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THE INTEL FLASH

Analysis of Developments and
Topics of Interest



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Competing Visions - US and Chinese National Strategies

12 Oct 2022 - The Biden Administration released the new [National Security Strategy](#) two weeks ago, replacing the Interim National Security Guidance from March 2021. Four days later, Chinese General Secretary Xi Jinping put forth his [Five-Year Plan](#) at the [20th National Congress](#). Watch Xi's full address [here](#).

-The Biden Administration articulated three national interests that share commonalities with many of the preceding administrations: “to protect the security of the American people; to expand economic prosperity and opportunity; and to realize and defend the democratic values at the heart of the American way of life.”

-The 2022 National Security Strategy recognized China “presents America’s most consequential geopolitical challenge” and “harbors the intention and, increasingly the capacity to reshape the international order in favor of one that tilts the global playing field to its benefit” and explicitly called for “constraining Russia.”

-Global analysts remarked on the National Security Strategy’s “relentless focus on China” as it follows an increasingly Indo-Pacific focused series of national security documents released in the past two months including the [Pacific Partnership Strategy](#), [Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity](#), [Indo-Pacific Strategy](#), and continued in the newly released [National Defense Strategy](#).

- On 13 Oct 2022, the [Chinese Foreign Ministry](#) accused the US of “Cold War thinking”, continuing with the “weaponization of economic and trade issues”, and offered China was a nation upholding the free world order.

-Then on 16 Oct 2022, China’s Xi Jinping laid out his vision for his country’s future during a 100-minute speech at the 20th National Congress (you can safely read the transcript [here](#)). Xi mentioned “security” 80 times and “defense” 17 times blasting “external attempts to blackmail, contain, blockade, and exert maximum pressure on China” while never explicitly naming the United States.

-In parallel with the Biden Administration’s efforts to ensure strategic resources are manufactured in-country, Xi remarked on China’s “accelerated efforts to build our self-reliance in science and technology.” He continued many of the same themes and objectives outlined in the [2019 China's Defense in the New Era](#).



-Xi continued to tie the reunification of Taiwan as a “natural requirement for realizing the rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation”, following with, “We will continue to strive for peaceful reunification with the greatest sincerity and the utmost effort, but we will never promise to renounce the use of force, and we reserve the option of taking all measures necessary.”

-Deep into his speech, Xi declared one of China’s five-year goals is to “further increase China’s international standing and influence and enable China to play a greater role in global governance.” He also offered how his nation “respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries” and “enhances coordination and positive interaction with other major countries to build relations featuring peaceful coexistence, overall stability, and balanced development.”

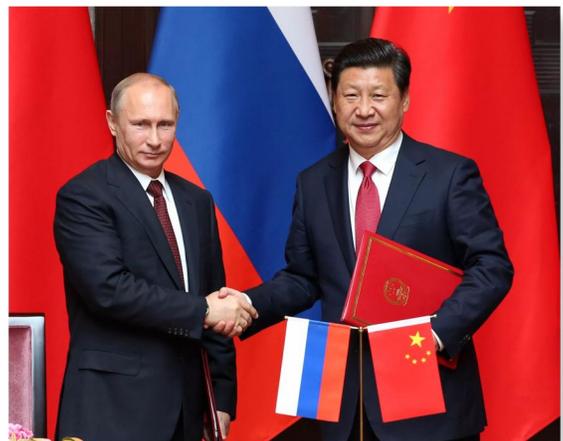
-These lines allow China strategic ambiguity when it comes to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and subsequent illegal annexation of Ukrainian territory. It also points to a nuanced and pragmatic approach to further partner with Russia to advance China’s goals. It also potentially signals a growing likelihood of consolidation in the South China Sea and "resolving the Taiwan question."

Xi laid out "The Chinese Dream of National Rejuvenation" at the 19th Communist Party National Congress in 2017 with three specific goals and, in a rare move from China’s leaders, put target dates for each. By 2021 China would “finish building a moderately prosperous society in all respects” (he explicitly labeled this effort a success in the 20th National Congress). Building on that first line of effort, China becomes a “global leader in innovation” and fully modernized their already formidable military by 2035. This leads China to Xi’s goal of resolving the “Taiwan question” and becoming a powerful nation with “world-class forces” by their Centenary in 2049. The buildup in goals, choice of language, demonstrated activity, and China’s growing influence around the world suggests a nation with global ambitions to “play a greater role in global governance.”

