization – the depth of peacetime military cooperation stipulated in and formalized by the alliance agreement. As Walt notes, “At one extreme, formal alliances such as NATO are highly institutionalized, with elaborate decision-making procedures and an extensive supporting bureaucracy...at the other extreme are largely *ad hoc* coalitions...limited partnerships in which each member acted relatively independently.”³²

Alliance theory holds that institutionalization imposes costs on alliance members. Benson and Clinton argue “alliance commitments themselves impose varying levels of costs on alliance members beyond those associated with the risks of conflict.”³³ Thus, it follows that higher institutionalization incurs greater costs while lower institutionalization incurs lower costs. For example, “Defensive commitments that formalize joint military planning as well as requirements for peacetime military integration, the provision of aid, and military basing impose deeper costs on the alliance members than agreements that only contain defensive obligations.”³⁴

Alliance scholarship has generally maintained that greater institutionalization increases the effectiveness of an alliance. Leeds and Anac argue that, “greater peacetime

³¹ The Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions Project (ATOP): <http://www.atopdata.org/>.

³² Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse,” 157.

³³ Benson and Clinton, “Assessing the Variation of Formal Military Alliances,” 873.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 868.

military coordination [institutionalization] should increase the value of an alliance, making the whole greater than the sum of its fighting effectiveness. This, in turn, should increase the incentives for allies to assist each other in conflict.”³⁵ Morrow similarly posits that while greater institutionalization imposes greater peacetime costs on alliance members, it also increases allied cohesion and warfighting capability in wartime.³⁶

Despite the significant body of academic work on military alliances, few formal frameworks exist or measuring the level of an alliance’s institutionalization. However, in his 2018 article “On the Verge of an Alliance: Contemporary China-Russia Military Cooperation”, Alexander Korolev proposes an empirical framework for measuring alliance institutionalization (See Table 1). He identifies eight characteristics of alliances that are divided into two groups, “moderate institutionalization” and “deep institutionalization.” He writes that,

“both clusters address institutional arrangements and reflect the operational mechanics and the degree of institutionalization of an inter-military relation. The first cluster represents a moderate institutionalization of inter-military contacts, whereas cluster two represents deep institutionalization, which is a more advanced stage of alliance development and implies higher demands in terms of the interoperability of military forces and defense policy compatibility. It is reasonable to assume that a functioning alliance reaches a moderate degree of institutionalization before it moves into deep institutionalization, for which powerful incentives and political will are necessary.”³⁷

³⁵ Leeds and Anac, “Alliance Institutionalization and Alliance Performance,” 186.

³⁶ James D. Morrow, “Alliances, Credibility, and Peacetime Costs.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 38:2 (1994): 270–297.

³⁷ Korolev, “On the Verge of an Alliance,” 3.

Table 1: Korolev's Stages and Criteria of Alliance Institutionalization

Moderate Institutionalization	1) Alliance treaty or agreement; 2) Mechanism of regular consultations; 3) military-technical cooperation; 4) regular military drills; 5) confidence building measures
Deep Institutionalization	6) Integrated military command; 7) Joint troop placements and/or military bases exchange; 8) Common defense policy

Source: Korolev, "On the Verge of an Alliance," 4.

Utilizing this framework, Korolev assesses that China and Russia's military relationship is "on the verge of an alliance."³⁸ However, Korolev's conclusion that the relationship is "on the verge of an alliance," falls outside of the alliance framework that he himself crafted. As he notes, "one can still argue...what a true alliance means in contemporary international politics,"³⁹ meaning his assertion that the relationship "is on the verge of an alliance," fails to explicitly define exactly how institutionalized the relationship actually is. Moreover, since Korolev published his article in 2018, significant developments have occurred in China and Russia's defense relationship that merit revisiting the level of institutionalization between the two countries' defense establishments.

³⁸ Ibid, 15.

³⁹ Ibid, 15.

Hypothesis & Methods

This study seeks to address this gap by utilizing Korolev's framework of alliance institutionalization to assess the degree of institutionalization in China and Russia's defense security partnership. Using Korolev's alliance institutionalization framework, the following analysis collects evidence to determine whether the Sino-Russian defense relationships meets the criteria outlined by Korolev.

As previously noted, Korolev divides alliance institutionalization into two clusters, moderate institutionalization and deep institutionalization. Korolev argues that moderate institutionalization is measured by five indicators. The first is an "official alliance treaty or other formal agreement of military coordination in the event of a crisis or when either party is facing an external attack or another type of threat."⁴⁰ Korolev caveats this criteria by stating, "since alliance treaties vary considerably in terms of the precision of commitments, and moreover, at times, states can act as alliance members without binding treaties, this criterion is not sufficient."⁴¹ Thus, Korolev's second criteria is the mechanism of inter-military consultations. Korolev notes that, "such mechanisms enhance mutual understanding and increases the predictability of intra-alliance dynamics."⁴²

The third criteria is military-technical cooperation (MTC). Korolev writes that in its beginning stages, "military-technical exchanges can be more of a structure for the

⁴⁰ Ibid, 4.

⁴¹ Ibid, 4.

⁴² Ibid, 4.

parties to purchase military equipment or technological expertise from each other. As MTC moves into more advanced stages, however, it becomes more intertwined and is increasingly characterized by long-term projects for the joint design and production of arms and their components.”⁴³ He asserts that MTC requires significant trust between allies, and “requires a high level of coordination between multiple institutions (research centers, manufacturers, and various government agencies), shared procedures, and the standardization of training.”⁴⁴

The fourth criteria is regular joint military exercises. Korolev notes that regular military exercises help allies “achieve a certain degree of military force compatibility and interoperability,” and also send “important signals, admonitions, or assurances to certain countries or groups of countries.”⁴⁵ The fifth criterion is inter-military confidence building measures (CBM), CBM include agreements such as border-securitization measures, demilitarization measures, establishing mechanisms for deconfliction, information sharing agreements, and others.⁴⁶

Deep institutionalization is categorized by three criteria, “an integrated military command, joint troop placement or an exchange of military bases, and a common defense policy.” Korolev notes that these criteria “require extensive and costly investments in joint action and indicate a much deeper military institutionalization. They also reflect the highest level of joint preparation for war. Decisions to enter this level of cooperation require strong incentives and strong resolve on the part of policymakers.”⁴⁷

⁴³ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 5.

⁴⁷ Korolev, 5.

The data used to measure China and Russia's defense relationship against these criteria is collected from international agreements signed by China and Russia, official Chinese and Russian government statements, policy documents and state media reports, open source news reporting, think-tank reports, and academic journals.

Data

Moderate Institutionalization: Alliance Treaty or Agreement

Korolev writes that “the existence of a treaty is considered important and is often the first mark to look for when assessing an alliance relation.”⁴⁸ In 2001, China and Russia signed the Treaty of Good Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation, often referred to as “the Big Treaty.”⁴⁹ The treaty, in effect until 2021, significantly upgraded the bilateral relationship and laid the foundation for the subsequent growth in Sino-Russian ties. The treaty, which clearly establishes a non-aggression and consultation pact, can also be seen as containing an implicit commitment to mutual defense.

Article 2, 8, and 9 of the treaty clearly establish it as a non-aggression and consultation pact. Article 2 commits the two parties to a policy of mutual non-aggression, stating that “contracting parties will neither resort to the use of force; or the threat of force nor take economic and other means to bring pressure to bear against the other.” Article 8 prohibits either party from joining an alliance or undertaking any actions that jeopardizes the security of the other; stating that “The contracting parties shall not enter into any alliance or be a party to any block nor shall they embark on any such action,

⁴⁸ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁹ China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation*, July 24, 2001. <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-l-d&q=Treaty+of+Good-Neighborliness+and+Friendly+Cooperation+Between+the+People%27s+Republic+of+China+and+the+Russian+Federation>.

including the conclusion of such treaty with a third country which compromises the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of the other contracting party.” Article 9 establishes a joint consultation mechanism, stating in response to a security threat to either state that “the contracting parties shall immediately hold contacts and consultations in order to eliminate such threats.”⁵⁰

The treaty does not include an explicit *causus foederis*, a mutual defense clause that is the defining feature of formal military alliances. Without a clear mutual defense clause, some scholars assert that the treaty falls short of a defense pact. Korolev argues that the treaty, “does not explicitly define external threats or include a clear *causus foederis* clause...and therefore fails to qualify as a defense pact.”⁵¹ Similarly, Alexander Lukin writes that Alexander Lukin asserts that “the treaty did not create any alliance, let alone a military one. It contains no commitments regarding joint defense against aggression.”⁵²

However, the treaty can be seen as including an *implicit* obligation for mutual defense. Vasily Kashin asserts that “while the treaty did not create any obligations for mutual defense, it clearly required both sides to consider some sort of joint action in the case of a threat from a third party.”⁵³ Specifically, Article 9’s stipulation that China and Russia hold consultations “in order to eliminate such threats,” can be interpreted as an implicit obligation for the parties to assist each other in the event of a military attack or the outbreak of war. Korolev writes that Article 9 “can be viewed as carrying certain

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Korolev, “On the Verge of an Alliance,” 4.

⁵² Ibid, 5.

⁵³ Vasily Kashin, “The Current State Of Russian-Chinese Defense Cooperation”, *Center For Naval Analyses*, 2018, 14.

features of an implicit defense pact,”⁵⁴ while Franz Stefan-Gady notes that the provision “could be construed as an implicit commitment to mutual defense.”⁵⁵ Thus, the author agrees with Korolev’s assertion that the treaty sits “at the borderline between a non-aggression/consultation pact and a defense pact.”⁵⁶

Mechanism of Regular Consultations

China and Russia have developed an institutionalized and multilevel system of bilateral and multilateral security consultations. (See Appendix 1). This system was born as the result of the 1993 signing of the “Military Cooperation Agreement” by China and Russia’s defense ministries.⁵⁷ The agreement called for China and Russia to “carry out military cooperation on...military and political consultations” including, “official visits by ministers of defense and other military leaders” and “working meetings of defense ministers and other representatives parties.”⁵⁸ The Military Cooperation Agreement laid the groundwork for the establishment of subsequent formal consultations, including the Annual Strategic Consultation among Chiefs of the General Staff in 1997, the Russia-China Consultation on the National Security Issues in 2004, and the China-Russia Northeast Asia Security Dialogue in 2014 (See Appendix 1). Alexander Korolev estimates that China and Russia hold 20-30 bilateral security consultations per year, including multiple high-level defense contacts per year (See Table 2).⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Korolev, “On the Verge of an Alliance,” 5.

⁵⁵ Franz Stefan-Gady, “Why the West Should Not Underestimate China-Russia Military Ties,” *EastWest Institute*, January 30, 2019. <https://www.eastwest.ngo/idea/why-west-should-not-underestimate-china-russia-military-ties>.

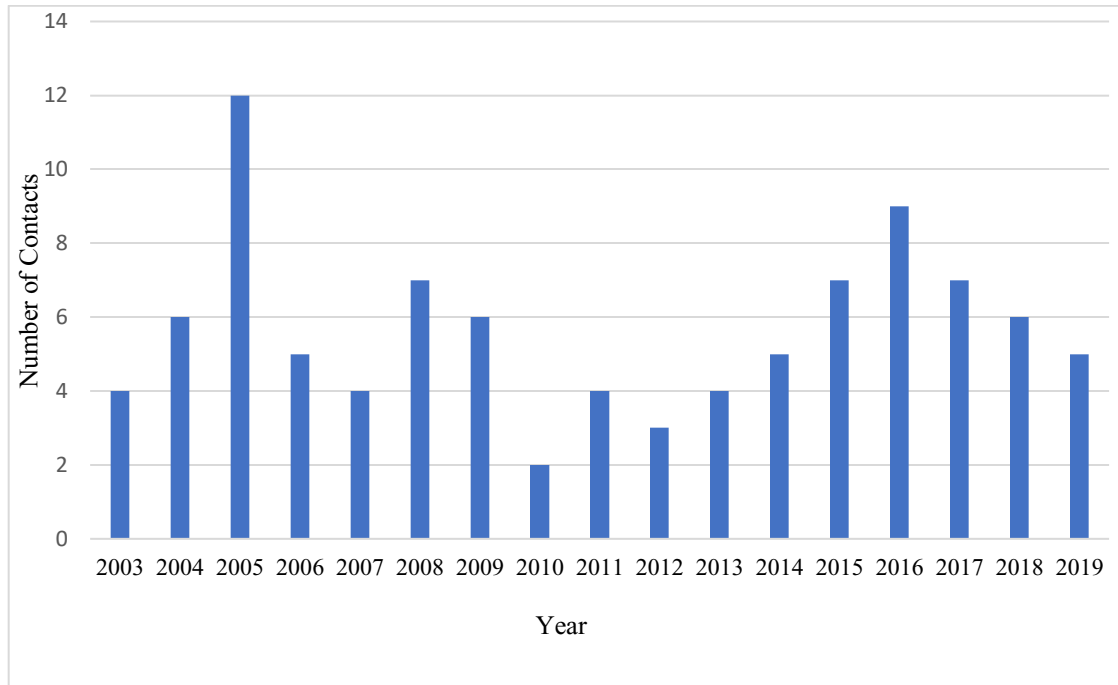
⁵⁶ Korolev, “On the Verge of an Alliance,” 5.

⁵⁷ Russian Council of Ministers, Military Cooperation Agreement. <https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=auto&tl=en&u=http%3A%2F%2Fpravo.gov.ru%2Fproxy%2Fips%2F%3Fdocbody%3D%26nd%3D102026598%26rdk%3D%26backlink%3D1&sandbox=1>.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Korolev, “On the Verge of an Alliance,” 6.

Table 2: China-Russia High-Level Military-to-Military Contacts, 2003-2019



Note: These contacts do not include presidential summits, meetings between border security forces, and multilateral summits (unless a meeting between military officials occurred on the sidelines). High-level contacts are defined as “officials and officers holding a leadership position and corresponding rank in the military services at or above deputy commander of a particular service and assistant to the chief of the general staff department (“joint staff department” in the PLA context as of its reorganization in late 2015).” Meick, 9.

Source: Data from 2003-2016 can be found in Meick, “China-Russia Military-to-Military Relations,” and Kenneth Allen, Philip C. Saunders, and John Chen, “Chinese Military Diplomacy, 2013–2016: Trends and Implications,” *Chinese Strategic Perspectives* 11 (July 17, 2017). See footnotes for data from the years 2017,⁶⁰ 2018,⁶¹ and 2019.⁶²

Military-Technical Cooperation

Military-technical cooperation (MTC) is a critical and growing aspect of China and Russia’s military relationship. Since the early 1990s, Sino-Russo MTC “has evolved from a one-sided relationship largely predicated on Chinese purchases of Russian weapons systems into an increasingly interdependent relationship characterized by long-term joint production of military equipment and the transfer of more advanced weapons systems.”⁶³ Like other components of Sino-Russian defense relations, MTC has deepened significantly in recent years, prompting Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to

⁶⁰ Russian Ministry of Defense, *Delegation From China Visits Russian Defense Ministry to Get Familiarized with Working Process of the Public Reception of the Minister of Defense*, December 11, 2017; Russian Ministry of Defense, *Implementation of Russia-China Plans to Put Bilateral Cooperation of Two Countries on Higher Level*, October 24, 2017; Russian Ministry of Defense, *Joint Sea-2017 Leadership Visited ‘Voroshilov Battery’*, September 19, 2017; Russian Ministry of Defense, *Russian Minister of Defense: Development of Strategic Partnership with China is An Absolute Priority*, August 12, 2017; Russian Ministry of Defense, *Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation at a Meeting with His Chinese Counterpart in Astana Proposed to Sign a Roadmap of Cooperation in the Military Field Between Two Countries in the Years 2017-2020*, June 7, 2017; Russian Ministry of Defense, *Representatives of the Russian General Staff Held Negotiations with Their Chinese Counterparts*, May 31, 2017;

⁶¹ Russian Ministry of Defense, *Russian Defense Minister Highly Appreciates Russian-Chinese Relations*, October 19, 2018; Tom O’Connor, “U.S. Military Wants to Fix Its Relationship with China, But Russia Has Already Stepped in,” *Newsweek*, October 18, 2018; Ministry of Defense of The Russian Federation, *Navy CINC Meets Commander of the People’s Liberation Army Navy in St. Petersburg*, July 28, 2018; Ministry of Defense of The Russian Federation, *Chinese Delegation Visits General Staff Academy and Discusses Geopolitics and Counterterrorism*, July 11, 2018; Kinling Lo, “US Take Note: Chinese, Russian Militaries Are Closer Than You Think, China’s Defense Minister Says,” *South China Morning Post*, April 4, 2018; Ministry of Defense of The Russian Federation, *Russian and Chinese Defense Ministries Emphasize Importance of Russian-Chinese Relations for International Security*, March 4, 2018.

⁶² Russian Ministry of Defense, *Russian Defense Minister General of the Army Sergei Shoigu Held Talks with Zhang Youxia, Vice Chairman of the CMC of the PRC*, September 4, 2019; Russian Ministry of Defense, *China’s Military Delegation Visits a Military Unit Station in Volgograd Region, Southern MD*, June 18, 2019; TASS, “Russia, China to Develop Military Cooperation as Strategic Partners,” June 13, 2019; Russian Ministry of Defense, *The Russian Federation, Commander of Russian Land Forces Meets His Chinese Counterpart to Discuss Plans for Cooperation*, June 13, 2019; *Xinhua*, “China, Russia to Increase Capabilities to Jointly Deal with Threats: Chinese Defense Minister,” April 26, 2019.

⁶³ Alec Blivas, “Sino-Russian Military-Technical Cooperation: A Primer,” *Defense360*, March 18, 2020. <https://defense360.csis.org/sino-russian-military-technical-cooperation-a-primer/>.

comment in 2014 that “we can now talk about the emerging technological alliance between the two countries.”⁶⁴

Bilateral MTC began in 1992 when China and Russia signed the Military-Technical Cooperation Agreement. The agreement established a legal framework for MTC between the two countries and led to the formation of the Mixed Intergovernmental Commission on Military-Technical Cooperation (MICMTC), China and Russia’s formal annual platform for coordinating bilateral MTC.⁶⁵ Through the mid-2000s, Sino-Russian MTC was characterized by large Russian arms sales to China. From 1992-2006, China imported roughly \$26 billion in Russian weaponry, accounting for nearly 80 percent of its arms imports.⁶⁶ Chinese purchases included export variants of Russia’s Kilo-class diesel-electric submarines, S-300 missile defense systems, and Su-27 and Su-30 multirole fighters.⁶⁷

During this period, Russian arms transfers to China during this period served both countries’ strategic interests. As the author described in a previous article,

“The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 had ravaged the Russian economy, leaving Russian defense firms desperately in need of foreign export markets to remain viable. Meanwhile, Beijing’s ambitious drive to modernize the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), deemed necessary by Chinese Communist Party for regime survival, had been severely curtailed by Western arms embargos levied on China in response to the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre. Thus, Russian arms

⁶⁴ Korolev, “On the Verge of an Alliance,” 9.

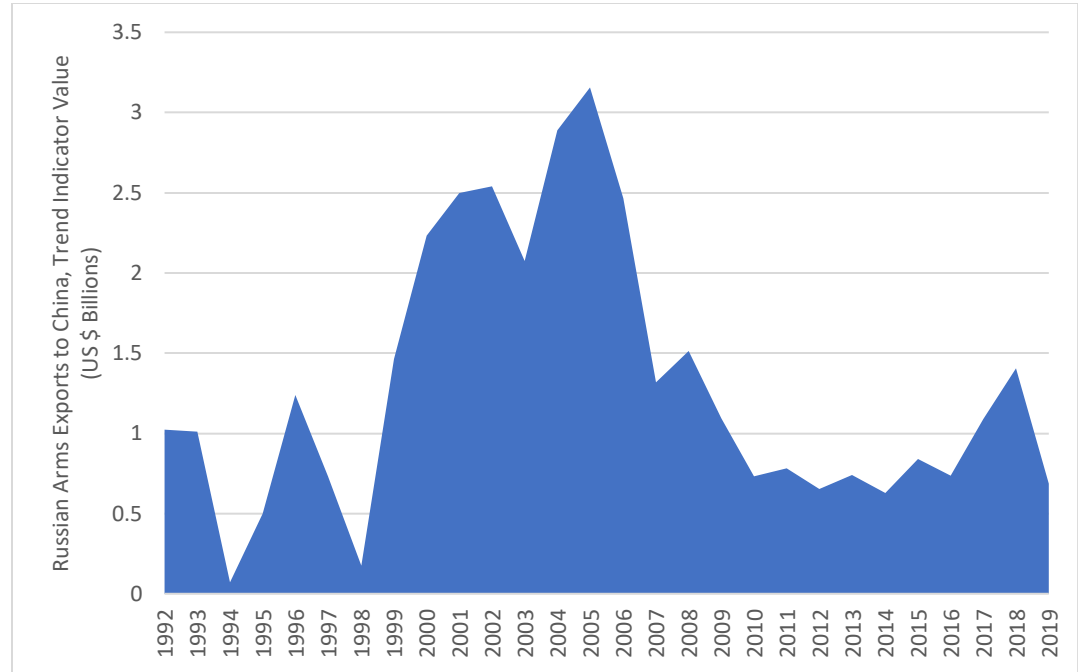
⁶⁵ Blivas, “Sino-Russian Military-Technical Cooperation.”

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Meick, “China-Russia Military-to-Military Relations,” 12.

transfers to China served both countries vital national interests, granting the PLA access to the military technology it needed to modernize while providing Russia's defense firms the revenue they required to stay viable."⁶⁸

Table 3: Russian Arms Exports to China, 1992-2019



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "SIPRI Arms Transfer Database." October 2020.

Note: Trend Indicator Values are "based on the known unit production costs of a core set of weapons and is intended to represent the transfer of military resources rather than the financial value of the transfer." (SIPRI Arms Transfer Database)

However, the mid-to-late 2000's saw a decline in Sino-Russian MTC. The annual meeting of the MICMTC was cancelled in 2006-2007. Furthermore, from 2006-2010, there were no significant arms transfers between Beijing and Moscow. The slowdown in

⁶⁸ Blivas, "Sino-Russian Military-Technical Cooperation."

MTC had multiple causes. Beijing had become unhappy with the quality of the weaponry it imported from Russia as well as Russian contract negotiation policies.⁶⁹ More importantly, “China’s defense industrial base had matured to the point that it could satisfy many of the PLA’s requirements domestically. With its basic military requirements met at home, China increasingly looked to Russia to purchase more advanced weapons systems and their underlying technology to further the PLA’s modernization.”⁷⁰ However, Russia refused to sell its most advanced military equipment to China due to fears regarding Beijing’s growing military strength vis-à-vis Moscow and concerns regarding Beijing’s intellectual property theft of Russian military technology and unlicensed reverse-engineering of Russian weapons systems.⁷¹

Starting in 2008, Sino-Russian MTC began to improve. Regular meetings of the joint commission were reinstated, and on December 11th China and Russia signed the Agreement of Intellectual Property in Military Technical Cooperation.⁷² It was not until 2014, however, that Sino-Russian MTC began to significantly ramp up. Russia, isolated from the international community following its illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, undertook a major strategic orientation away from the West and towards Beijing. As a result, the nature of Sino-Russian MTC changed considerably, becoming a more reciprocal and interdependent relationship as Moscow became increasingly dependent on Beijing.

⁶⁹ Paul N. Schwartz, “The Military Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations,” in Jo Inge Bekkevold and Bobo Lo, eds., *Sino- Russian Relations in the 21st Century*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, 91.

⁷⁰ Blivas, “Sino-Russian Military-Technical Cooperation.”

⁷¹ Schwartz, “The Military Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations,” 91-92; Meick, “China-Russia Military-to-Military Relations,” 12.

⁷² Korolev, “On the Verge of an Alliance,” 9.

In subsequent years, Sino-Russian military-technical cooperation rapidly deepened. Russia resumed arms sales to China, including the sale of advanced equipment that Russia was previously unwilling to transfer to Beijing. From 2014-2018, Russia accounted for 70 percent of China's arms imports. Furthermore, Moscow and Beijing began undertaking long-term joint production of weapons systems. Notable arms sales and joint-weapons development projects include:

Arms Sales:

- *S-400 surface-to-air missile (SAM) defense system:* In 2015 Russia announced the sale of two regiments of its most advanced air defense system, the S-400, to China for an estimated \$3 billion.⁷³ The sale is notable because Russia was previously hesitant to sell the S-400 to Beijing.⁷⁴ Russia completed delivery of the first regimental set in May 2018, and began delivery of the second set in July 2019.⁷⁵ The sale reportedly includes a training course provided by Russia to Chinese operators of the S-400.⁷⁶
- *Su-35 multi-role air-superiority fighter:* In November 2015, China signed a \$2.5 billion contract for 24 Su-35 planes.⁷⁷ The Su-35 is an "upgraded, twin-engine, multirole air superiority fighter aircraft."⁷⁸ Russia was

⁷³ Meick, 14.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 14.

⁷⁵ Franz-Stefan Gady, "Russia Kicks off Delivery of China's Second S-400 Air Defense Regiment," *Diplomat*, July 25, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/07/russia-kicks-off-delivery-of-chinas-second-s-400-air-defense-regiment/>.

⁷⁶ Franz-Stefan Gady, "Chinese PLA Personnel Complete Training for S-400 Air Defense System in Russia," *Diplomat*, July 31, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/07/chinese-pla-personnel-completes-training-for-s-400-air-defense-system-in-russia/>;

⁷⁷ Franz-Stefan Gady, "Russia Completes Delivery of 24 Su-35 Fighter Jets to China," *Diplomat*, April 17, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/russia-completes-delivery-of-24-su-35-fighter-jets-to-china/>.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

previously hesitant to sell China the Su-35 due to concerns China would reverse engineer the Su-35's powerful AL-41FS engine.⁷⁹ Russia completely the delivery of the Su-35 to China in April 2019. The sale also included the "delivery of ground support equipment and reserve aircraft engines."⁸⁰

Joint Weapons Development Projects:

- *Missile-Attack Early-Warning System:* In October 2019, President Putin announced that Russia's defense industry is helping the PLA build a modern missile-attack early-warning system. At least one \$60 million contract has reportedly been signed for a Russian defense firm to develop software for a future PLA early-warning missile defense network.⁸¹
- *Next Generation Heavy Lift Helicopter:* In June 2015 China and Russia signed an, "intergovernmental agreement on the joint development of a heavy helicopter."⁸² The agreement stipulated that Chinese company Avicopter would partner with Russian Helicopters to develop the helicopter. Avicopter was reportedly responsible for "the process organization, as well as design, testing, certification, and series production

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ DW, "Why Russia Needs China to Buy Its Weapons," November 24, 2014. <https://www.dw.com/en/why-russia-needs-china-to-buy-its-weapons/a-18870472>.

⁸¹ Pavel Felgenhauer, "Russia Exports Its Missile Early-Warning Knowhow to China," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, October 10, 2019. <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-exports-its-missile-early-warning-knowhow-to-china/>.

⁸² *Russian Aviation Insider*, "Russian Government Approved Russo-Chinese Helicopter Development," February 13, 2017. <http://www.rusaviainsider.com/russian-government-approves-russo-chinese-helicopter-development/>.

of the rotorcraft,” while Russian Helicopters’ contributed “several subsystems and technology transfer” to the project.⁸³

- *Lada-class Submarine*: In December 2012, China and Russia “signed a framework agreement for joint construction of four Lada-class (Project 677E) diesel-electric attack submarines (the Russian export version is known as Amur-1650).”⁸⁴ In October 2014, the first Lada-class was reportedly delivered to China.⁸⁵
- *GAZ “Tigr” infantry mobility vehicle*: In 2011, The Russian Military Industrial Company began to assemble its GAZ “Tigr” all terrain, multipurpose infantry mobility vehicles in China.⁸⁶

China has also become a critical source of some military and dual-use technologies for Moscow after the imposition of Western sanctions and arms embargoes on Russia post-Crimea. China can offer Russia electronic components, composite materials, UAV technology, and engines for warships that Moscow can’t procure from the West.⁸⁷ As a result, the bilateral MTC relationship has become much more reciprocal than it was previously.⁸⁸

This growth in Sino-Russian MTC reflects the overall strengthening of the bilateral military-to-military relationship. MTC has progressed to a point where Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stated, “We can now even talk about the emerging

⁸³ Russian Aviation Insider, ““Russian Government Approved Russo-Chinese Helicopter Development.”

⁸⁴ Nuclear Threat Initiative, “China Submarine Capabilities.” <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/china-submarine-capabilities/>.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 9.

⁸⁷ Alec Blivas, “Sino-Russian Military-Technical Cooperation: A Primer.”

⁸⁸ Korolev, “On the Verge of an Alliance,” 9-10; Meick, 16-17.

technological alliance between the two countries.”⁸⁹ The sale and joint development of advanced weapons systems requires significant trust between the collaborating parties. Korolev notes that, “the proper organization of MTC requires a high level of coordination between multiple institutions (research centers, manufacturers, and various government agencies), shared procedures, and the standardization of training.”⁹⁰

Regular Military Drills

Joint military exercises are arguably the most important aspect of China and Russia’s military relationship (for a full list of Sino-Russian joint military exercises, see Appendix 2). In 2015, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu’s 2015 remarked that, “The most important issue of the Russian-Chinese military cooperation are the joint military exercises.”⁹¹ Joint military exercises contribute to China’s and Russia’s security partnership in three critical ways. First, they help Beijing and Moscow’s armed forces (particularly the PLA) improve their tactical and operational capabilities as well as increasing their interoperability, enhancing their ability to conduct joint operations.⁹² Second, the exercises serve a mutual reassurance function, affirming China and Russia’s “commitment to military cooperation as an important dimension of their evolving relationship.”⁹³ Third, joint military exercises signal to third parties, particularly the

⁸⁹ Ibid, 9.

⁹⁰ Korolev, “On the Verge of an Alliance,” 4.

⁹¹ Russia’s Ministry of Defense, *Russian Defense Minister Had an Appointment with Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission of the People’s Republic of China*, September 2, 2015. http://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12054707@egNews.

⁹² U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *Hearing on An Emerging China-Russia Axis? Implications for the United States in an Era of Strategic Competition*, Written testimony of Richard Weitz, March 21, 2019, 3.

⁹³ Ibid, 4.

United States, China and Russia's strong commitment to supporting each other's security interests to international audiences.⁹⁴

Currently, Moscow and Beijing maintain two principal recurring joint exercise programs, the Peace Mission counter-terrorism exercises, and the Joint Sea naval exercises. China and Russia have also participated in a number of exercises outside of the Peace Mission and Joint Sea frameworks, including Russia's annual large-scale strategic military exercises. Since the first Sino-Russian joint military exercises was held in 2003, the frequency, complexity, and geographic scope of subsequent exercises has dramatically increased.

Peace Mission: Since 2005, China and Russia have participated in a recurring joint military exercise known as "Peace Mission." Held under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Peace Mission is an anti-terrorism exercise designed to strengthen the ability of SCO members to combat "terrorism, extremism, and separatism."⁹⁵ The exercise typically consists of three phases, joint consultations and operational planning, troop transportation and deployment, and combat operations.⁹⁶ As "Peace Mission" has matured, the exercises have become increasingly complex, featuring more challenging operations, greater interoperability, and more advanced weapons systems."⁹⁷ Though the Peace Mission exercises are nominally anti-terrorism operations, many analysts contend

⁹⁴ Meick, 6.

⁹⁵ *Xinhua*, "Joint Drill with Russia Named 'Peace Mission 2005'," August 2, 2005.
<http://www.china.org.cn/english/2005/Aug/137129.htm>.

⁹⁶ *Xinhua*, "Second Phase of 'Peace Mission 2005' Starts," August 20, 2005.
<http://www.china.org.cn/english/2005/Aug/139175.htm>.

⁹⁷ Daniel Urchick, "Looking Toward the SCO Peace Mission 2016," *Real Clear Defense*, July 25, 2016.
https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2016/07/26/looking_towards_the_sco_peace_mission_2016_109623.html

that the exercises resemble conventional military operations. During Peace Mission 2016, for example, participants conducted a wide range of joint air-ground exercises involving a wide array of advanced weapons including air-to-ground precision strikes.⁹⁸

Joint Sea: Since 2012, China and Russia have conducted Joint Sea, an annual bilateral naval exercise. Joint Sea provides a forum for the Chinese and Russian navies to gain operational experience by engaging in a wide range of joint activities. Since its inception, Joint Sea has increased in both complexity and geographic scope. For example, Joint Sea 2016 included a complex air-sea amphibious exercise conducted by Chinese and Russian naval forces.⁹⁹ During Joint Sea 2019, held from April 29 to May 4, the Chinese and Russian navies conducted a joint sea-based live-fire air defense exercise for the first time in addition to holding various live-fire exercises, search and rescue operations, communications exercises, and anti-submarine warfare exercises.¹⁰⁰ Further, Joint Sea exercises have expanded into sensitive waters that hold strategic value for either Moscow or Beijing, included the Mediterranean Sea (2015), the South China Sea (2016), and the Baltic Sea (2017).¹⁰¹ However, there are limits to the effectiveness of the Joint Sea program. The exercises place little emphasis on interoperability, restricting the ability of the Chinese and Russian navies to

⁹⁸ Ibid, 95.

⁹⁹ Schwartz, "The Military Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations," 89.

¹⁰⁰ Franz-Stefan Gady, "China, Russia Conduct First Joint Live-Fire Missile Exercise at Sea," *Diplomat*, May 8, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/china-russia-conduct-first-joint-live-fire-missile-exercise-at-sea/>.

¹⁰¹ Schwartz, "The Military Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations," 89; Richard Weitz, "Assessing the Sino-Russian Baltic Sea Drill," *China Brief*, September 20, 2017. <https://jamestown.org/program/assessing-the-sino-russian-baltic-sea-drill/>; Meick, "China-Russia Military-to-Military Relations," 14, 15.

practice conducting joint operations against a real-world adversary. In addition, Joint Sea exercises are limited in terms of scope and duration compared to typical U.S. and allied naval exercises, limited the operational benefits of the Joint Sea program for the Chinese and Russian militaries.¹⁰²

Annual Russian Strategic Exercises: The most recent notable development regarding Sino-Russo military exercises is the participation of PLA forces in Russia's annual large strategic military exercises. In 2018 Moscow's 2018 invitation to Beijing to participate for the first time in one of Russia's major annual strategic military exercises, Vostok-2018.¹⁰³ Russia holds an annual major strategic exercise that rotates through its four military districts, Vostok (East), Zapad (West), Tsentr (Center), and Kavkaz (South).¹⁰⁴ China sent 3,200 troops, 900 tanks and armored vehicles, and 30 fixed-wing aircraft from the PLA's Northern Theatre Command to participate in the 2018 iteration of the exercise, Vostok-2018, which took place from September 11-17 in Eastern Russia. The exercise simulated a large-scale conventional military campaign to repel an enemy invasion of Russian territory.¹⁰⁵ Chinese forces also participated in the 2019 (Tsentr) and 2020 (Kavkaz) iterations of the exercise.

¹⁰² Schwartz, "The Military Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations," 89.

¹⁰³ Franz-Stefan Gady, "Russian, Chinese Troops Kick Off Russia's Largest Military Exercise Since 1981," *Diplomat*, September 12, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/09/russian-chinese-troops-kick-off-russias-largest-military-exercise-since-1981/>.

¹⁰⁴ Elizabeth Buchanan, Mathieu Boulegue, "Russia's Military Exercises in the Arctic Have More Bark Than Bite," *Foreign Policy*, May 20, 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/05/20/russias-military-exercises-in-the-arctic-have-more-bark-than-bite/>.

¹⁰⁵ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Chapter 2, Section 1, "Year in Review, Security and Foreign Affairs," in *2018 Annual Report to Congress*, November 14, 2018, 165. https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/Chapter%202%20Section%201-%20Year%20in%20Review,%20Security%20and%20Foreign%20Affairs_0.pdf.

Aerospace Security Exercises: In 2016, China and Russia expanded added missile defense to their portfolio of bilateral military exercises, holding Aerospace Security 2016—the first computer-simulated missile defense exercise between China and Russia—to signal opposition to U.S.-South Korean discussions about deploying a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery in South Korea.¹⁰⁶ The five day exercise aimed to improve interoperability between Russian and Chinese missile and air defense groups and involved “defending territory against accidental and provocative ballistic and missile strikes.”¹⁰⁷ China and Russia conducted a follow-on exercise, Aerospace Security 2017, in December 2017.¹⁰⁸ The decision to launch the Aerospace Security program reflects a growing level of convergence between China and Russia on countering U.S. missile defense.

Confidence Building Measures

Confidence building measures between China and Russia have focused on resolving their historical border disputes and reducing security concerns. In the late 1980s, China and the then-Soviet Union began negotiations to resolve their long-standing

¹⁰⁶ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Chapter 2, Section 1, “Year in Review: Security and Foreign Affairs,” in *2017 Annual Report to Congress*, November 2017, 174-176. [https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2019-](https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2019-10/Chapter%202,%20Section%201%20-%20Year%20in%20Review%20-%20Security%20and%20Foreign%20Affairs_0.pdf)

[10/Chapter%202,%20Section%201%20-%20Year%20in%20Review%20-%20Security%20and%20Foreign%20Affairs_0.pdf](https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2019-10/Chapter%202,%20Section%201%20-%20Year%20in%20Review%20-%20Security%20and%20Foreign%20Affairs_0.pdf); Meick, “China-Russia Military-to-Military Relations,” 11.

¹⁰⁷ *Interfax*, “Russia, China Hold First Joint Missile Defense Exercise – Russian Defense Ministry,” May 27, 2016.

¹⁰⁸ *China Military Online*, “Defense Ministry: China, Russia Achieve New Breakthroughs in Anti-Missile Cooperation,” December 18, 2017. http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2017-12/18/content_4800133.htm; *China Military Online*, “Defense Ministry: China, Russia Kick Off Anti-Ballistic Missile Drill as Scheduled,” December 12, 2017. http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2017-12/12/content_4799725.htm.

border disputes.¹⁰⁹ In 1991, the two states signed an agreement demarcating the eastern portion of the border, followed by a supplementary agreement in 2004.¹¹⁰ A 1994 agreement signed by China and the Russian Federation demarcated the western portion of the border.¹¹¹ In 2008, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi and Russian Foreign Minister. Sergei Lavrov signed the “additional protocol on the eastern part of borders,” formally ending their decades long border disputes.

Success in the border negotiations fostered good will between China and Russia that allowed the two states to establish confidence building measures relating to military and security affairs (see Appendix 3) Korolev writes that “it was the multiple border negotiations from which the subsequent trust-building measures...gradually developed.”¹¹² For example, the signing of the 1994 border agreement was complemented by the signing of the “Agreement on No First Use of Nuclear Weapons Against Each Other and Not Targeting Strategic Nuclear Weapons at Each Other.”¹¹³ In 2009, the two countries signed an “Agreement on Mutual Notification of the Launch of Ballistic Missiles and Space Launch Vehicles.”¹¹⁴

These confidence building measures do not suggest that China and Russia have completely eliminated their historical mistrust of each other. However, they do

¹⁰⁹ Jyotsna Bakshi, “Russia-China Boundary Agreement: Relevance for India,” *Strategic Analysis* 24:10 (2001): 1833-1859.

¹¹⁰ Alexander Lukin, “Territorial Issues in Asia: Drivers, Instruments, Ways Forward,” in *7th Berlin Conference on Asian Security (BCAS)*, July 1-2, 2013. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/projekt_papiere/BCAS2013_Alexander_Lukin.pdf.

¹¹¹ Reuters, “China Signs Border Demarcation Pact with Russia,” July 21, 2008. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-russia-border/china-signs-border-demarcation-pact-with-russia-idUKPEK29238620080721>.

¹¹² Korolev, “On the Verge of An Alliance,” 14.

¹¹³ Ibid, 13.

¹¹⁴ *China News*, “Express: China and Russia Sign an Agreement on Mutual Notification of the Launch of Ballistic Missiles and Space Launch Vehicles,” October 13, 2009. Translated. <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/news/2009/10-13/1908552.shtml>.

demonstrate a willingness on the part of Beijing and Moscow to reduce bilateral tensions in order to strengthen their strategic partnership.¹¹⁵

Deep Institutionalization: Integrated Military Command

China and Russia have made significant strides in their ability to integrate their military forces and conduct joint operations. Although open source information is limited, reporting on China and Russia's recent military interactions demonstrates the growing interoperability of their military forces and an increasingly integrated military command capability. A number of recent Sino-Russian military interactions highlight the growing ability of China and Russia's militaries to operate jointly.

- *Kavkaz-2020*: During Russia's annual large scale strategic military exercise, "Kavkaz-2020", Russian troops trained Chinese forces to use Russian "command and communication" equipment, demonstrating an increased capacity for integrated military command.¹¹⁶
- *Tsentr-2019*: During 2019 iteration of Russia's annual strategic exercise, dubbed "Tsentr-2019," "dropped live ordinance together with Russian jets."¹¹⁷
- *2019 Joint Bomber Patrol*: On July 23, 2019, the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) and the Russian Air Force conducted their first

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 13.

¹¹⁶ *China Military Online*, "Kavkaz-2020 Strategic Exercise: Chinese Troops Adapt to Russian Equipment, Highlighting Bilateral Friendship," September 17, 2020. http://english.chinamil.com.cn/view/2020-09/17/content_9904512.htm.

¹¹⁷ Pavel Felgenhauer, "Russia Completes Massive Tsentr 2019 War Games with Enhanced Chinese Participation," *China Brief*, September 26, 2019. <https://jamestown.org/program/russia-completes-massive-tsentr-2019-war-games-with-enhanced-chinese-participation/>.

joint strategic bomber patrol, highlighting the increasing interoperability of China and Russia's military forces. Two PLAAF Xian H-6K bombers were joined by two Russian Tupolev Tu-95MS bombers on the long-range aerial patrol, reportedly violating South Korea's air defense identification zone (KADIZ) in the process. Notably, South Korea's Ministry of Defense stated that the Chinese and Russian aircraft "engaged in coordinated maneuvering" while flying in the KADIZ.¹¹⁸ Wu Qian, spokesman for China's Ministry of Defense, stated that the patrol was aimed at "upgrading joint operation capacity" while Russia's Ministry of Defense indicated that the patrol was intended to "strengthen global strategic stability".¹¹⁹

- *Joint Sea 2019*: China and Russia conducted a joint sea-based live-fire air defense exercise for the first time as part of the bilateral Joint Sea- 2019 military exercise. A spokesman for China's Ministry of Defense noted that the exercise was intended to improve "joint maritime defensive operations" between China and Russia. The exercise, which required close coordination between Chinese and Russian ships and command organs, demonstrates both the increasing interoperability of China and Russia's

¹¹⁸ Franz-Stefan Gady, "The Significance of the First Ever China-Russia Strategic Bomber Patrol," *Diplomat*, July 25, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/07/the-significance-of-the-first-ever-china-russia-strategic-bomber-patrol/>; Jeremy Page, "China Promises Further Military Cooperation With Russia," *Wall Street Journal*, July 24, 2019. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-promises-further-military-cooperation-with-russia-11563973937>.

¹¹⁹ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Chapter 4, Section 2, "An Uneasy Entente: China-Russia Relations in a New Era of Strategic Competition with the United States," 322.

military forces as well as their growing ability to integrate their command structures.¹²⁰

- *Vostok 2018*: During Vostok 2018, China and Russia's air forces operated in a unified formation for the first time, marking significant progress in their ability to operate jointly.¹²¹
- *Joint Sea 2016*: During Joint Sea 2016, Chinese and Russian naval forces utilized a "joint command information system" for the first time.¹²²
- *Joint Sea 2015*: During Joint Sea 2015, Beijing and Moscow established a joint command center for their warships participating in the exercise.¹²³

Joint Troop Placements/Military Base Exchanges

Currently, there is no publicly available evidence that China and Russia have exchanged military bases or jointly deployed military forces.

Common Defense Policy

While it is hard to confirm via open sources the extent to which China and Russia share a common defense policy, recent Sino-Russian military activities in the Asia-

¹²⁰ Franz-Stefan Gady, "China, Russia Conduct First Joint Live-Fire Missile Exercise at Sea,"; Guo Yuandan and Liu Xuanzun, "China, Russia Conduct First Ever Joint Warship-Based Live-Fire Exercise," *Global Times*, May 5, 2019.

http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1148538.shtml?fbclid=IwAR0Gq5gB4JFZA0t9V-3KebovheGS_bhaOhhd0eaXeVipC20OVNyKYiSYIbA; Franz-Stefan Gady, "China, Russia Kick Off Bilateral Naval Exercise 'Joint Sea'," *Diplomat*, April 29, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/china-russia-kick-off-bilateral-naval-exercise-joint-sea/>;

¹²¹ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Chapter 2, Section 1, "Year in Review: Security and Foreign Affairs," in *2018 Annual Report to Congress*, November 14, 2018. 165.

¹²² Meick, 8.

¹²³ Tom Parffit, "Russia-China Clinch Tightens with Joint Navy Exercises in Mediterranean," *Telegraph*, May 13, 2013. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/11596851/Russia-China-clinch-tightens-with-joint-navy-exercises-in-Mediterranean.html>.

Pacific suggest that China and Russia are closely aligning their defense policies. Most notable was the joint Sino-Russian long-range air patrol in July 2019. Dmitri Trenin noted it is likely that “such patrols will become a regular feature.”¹²⁴ The month prior, two Russian bombers made an unprecedented flight circling the island of Taiwan. Given China’s sensitivity to foreign militaries operating in the Taiwan Strait, U.S. Admiral Philip Davidson, then Commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Admiral Philip Davidson, remarked that “the fact that the Chinese did not challenge those flights suggests that they had the tacit approval of Beijing.”¹²⁵ Additionally, in June 2016, a PLAN frigate rendezvoused with three Russian naval vessels in the waters surrounding the Senkaku Islands, an uninhabited island chain in the East China Sea claimed by China, Japan, and Taiwan. Ownership of the islands, which are administered by Japan, is the source of a long-standing dispute between China and Japan.¹²⁶ While these episodes do not indicate the emergence of unified Sino-Russian defense policies, they demonstrate that Beijing and Moscow are coordinating their military activities in strategically significant regions. Furthermore, Korolev notes that these military interactions show “a strong basis for a further enhancement that can be utilized in a time of need.”¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Andrew Osborn, Joyce Lee, “First-Russian-Chinese Air Patrol in Asia-Pacific Drawz Shots from South Korea,” *Reuters*, July 22, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-russia-aircraft/first-russian-chinese-air-patrol-in-asia-pacific-draws-shots-from-south-korea-idUSKCN1UI072>.

¹²⁵ James Kitfield, “Adm. Davidson, China Assaults International Order,” *Breaking Defense*, July 18, 2019. <https://breakingdefense.com/2019/07/adm-davidson-china-assaults-international-order/>.

¹²⁶ Bertil Lintner, “Eye on America, China-Russia Flex Naval Muscle,” *Asia Times*, April 6, 2019. <https://asiatimes.com/2019/04/eye-on-america-china-russia-flex-naval-muscles/>.

¹²⁷ Korolev, “On the Verge of an Alliance,” 15.

Analysis

The data demonstrates that China and Russia's defense relationship meets all five criteria of moderate alliance institutionalization. The 2001 "Big Treaty" signed by the two countries qualifies clearly as a non-aggression/consultation pact, and can be interpreted as containing an implicit commitment to mutual defense. Beijing and Moscow have established multiple high-level defense consultations on bi-lateral security interests, regional security, and counterterrorism. Bilateral military-technical cooperation is characterized by the Russian sale of increasingly advanced weapons systems to China as well as the joint production of sophisticated weapons systems and defense technology. The two militaries have established regular military exercises that continue to expand in their complexity, geographic scope, and level of interoperability demonstrated. They have also signed a number of confidence building agreements designed mostly to de-escalate mutual security concerns and diffuse long-standing border disagreements.

In analyzing the level of institutionalization in China and Russia's defense relationship, it is useful to compare Sino-Russian defense ties to formal U.S. alliances such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance. The NATO alliance is widely regarded as the prime example of a deeply institutionalized alliance,¹²⁸ providing a useful benchmark for evaluating how closely the level of institutionalization in China and Russia's defense partnership resembles a "true" military alliance.

In assessing the criteria of "moderate alliance institutionalization", two. Aspects of China and Russia's defense relationship, "mechanisms of regular consultations" and "military-technical cooperation", are particularly robust. China and Russia have

¹²⁸ Walt, 157.

established an extensive system of regular defense consultations. This system extends top-down throughout Beijing and Moscow's respective defense establishments, from "top decision makers (today, Putin and Xi) and their administrative apparatuses to defense ministries and their subdivisions to regional military districts and border garrisons to military educational institutions."¹²⁹ These consultations build mutual understanding between Chinese and Russian defense officials and military officers, facilitate arms packages, prepare bilateral and joint exercises, and provide venues to discuss bilateral military cooperation as well as critical regional and global security concerns.¹³⁰ The number and breadth of these consultations have continued to grow in response to changes in China and Russia's security environments. For example, the Northeast Asia Security Dialogue, formed in response to the "growing number of negative trends in the development of the regional situation,"¹³¹ has increased the frequency of meetings in response to regional events such as the United States 2017 decision to deploy the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missile system to South Korea.¹³² Looking forward, China's 2019 defense white paper affirmed the critical role bilateral consultations will continue to play in the bilateral defense relationship, calling for the "sound development of exchange mechanisms at all levels" and "expanded cooperation in high-level exchanges" between China and Russia's militaries.¹³³

¹²⁹ Ibid, 6.

¹³⁰ Korolev, "On the Verge of an Alliance," 6; Meick, "China-Russia Military-to-Military Relations," 17.

¹³¹ Russian Ministry of Defense, *On the First Round of the Russian-Chinese Dialogue on Security in Northeast Asia*, April 25, 2015. Translated. https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=auto&tl=en&u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.mid.ru%2Fforeign_policy%2Fnews%2F-%2Fasset_publisher%2FcKNonkJE02Bw%2Fcontent%2Fid%2F1207275.

¹³² Korolev, 8.

¹³³ State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, "China's National Defense in the New Era." July 24, 2019. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-07/24/c_138253389.htm.

Military-technical cooperation between China and Russia is deeply institutionalized. Bilateral institutions such as the MICTIC have facilitated Russia's post-Crimea resumption of large-scale transfers of military to China, including advanced weapons systems Moscow was previously hesitant to sell Beijing. In addition, China and Russia have used these institutions to catalyze the joint production of major weapons systems while seeking to "jointly develop dual-use technologies including next-generation telecommunications, robotics and artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and Internet and data governance."¹³⁴

The recent growth in bilateral MTC reflects China and Russia's "complementary needs and capabilities that they can leverage to advance their great-power pursuits."¹³⁵ As a result of their respective geopolitical disputes with the West, both Beijing and Moscow have limited access to advanced Western defense technologies, increasing the importance of bilateral military-technical cooperation for the modernization of the Russian Armed Forces and the People's Liberation Army.¹³⁶ China and Russia's respective defense industrial bases also have complementary strengths that they can leverage to strengthen their respective militaries. As the author previously noted in a *Defense360* article, "Beijing has become a critical source of key military and dual-use technologies for Russia as a result of sanctions that prevent it from purchasing similar technologies from the West. Russia is now dependent on China to provide critical items including electronic components for its aerospace programs, composite materials, UAV

¹³⁴ Blivas, "Sino-Russian Military-Technical Cooperation."

¹³⁵ Andrea Kendall-Taylor, David Schullman, and Dan McCormick, "Navigating Sino-Russian Defense Cooperation." *War on the Rocks*, August 5, 2020. <https://warontherocks.com/2020/08/navigating-sino-russian-defense-cooperation/>.

¹³⁶ Samuel Bendett and Elsa B. Kania "China, Russia Deepen Technological Ties," *Defense One*, October 4, 2019. <https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2019/10/china-russia-are-turning-each-other-tech-help-west-limits-access/160364/>.

technology, and marine diesel engines for the Russian Navy.”¹³⁷ In October 2019, Premier of China’s State Council Li Keqiang articulated this trend, stating the necessity for China and Russia to “deepen cooperation in scientific and technological innovation, give full play to complementary advantages, and fully tap the potential of cooperation between the two countries in basic research, applied research, and industrialization of scientific and technological achievements”¹³⁸

Thus, the scope of China and Russia’s mechanisms of regular consultations and the depth of their bilateral MTC approaches and in some cases likely surpasses the level of MTC among NATO partners. However, two different criteria of moderate institutionalization, alliance treaty or agreement, regular military drills, and confidence building measures, reveals that the Sino-Russian defense partnership falls short of the level of institutionalization demonstrated by NATO countries.

The author’s analysis of the 2001 “Big Treaty” concluded that it contained an implicit obligation for mutual defense. This implicit obligation falls well short of the explicit commitment for mutual defense outlined in NATO’s founding treaty. Article IV of the North Atlantic Treaty, signed in April 1949, stipulates that

“an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them... will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties,

¹³⁷ Meick, 15; Korolev, 9-10.

¹³⁸ China’s State Council, *China and Russia Sign a Joint Communiqué to Expand Cooperation from Traditional Fields to High-Tech*, September 19, 2019. Translated. http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-09/19/content_5431215.htm.

such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.”¹³⁹

Sino-Russian joint military exercises also fail to measure up to their U.S. equivalents. Evaluating the efficacy of the “Peace Mission” exercise series, Paul Schwartz writes that “the level of interoperability, though improved, still remained relatively limited, especially in comparison with comparable exercise held within Western alliances.”¹⁴⁰ Assessing the Sino-Russian maritime exercises, he notes that the Joint Sea naval exercises are “significantly shorter than the typical U.S./allied naval exercise,” and “also tend to be smaller than their U.S./allied counterparts.”¹⁴¹

Where China and Russia’s defense partnership least resembles U.S. formal alliances are in the criteria for “deep alliance institutionalization.” While recent Sino-Russian military activities and joint military exercises have demonstrated a nascent capability for the PLA and Russian Defense Forces to integrate their military forces, NATO’s military forces feature a fully integrated command structure.¹⁴² Furthermore, while there is no evidence of China and Russia engaging in joint troop placement or exchanging military bases, NATO forces “maintain 6,800 posts across seven commands” stretched across NATO territory.¹⁴³ Lastly, while China and Russia have signaled their support for each other’s key security interests, the relationship lacks NATO’s formal

¹³⁹ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “The North Atlantic Treaty.”
https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm.

¹⁴⁰ Schwartz, 96.

¹⁴¹ Ibid 97.

¹⁴² North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “The NATO Command Structure.”
https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_02/1802-Factsheet-NATO-Command-Structure_en.pdf.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

institutions for crafting common defense policies. The North Atlantic Council, “the principal political decision-making body and oversees the political and military process relating to security issues affecting the whole Alliance,”¹⁴⁴ determines NATO defense policy through “consensus decision-making” in which “consultations take place until a decision that is acceptable to all is reached.”¹⁴⁵ This means that when NATO policy is announced “it is therefore the expression of the collective will of all the sovereign states that are members of the Alliance.”¹⁴⁶

Thus, the evidence makes clear that while China and Russia’s defense relationship meets all the criteria of moderate alliance institutionalization to various extents, it has only recently reached the nascent stages of “deep institutionalization.” Thus, it is accurate to say that, rather than being “on the verge of an alliance,” as Korolev writes, the Sino-Russian defense relationship is “on the verge of deep institutionalization.”

Conclusion

China and Russia’s mutual security concerns and the convergence of their geostrategic interests make it highly likely that their bilateral defense relationship will continue to deepen in the near future. It may one day even become a “formal” military alliance.¹⁴⁷ However, it is clear that for the time being, rather than resembling a deeply institutionalized, NATO-style alliance, the relationship stands “on the verge of deep institutionalization.”

¹⁴⁴ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “North Atlantic Council.” https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49763.htm.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ June Mai, “Beijing Gives Cautious Welcome to Vladimir Putin’s Hint over Russia-China Military Alliance.” October 25, 2020. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3107027/beijing-gives-cautious-welcome-vladimir-putins-hint-over>.

It is likely that experts will continue to debate what constitutes a military alliance and whether China and Russia's military-to-military relationship constitutes a true alliance. For example, some may note that the level of institutionalization in China and Russia's defense relationship remains a far cry from the level of institutionalization between members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO),¹⁴⁸ while others will highlight that the relationship is more institutionalized than other alliances such as the U.S.-Thailand alliance.¹⁴⁹ However, it is undeniable that Beijing and Moscow have established a deep, multifaceted defense relationship, that will likely continue to develop in the near future.

China and Russia's defense relationship will most likely continue to grow in the near future. It will be important for future studies to continue to monitor the growth in the bilateral relationship using Korolev's criteria. However, points of friction exist in the relationship that may undermine continued defense cooperation. For example, tensions might arise between Beijing and Moscow over Beijing's growing influence in Central Asia, or China's desire to become an "Arctic Power." Most importantly, the "Big Treaty" expires in 2021. The nature of the Sino-Russian defense relationship for the next two decades will likely be shaped by its replacement.

¹⁴⁸ Paul N. Schwartz, "The Military Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations."

¹⁴⁹ Rensselaar Lee and Aytom Lukin, *Russia's Far East: New Dynamics in Asia Pacific and Beyond*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2016, 117-120.

Appendix 1: Key China-Russia Military Consultations

Name	Institutional Level	Purpose
1992 - China-Russia Intergovernmental Joint Commission on Military Technology Cooperation	“Usually co-chaired by China’s vice chairman of the CCP’s Central Military Commission (CMC) and Russia’s defense minister. Regular participants also include Russian deputy defense ministers, China’s defense minister, and other key officials and personnel; held annually except for 2006-2007.” ¹⁵⁰	Discuss arms sales and broader defense industrial cooperation.
1993 – Regular Meetings Between the Defense Ministers of Russia and China	Defense Ministers; held annually.	Discuss general strategic issues and military strategy.
1997- Annual Strategic Consultation among Chiefs of the General Staff¹⁵¹	Chiefs or Deputy Chiefs of the Russian Armed Forces General Staff Department and the PLA Joint Staff Department; held annually.	Discuss practical issues of military cooperation including military technical cooperation and joint military exercises; practical implementation of military agreements reached at higher levels.
2001 – Consultations held through the SCO: 1) SCO’s Annual Summits; 2) Meetings of the SCO’s Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure; 3) SCO Defense Ministers Meeting¹⁵²	Heads of State of SCO member countries, Defense Ministers, various military officials and experts; each consultation held yearly.	Discuss issues of regional security and stability in Central Asia; conduct intelligence sharing; plan joint military exercises.
2004 – China-Russia Consultation on National Security Issues¹⁵³	Heads of Russia’s Security Council and the heads of China’s State Council; held annually from 2004-2009, since 2009 held four times a year.	Discuss China and Russia’s immediate national interests.
2014 – China-Russia Northeast Asia Security Dialogue¹⁵⁴	Deputy Foreign Ministers and diplomats and military experts of different ranks; held every two or three months.	Facilitate effective security cooperation in Northeast Asia.

¹⁵⁰ Meick, 17.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 18.

¹⁵² Korolev, 7.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 7.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 7.

Appendix 2: China-Russia Military Exercises, 2003-2020

Exercise Name	Date	Participants	Location	Personnel	Weapons Systems/Units Involved	Exercise Description
Apprehension of Illegal Border Crosser Exercise ¹⁵⁵	January 2003	China, Russia	Heilongjiang Province, China	Not Reported	Border units from China and Russia	Border security exercise
Coalition-2003	August 6-12, 2003	China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan (SCO)	Xinjiang, China; Ucharal and Ili, Kazakhstan	1,200 (700 Chinese)	“Major systems from all participants included fighters, helicopters, tanks, and armored vehicles (China sent riflemen, infantry, artillery, armed police, and support forces)” ¹⁵⁶	Anti-terror exercise. It was the first exercise of its kind within the framework of the SCO
Peace Mission-2005	August 18-25, 2005	China, Russia (SCO)	Vladivostok, Russia; Weifang and Qingdao, Shandong Province, China	Total: 10,000 Chinese: 8,000 Russian: 2,000	“Major systems from all participants included fighters, early-warning aircraft, helicopters, destroyers, frigates, tanks, artillery, and light armored vehicles (China sent Su-27 fighters, helicopters,	Ostensibly an anti-terrorism exercise. “The first phase of the exercise involved respective military forces’ staff officers conducting strategic

¹⁵⁵ Meick, 24.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 24.

					three destroyers, three frigates, tanks, and armored vehicles)” ¹⁵⁷	consultations and battle planning. The second and third operational phases involved a one-day offshore blockade, followed by an amphibious landing with a concurrent airborne assault” ¹⁵⁸
Peace Mission-2007	August 9-17, 2007	(SCO) China, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan	Chelyabinsk, Russia; Urumqi, Xinjiang, China	Total: 7,000, Chinese: 1,600 Russian: 2,000	“Major systems from all participants included fighter-bombers, helicopters, supply aircraft, and tanks (China sent eight JH-7 fighter-bombers, 32 helicopters, transport aircraft, and army, air force, and integrated support groups)” ¹⁵⁹	Exercise focused on anti-terrorism drills. The exercise was the first time entire PLA organizational units conduct joint military exercises outside of China.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 24.

¹⁵⁸ Martin Andrew, “Power Politics: China, Russia, and Peace Mission 2005,” *China Brief*, September 27, 2005. <https://jamestown.org/program/power-politics-china-russia-and-peace-mission-2005/>.

¹⁵⁹ Meick, 24.

Cooperation-2007	September 4-6, 2007	China, Russia	Moscow, Russia	Total: 1,000 Chinese: 600	“Major systems from all participants included helicopters and armored vehicles (China sent Snow Leopard Commando force of the People’s Armed Police [PAP] and Russia sent its Warrior Special Force unit)” ¹⁶⁰	Antiterrorism exercise ¹⁶¹
Border Blockade Exercise¹⁶²	February 26, 2009	China, Russia	Heihe, China; Blagoveshchensk, Russia	Not reported	Not reported	Border security exercise
Nurak-Antiterror - 2009	April 17-19, 2009	(SCO) China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan	Fakhrabad, Tajikistan	Total: 1,000	“Major systems from all participants included attack aircraft, helicopters, and armored vehicles” ¹⁶³	Antiterrorism exercise
Bogorodsk Disaster Relief Exercise	May 19-22, 2009	China, Russia, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan	Noginsk and Moscow, Russia	Total: 200 Chinese: 20	“Major systems from all participants included 50 Mi-8 and Ka-32 aircraft” ¹⁶⁴	Exercise focused on disaster relief

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 24.

¹⁶¹ *Xinhua*, “Sino-Russian Anti-Terror Exercise Kicks Off,” September 5, 2007.
http://www.china.org.cn/international/2007-09/05/content_1223292.htm.

¹⁶² Ibid, 24.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 25.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 26.

Peace Mission-2009	July 24-26, 2009	(SCO)China, Russia	Taonan, Jilin Province, China	Total: 2,600 Chinese: 1,300 Russian: 1,300	“Major systems from all participants included fighters, attack aircraft, helicopters, tanks, and armored vehicles (China sent 20 fighters, fighter-bombers, attack aircraft, helicopters, and tanks)” ¹⁶⁵	Anti-terror exercise intended to “to verify operation plans and capabilities to respond to unexpected incidents under the unstable environment of countries and regions.” Included, large-scale conventional drills involving combined arms operations against terrorists in an urban setting. ¹⁶⁶
River/Port Emergencies Exercises ¹⁶⁷	August 18 and 31, 2009	China, Russia	Heihe, China; Blagoveschensk, Russia	Total: 240	Not reported	River/port security exercise
Peace Shield-2009	September 18, 2009	China, Russia	Gulf of Aden	Not reported	“China sent two frigates and a supply ship; Russia sent three warships” ¹⁶⁸	Maritime maneuver exercise

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 25

¹⁶⁶ Stephen Blank, “Peace-Mission 2009: A Military Scenario Beyond Central Asia,” *China Brief*, August 20, 2009. <https://jamestown.org/program/peace-mission-2009-a-military-scenario-beyond-central-asia/>.

¹⁶⁷ Meick, 25.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 25.

Peace Mission-2010	September 10-25, 2010	(SCO) China, Russia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan,	Zhambyl region, Kazakhstan	Total: 5,000 Chinese: 1,000 Russian: 1,000	“Major systems from all participants included combat aircraft, helicopters, armored vehicles, and tanks(China sent two J-10 fighters, four H-6 bombers, tanks, and ground force, air force, and logistics combat groups)” ¹⁶⁹	Exercise included joint maneuvers and drills including conducting breakouts, and using suppressing fire at night. ¹⁷⁰
Joint Sea-2012	April 22-27, 2012	China, Russia	Waters off of Qingdao, China	Total: 10,000 Chinese: 4,000 Russian: 6,000	“China sent 16 surface ships, two submarines, 13 aircraft, and five helicopters; Russia sent four surface ships, three support ships, and four helicopters, and a naval task force” ¹⁷¹	First Sino-Russian maritime exercise, included anti-submarine operations and simulated rescue of hijacked vessels. ¹⁷²
Peace Mission-2012¹⁷³	June 8-14, 2012	(SCO) China, Russia, Tajikistan,	Khujand, Tajikistan	Total: 2,000 Chinese: 369 Chinese	“Major systems from all participants included combat	Anti-terrorism exercise

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 25.

¹⁷⁰ Richard Weitz, “China’s Growing Clout in the SCO: Peace Mission 2010,” *China Brief*, October 8, 2010. <https://jamestown.org/program/chinas-growing-clout-in-the-sco-peace-mission-2010/>.

¹⁷¹ Meick, 25.

¹⁷² BBC, “China and Russia Launch Naval Exercises in Yellow Sea,” April 22, 2012. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-17803624>.

¹⁷³ *Xinhua*, “SCO Member States Hold “Peace Mission 2012” Drill in Tajikistan (2),” June 15, 2012. <http://en.people.cn/102774/7846935.html>.

		Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan,		Russian: 350	aircraft, helicopters, and armored vehicles (China sent six helicopters, a motorized infantry company, and an artillery squad) ¹⁷⁴	
Cooperation- 2013	June 10-20, 2013	China, Russia	Beijing, China	Total: 75 Chinese: 46 Russian: 29	“China sent Snow Leopard Commando force of the People’s Armed Police [PAP] and Russia sent a special operations unit” ¹⁷⁵	Anti-terrorism exercise
Joint Sea-2013	July 5-12, 2013	China, Russia	Peter the Great Gulf, Russia	Total: 4,000	“China sent six surface ships, three helicopters, and one special operations unit; Russia sent 12 surface ships, one submarine, three fixed-wing aircraft, two helicopters, and a special operations unit” ¹⁷⁶	Exercise included antisubmarine warfare, close maneuvering, and the simulated takeover of an enemy ship. ¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Meick, 25.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 26.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 26.

¹⁷⁷ Mark Adomanis, “Joint China-Russia Exercise More Political Than Military,” *USNI News*, July 8, 2013. <https://news.usni.org/tag/joint-sea-2013>; *Xinhua*, “Backgrounder: China-Russia Joint Military Exercises Since 2003,” July 6, 2013. <http://en.people.cn/90786/8313722.html>.

Peace Mission-2013	July 27-August 15, 2013	(SCO) China, Russia	Cherbarkul, Russia	Total: 1,500 Chinese: 600 Russian: 900	“Major systems from all participants included fighter-bombers, helicopters, UAVs, artillery, armored tanks, and special forces units (China sent JH-7A fighter-bombers, helicopters, gunships, tanks, self-propelled guns, and army, air force, and logistics groups)” ¹⁷⁸	Anti-terrorism exercise
Joint Sea-2014	May 20-26, 2014	China, Russia	Waters near Shanghai, China	Not reported	“China sent six surface ships, two submarines, seven fixed-wing aircraft, four helicopters, and a marine commando unit; Russia sent six surface ships, two fixed-wing aircraft, two helicopters, and a marine commando unit” ¹⁷⁹	Exercised focused on navigation safety, at-sea replenishment, escort missions and live fire exercises.

¹⁷⁸ Meick, 26.

¹⁷⁹ Meick, 26.

Peace Mission-2014	August 24-29, 2014	(SCO) China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan	Zhurihe Town, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China	Total: 7,000 Chinese: 5,000 Russian: 1,000	“Major systems from all participants included fighters, helicopters, UAVs, tanks, and ground vehicles (China sent J-10 and J-11 fighters, JH-7 fighter-bombers, early warning aircraft, helicopters, and UAVs)” ¹⁸⁰	Exercise included a range of joint air-ground drills involving a wide array of advanced weapons.
Border Defense Cooperation- 2014¹⁸¹	October 31, 2014	China, Russia	Sino-Russian border area near Jilin Province, China	Not reported	Not reported	Border defense exercise
Joint Sea-2015	May 11-21, 2015 (Phase I), August 20-28, 2015 (Phase II)	China, Russia	Mediterranean Sea (Phase I). Peter the Great Gulf; waters off Clerk Cape; and the Sea of Japan (Phase II)	Not reported (Phase I). Total not reported; 400 marines (200 Chinese, 200 Russian) (Phase II)	“China sent two frigates and one replenishment ship; Russia sent six surface ships” (Phase I). “China sent seven surface ships, five fixed-wing aircraft, six helicopters, and 21 amphibious vehicles; Russia sent 16 surface ships, two submarines, 12	Exercise included underway replenishment and escort operations, joint practice of maritime escorts, and live-fire maritime defense drills

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 26.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 26.

					naval aircraft, and nine amphibious vehicles” (Phase II) ¹⁸²	
International Army Games-2015 ¹⁸³	August 1-15, 2015.	17 countries including China and Russia	Held on 11 different firing ranges across Russia	2,000	Major systems from China and Russia included tanks, artillery, and air-defense systems	International military sports event hosted annually by Russian
Aerospace Security-2016	May 23-28, 2016	China, Russia	Moscow, Russia	Not reported	Not reported	First computer-simulated missile defense exercise between China and Russia.
Cooperation- 2016	July 3-14, 2016	China, Russia	Moscow, Russia	Total: 100	“Major systems from all participants included helicopters and armored vehicles (China sent Falcon Commando and Snow Leopard Commando forces of the People’s Armed Police [PAP] and	Anti-terrorism exercise

¹⁸² Ibid, 27.

¹⁸³ Franz-Stefan Gady, “Russia Beats China in This Year’s International Army Games,” *Diplomat*, August 18, 2015. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/08/russia-beats-china-in-this-years-international-army-games/>; *China Military Online*, “China Ranks Second in 10 Team Competitions at International Military Games,” August 17, 2015. http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/2015-08/17/content_6635532.htm; RT, “International Army Games Conclude with Russian Biathlon Win,” August 15, 2015. <https://www.rt.com/news/312560-army-games-russia-tank-biathlon/>.

					Russia sent its Warrior Special Force unit)” ¹⁸⁴	
International Army Games-2016 ¹⁸⁵	July 30 – August 13, 2016	22 countries including China and Russia	Held on 15 different sites across Russia and Kazakhstan	Total: 3,000 Chinese: 1,000	Major systems from China and Russia included tanks, fighter jets, airborne troops, and naval ships (China sent a frigate)	2016 iteration of the International Army Games
Joint Sea-2016	September 12-20, 2016	China, Russia	South China Sea	Total Not Reported: 256 marines participated Chinese: 160 Russian, 90	“China sent 10 surface ships, two submarines, 11 fixed-wing aircraft, and eight helicopters; Russia sent three surface ships, two supply ships, two helicopters, and amphibious vehicles’	Exercise included the first Sino-Russian drills on “three-dimensional seizing and controlling of islands and reefs” (involving coordinated air, sea, and land operations) among other drills covering amphibious operations, air defense,

¹⁸⁴ Meick, 27.

¹⁸⁵ *China Military Online*, “International Army Games 2016 Wraps Up in Russia,” August 15, 2016. http://english.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2016-08/15/content_7207950.htm; Kukil Bora, “International Army Games 2016: Russia, Kazakhstan Host Olympic-Style Military Drills With Over 3,000 Troops From 20 Countries,” *International Business Times*, August 1, 2016. <https://www.ibtimes.com/international-army-games-2016-russia-kazakhstan-host-olympic-style-military-drills-2396394>; *Defence-Blog*, “China Sends Troops to Participate in International Army Games 2016,” July 18, 2016. <https://defence-blog.com/army/china-sends-troops-to-participate-in-international-army-games-2016.html>.

						anti-submarine warfare, and search and rescue. Additionally, China and Russia used a unique “joint command information system” developed specifically for the exercise. 186
Peace Mission-2016	September 15-21, 2016	China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, (SCO)	Balykchy, Kyrgyzstan	1,100 (270 Chinese, 500 Russian)	“Major systems from all participants included fighter-bombers, bombers, helicopters, UAVs, and armored vehicles (China sent Z-9 helicopters and armored vehicles)” ¹⁸⁷	“The drills focused on joint anti-terrorism operations in mountainous terrain and used tactics including surrounding and destroying an enemy using air support for ground operations, non-combatant evacuation operations.

¹⁸⁶ Meick, 8-9.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 27.

						and air-to-ground precision strikes.” ¹⁸⁸
Joint Sea-2017	July 23-28, 2017 (Phase I); September 22-26, 2017 (Phase II)	China, Russia	Baltic Sea	Not reported	“China sent a destroyer, a frigate, and a support ship; Russia sent an anti-submarine ship, a frigate, a rescue ship, a deep submersible rescue vehicle, two ship-borne helicopters and marines” ¹⁸⁹	Exercise focused on high-end maritime warfighting drills. First time China and Russia’s navy conducted joint submarine rescue exercises and joint anti-submarine exercises.
International Army Games-2017¹⁹⁰	July 29 – August 12	22 countries including China and Russia	Held on 22 sites in Russia, China, Belarus, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan	1,200	Major systems from China and Russia included tanks, fighter jets, artillery, airborne troops, and naval ships	2017 iteration of the International Army Games

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 10.

¹⁸⁹ Ankit Panda, “Chinese, Russian Navies Hold Exercises in Sea of Japan, Okhotsk Sea,” *Diplomat*, September 21, 2017. <https://thediplomat.com/2017/09/chinese-russian-navies-hold-exercises-in-sea-of-japan-okhotsk-sea/>.

¹⁹⁰ *Xinhua*, “China, Russia Start Joint Naval Drills,” September 19, 2019.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-09/19/c_136619184.htm; *Xinhua*, “China’s Airborne Troops Win 11 Events in Int’l Army Games,” August 10, 2017. http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/2017special/2017-08/10/content_7714082.htm; *China Military Online*, “Chinese Team Wins Two Champions at “Sea Cup” of IAG 2017,” August 4, 2017. http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2017-08/04/content_7704856.htm; Damien Sharkov, “Russian Forces Host China, India and 20 Other Militaries for International Army Games,” *Newsweek*, July 24, 2017. <https://www.newsweek.com/russian-forces-host-china-india-and-20-other-militaries-international-army-640844>.

Aerospace Security-2017¹⁹¹	December 2017	China, Russia	Beijing, China	Not reported	Not reported	Exercise included cooperation between Russia and China's to repel a simulated missile attack by a third-party country.
International Army Games-2018¹⁹²	July 28 – August 11, 2018	32 countries including China and Russia	Held across China, Russia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Iran Armenia, and Iran	189 teams from the 32 countries participated	Major systems from China and Russia included tanks, fighter jets, bombers, artillery, airborne troops, and naval ships.	2018 Iteration of the International Army Games
Peace Mission-2018	August 24 – August 29, 2018.	China, Russia, India, Pakistan, India, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan	Cherbarkulsky Training Ground, Russia	Total: 3,000 Chinese: ~700-750 Russian: 1,700	China sent forces including “an armored detachment, a mixed artillery battery, a detachment of the People’s Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF), and a special operations	The exercise focused on “Mountain Joint Anti-Terrorism, containing three stages: strategic consultation, joint anti-terrorism operations preparation

¹⁹¹ Franz-Stefan Gady, “China Claims ‘New Breakthroughs in Anti-Missile Cooperation’ with Russia,” *Diplomat*, December 19, 2017. <https://thediplomat.com/2017/12/china-claims-new-breakthroughs-in-anti-missile-cooperation-with-russia/>; Russia’s Ministry of Defense, “Aerospace Security 2017 Russian-Chinese ABM Defence Computer CPX Kicks Off in Beijing,” November 12, 2017. https://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12154544@egNews.

¹⁹² Russia’s Defense Ministry, “Closing Ceremony of the International Army Games 2018 To Take Place in Alabino,” October 8, 2018. https://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12190521@egNews; *China Military Online*, “Seven Countries to Host International Army Games – 2018,” June 15, 2018. http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2018-06/15/content_8063665.htm

					group.” ¹⁹³ During the exercise, Russia utilized Su-24 attack aircraft, and Tiger armored attack vehicles. ¹⁹⁴	and war implementation.” ¹⁹⁵
Vostok-2018 ¹⁹⁶	September 11-17, 2018	China, Russia, and Mongolia	Eastern Siberia, Russia	Total: ~300,000 + Chinese: 3,200 Russian: 297,000	Major systems from China included 900 tanks and armored vehicles from the People’s Liberation Army’s Northern Theater Command as well as six fixed-wing aircraft and 24 helicopters. Russian forces involved reportedly included over 1,000 aircraft, 1,100 tanks and over 50 combat ships	Exercise designed to simulate a large-scale conventional campaign to half an enemy invasion. Notably, Chinese and Russian air forces operated in a unified formation for the first time.
Joint Sea-2019 ¹⁹⁷	April 29-30, 2019	China, Russia	Yellow Sea	Not reported	China sent a destroyer and two frigates;	Exercise included joint

¹⁹³ Daniel Urchick, “What We Learned From Peace Mission 2018,” *Small Wars Journal*, October 3, 2018. <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/what-we-learned-peace-mission-2018>.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ *China Military Online*, “SCO “Peace Mission 2018” Anti-Terrorism Exercise Kicks Off in Russia,” August 27, 2018. http://eng.mod.gov.cn/news/2018-08/27/content_4823426.htm.

¹⁹⁶ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2018 Annual Report to Congress*, November 14, 2018, 165.

¹⁹⁷ Franz-Stefan Gady, “China, Russia Conduct First Joint-Live Missile Exercise at Sea,” *Diplomat*, May 8, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/china-russia-conduct-first-joint-live-fire-missile-exercise-at-sea/>; *China Military Online*, “China-Russia ‘Joint Sea-2019’ Exercise Makes Two ‘First Times,’” May 5, 2019. http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-05/05/content_9495927.htm.

	(Phase I); May 1-4, 2019 (Phase II)				Russia sent a cruiser, a destroyer, and a corvette	maneuvers, live-fire exercises, search and rescue operations as well as anti-submarine warfare and anti-air warfare drills. Notably, the exercise was the first time the Chinese and Russian navies conducted a joint sea-based live-fire air defense drill.
International Army Games-2019¹⁹⁸	August 3-17, 2019	39 countries including China and Russia	Held across 10 participating countries	5,000+	China sent tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, and aircraft including fighters and fighter-bombers	Multinational armed forces competition held by Russia

¹⁹⁸ Russia's Ministry of Defense, "Seaborn Assault." *ArmyGames2019.mil.ru*. http://armygames2019.mil.ru/seaborne_assault_en; New Europe, "More than 5,000 Troops in Kazakhstan for Fifth Annual International Army Games," August 7, 2019. <https://www.neweurope.eu/article/more-than-5000-troops-in-kazakhstan-for-fifth-annual-international-army-games/>; TASS, "Over 5,000 Servicemen Will Take Part in 2019 International Army Games," July 15, 2019. <https://tass.com/defense/1068736>; China Military Online, "New Highlights in International Army Games 2019," July 5, 2019. http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2019-07/05/content_9549324.htm.

Tsentr-2019¹⁹⁹	September 16-21, 2019	China, Russia, Pakistan, India, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan	Eight ranges across Russia's Orenburg region and the Caspian Sea	128,000 total Chinese: 1,600 Russian: Over 100,000	China sent 1,600 troops, over 300 weapon systems and ~30 aircraft and helicopters from the PLA's Western Theatre Command participated including Type 96A main battle tanks, H-6K strategic bombers, JH-7A and J-11 fighter jets, Il-76 and Y-9 transport planes and Z-10 attack helicopters. Russia dispatched forces troops from its Central Military District and the Caspian Flotilla as well as paratroopers and military transport aircraft of the Aerospace Force	Large scale conventional warfare exercise
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¹⁹⁹ Roger McDermott, "Russia Tests Network-Centric Warfare in Tsentr 2019," *Real Clear Defense*, September 30, 2019. https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2019/09/30/russia_tests_network-centric_warfare_in_tsentr_2019_114778.html; Petri Mäkelä, "These Are the Military Exercises Russia Will Conduct This Fall," *National Interest*, September 15, 2019. <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/these-are-military-exercises-russia-will-conduct-fall-80451>; Elizabeth Buchanan, Mathieu Boulegue, "Russia's Military Exercises in the Arctic Have More Bark than Bite," *Foreign Policy*, May 20, 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/05/20/russias-military-exercises-in-the-arctic-have-more-bark-than-bite/>.

ASEAN Counterterrorism Drill²⁰⁰	November 13-21, 2019	The 10 ASEAN countries plus Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the United States	Guilin, China	Total: ~800 troops	Reportedly, “10 aircraft and over 60 armored vehicles” participated in the exercise. ²⁰¹	The drill was aimed at “deepening the exchanges and cooperation among the militaries of the countries and enhancing their capabilities to jointly tackle various security challenges.” ²⁰²
Mosi Naval Drill	November 25 – 29, 2019	China, Russia, South Africa	Held in waters off of Cape Town, South Africa		China sent the Type 054A guided-missile frigate Weifang, Russia sent the missile cruiser Marshal Ustinov, a Sliva-class rescue tug and a tanker	Exercise focused on promoting navigation security and maritime economic security and included “surface gunnery exercises, cross-deck helicopter

²⁰⁰ *Xinhua*, “ADMM-Plus Countries Wrap Up Counter-Terrorism Drill,” November 21, 2019.

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-11/21/c_138573171.htm; Russia’s Ministry of Defense, “ASEAN International Counter-Terrorist Exercise Begins in China with the Participation of the Eastern MD Special Forces,” November 20, 2019. http://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12262906@egNews.

²⁰¹ *China Military Online*, “Introduction of ASEAN International Counter-Terrorism Exercise,” November 18, 2019. http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/2019special/2019-11/18/content_9677867.htm.

²⁰² *Xinhua*, “ADMM-Plus Countries Wrap Up Counter-Terror Drill.”

						landings, boarding operations, anti-piracy drills, and disaster control drills.” ²⁰³
Maritime Security Belt ²⁰⁴	December 27 – 30, 2019	China, Russia, Iran	Held in the Sea of Oman and the Northern Indian Ocean	Not yet reported	China sent a guided destroyer. Russia sent a frigate, tanker, and rescue tug boat from its Baltic Fleet.	Series of relatively unsophisticated tactical exercises including; live fire-drills, anti-piracy operations, fire-fighting drills.
International Army Games 2020 ²⁰⁵	August 23 – September 5, 2020	30 countries participated including China and Russia	Held in Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan	Total: 5,000 troops		2012 Iteration of the International Army Games

²⁰³ Liu Zhen, “China, Russia and South Africa Team Up For First Joint Naval Drill,” *South China Morning Post*, November 27, 2019. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3039469/china-russia-and-south-africa-team-first-joint-naval-drill>.

²⁰⁴ Syed Fazl-e Haider, “The Strategic Implications of Chinese-Iranian-Russian Naval Drills in the Indian Ocean,” *China Brief*, January 17, 2020. <https://jamestown.org/program/the-strategic-implications-of-chinese-iranian-russian-naval-drills-in-the-indian-ocean/>; Ben Westcott and Hamdi Alkhshali, “China, Russia, Iran Hold Joint Naval Drills in Gulf of Oman,” *CNN*, December 27, 2019. <https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/27/asia/china-russia-iran-military-drills-intl-hnk/index.html>; *Reuters*, “Russia, China, Iran Start Joint Naval Drills in Indian Ocean,” December 27, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-military-russia-china/russia-china-iran-start-joint-naval-drills-in-indian-ocean-idUSKBN1YV0IB>;

²⁰⁵ *Xinhua*, “China Ranks 2nd in Tank Biathlon Competition in Int’l Army Games,” September 7, 2020. http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-09/07/c_139347511.html; Li Zhenqi, Liu Jianwei, and Wu Xu, “China’s Participation in Int’l Army Games 2020 is of Great Significant,” *China Military Online*, August 18, 2020. http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2020-08/18/content_9884713.htm.

Kavkaz 2020²⁰⁶	September 21-26, 2020.	China, Russia, Armenia, Iran, Pakistan, Myanmar, Belarus	Astrakahn Region, Russia as well as waters near the Caspian and Black seas		China dispatched troops from the PLA's Western Theatre Command, including "ground troops.. armored vehicles and light weaponry." ²⁰⁷	The exercise focused "on defensive tactics, joint attack, encirclement, and battlefield command and control." ²⁰⁸
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²⁰⁶ CGTN, "Chinese Military to Participate in Kavkaz-2020 Multinational Anti-Terror Drills," September 10, 2020. <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-09-10/China-to-participate-in-Kavkaz-2020-multinational-anti-terror-drills-TFgZ6ieiY0/index.html>.

²⁰⁷ Catherine Wong, "Chinese Troops to Take Part in Russia's Kavkaz 2020 Military Exercises," *South China Morning Post*, September 10, 2020. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3101059/chinese-troops-take-part-russias-kavkaz-2020-military>.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

Appendix 3: Key Chinese-Russian Confidence Building Measures (CBM)

CBM	Purpose
May 1991 Agreement on the Eastern Sector of the National Boundaries	Demarcated the eastern portion of the Sino-Russian border ²⁰⁹
December 1992 Memorandum of Understanding on the Guiding Principle for Mutual Reductions of Armed Forces and the Strengthening of Trust in the Border Region	Designed to foster a “common border of trust” between China and Russia. The two sides “re-affirmed that they would reduce the armed forces along the border to the lowest level commensurate with friendly relations.” ²¹⁰
Military Cooperation Agreement	
July 1994 Agreement on the Prevention of Dangerous Military Activities	The agreement called for “safeguards against an accidental missile launch, bans on the use of eye-damaging lasers, the ending of electronic jamming of communications, and the establishment of an early-warning system against inadvertent intrusion of the other’s borders by aircraft and ships” ²¹¹
September 1994 Western Border Agreement	Demarcated the western portion of the Sino-Russian border ²¹²
September 1994 Agreement on No First Use of Nuclear Weapons Against Each Other and Not Targeting Strategic Nuclear Weapons at Each Other	China and Russia pledged to renounce the first use of nuclear weapons against the other and to target their strategic nuclear weapons away from each other. After the signing of this CBM bilateral relations were upgraded from “good neighborliness” to “constructive cooperation” ²¹³
August 1995 Agreement on Cooperation in Border Defense	Signed by “China’s Ministry of National Defense and the Russian Federal Border Guard Administration” ²¹⁴

²⁰⁹ Jing-dong Yuan, “Sino-Russian Confidence Building Measures: A Preliminary Analysis,” *Asian Perspective* 22:1 (1998), 83.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 85.

²¹¹ Ibid, 86.

²¹² Jyotsna Bakshi, “Russia-China Boundary Agreement: Relevance for India,” *Strategic Analysis* 24:10 (2001): 1833.

²¹³ Korolev, 13.

²¹⁴ Jing-dong Yuan, “Sino-Russian Confidence Building Measures,” 86.

April 1996 Shanghai Agreement	The agreement “provided for the pledge of nonaggression, nonuse of force, notifications preceding military exercises and other military maneuvers, and limits on the number and types of exercises permitted within the 100- kilometer” CBM zone ²¹⁵
May 1997 Moscow Agreement	The agreement focused on “the reduction of regular troops, <i>though not border guards or strategic forces</i> , within a 100- kilometer zone on either side of the former Sino-Soviet boundary” ²¹⁶
1998 China-Russia Protocol on Border Defense Information Exchange	Agreement establishing new information sharing on border defense ²¹⁷
2004 Agreement on the Eastern Segment of the China-Russia Border	Resolved questions regarding the eastern portion of the Sino-Russian border leftover from the 1991 agreement. ²¹⁸
2008 Additional Protocol on the Eastern Part of Borders	Finalized the complete demarcation of the Sino-Russian border ²¹⁹
2009 Agreement on Mutual Notification about Launches of Ballistic Missiles and Space Launch Vehicles	“Established a new level of information sharing.” ²²⁰

²¹⁵ Ibid, 87.

²¹⁶ Ibid, 87.

²¹⁷ Korolev, 13.

²¹⁸ *Reuters*, “China Signs Border Demarcation Pact with Russia,” July 21, 2008.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-russia-border/china-signs-border-demarcation-pact-with-russia-idUKPEK29238620080721>.

²¹⁹ *Ibid*.

²²⁰ Korolev, 13.

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<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-l-d&q=Treaty+of+Good-Neighborliness+and+Friendly+Cooperation+Between+the+People%27s+Republic+of+China+and+the+Russian+Federation>.

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http://eng.mil.ru/en/news_page/country/more.htm?id=12237337@egNews.

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