It's Complicated - The Sino-Russian Relationship

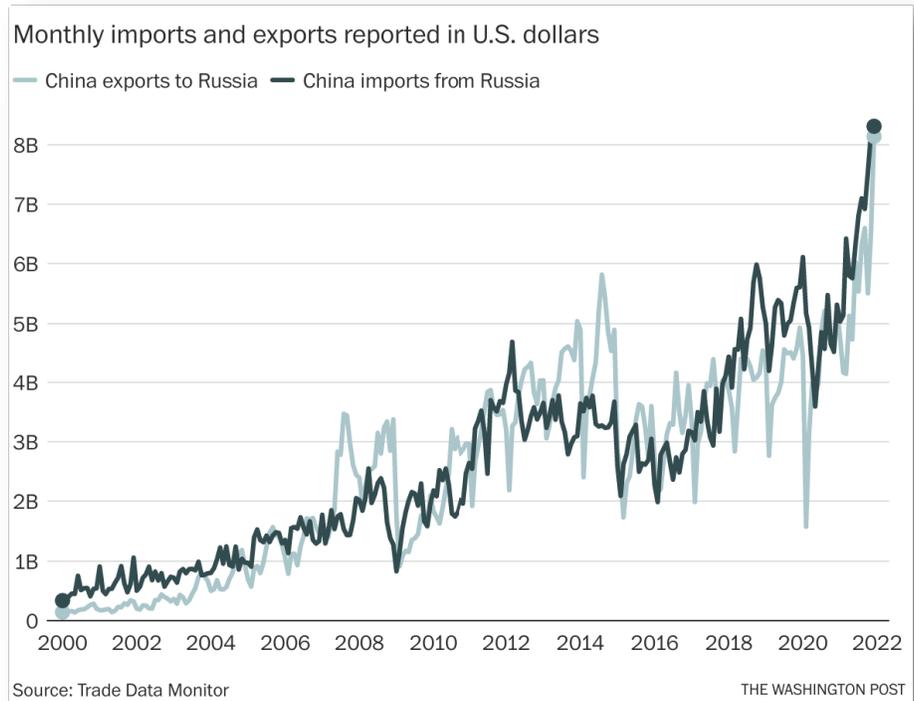
29 Oct 2022 - Russian President Putin reacted to the Chinese 20th National Congress, offering "As for the Russian-Chinese relations, they have reached an absolutely unprecedented level of openness, mutual trust and effectiveness over the past years". This builds on a 4 Feb joint statement from Xi and Putin after the 2022 Winter Olympics Opening Ceremony that the friendship between China and Russia “has no limits.”

-The 4 Feb 2022 Joint Statement previewed Russian and Chinese positions over the invasion of Ukraine on 24 Feb. Both agreed to “respect the rights of peoples to independently determine the development paths of their countries and the sovereignty and the security and development interests of States” and “The sides reaffirm their strong mutual support for the protection of their core interests, state sovereignty and territorial integrity...Russia and China stand against attempts by external forces to undermine security and stability in their common adjacent regions, [and] intend to counter interference by outside forces in the internal affairs of sovereign countries under any pretext.”



-China took a somewhat balanced approach in the international public arena, abstaining from Ukraine invasion related votes on 26 Feb, 24 Mar, 16 Sep, 1 Oct, 12 Oct in the United Nations; and voting against a 7 April UN Resolution to remove Russia from the UN Human Rights Council. These nuanced actions led some analysts to ponder whether this was a partnership based on shared visions or one of convenience to oppose the US, saying, “The deterioration of relations with the United States facilitates the driving together of China and Russia.”

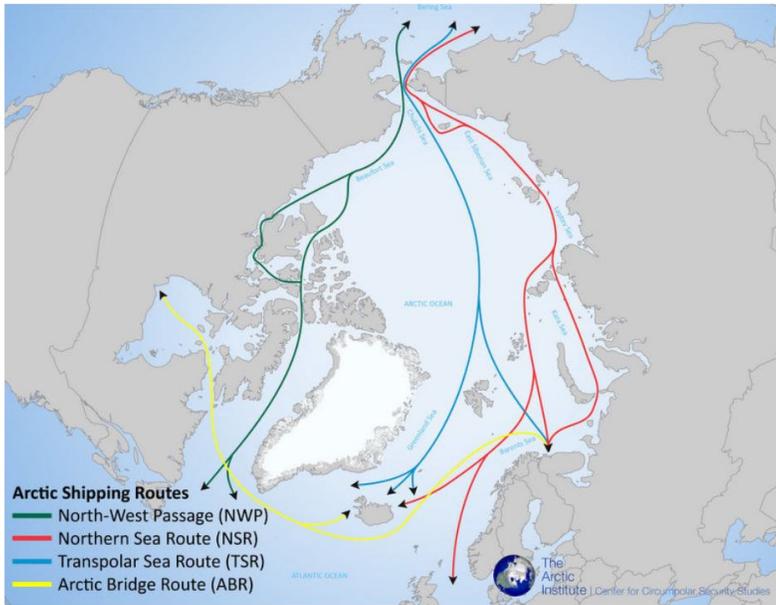
-During the same period, China continued to carefully avoid Western sanctions, insisting there were no weapons transfers to Russia, while taking advantage of cheaper Russian oil to fuel their own economy. Russia was China’s top oil supplier for at least May-July 2022 with both countries agreeing to ditch the Dollar for the Yuan and Ruble for trade purposes. China’s spending on Russian goods ballooned 60% from August 2021 with “goods traded between China and Russia surged 31% to \$117.2 billion...80% of last year’s total – which stood at a record \$147 billion.”



-During a 15 June phone call, Xi emphasized their partnership with Russia to, “[develop] the international order and global governance towards a more just and reasonable direction.”

-On 15 Sep, Xi and Putin met during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Samarkand, UZB. They agreed to move forward on key trade, agriculture, and connectivity issues after a 29% increase in trade the preceding 7 months. Prior to the meeting, China’s third-highest-ranking official, Li Zhanshu, chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, offered a remarkably unambiguous statement that, “China understands and supports Russia on issues that represent its vital interests, in particular on the situation in Ukraine.”





-During the same meeting, Putin thanked China for its “balanced position...when it comes to the Ukraine crisis” while China expressed “questions and concerns.” Analysts noted the change in Chinese language from one of “strategic coordination” to “areas of cooperation.”

-After Russia announced their partial mobilization on 21 Sep, the Chinese Foreign Ministry urged a ceasefire, continuing the drumbeat to accommodate “legitimate security interests of all parties” - which was a modest departure from their “no

limits” partnership.

-Alternatively, China and Russia expanded their Arctic partnership in Oct as they “[seek] to advance their work to link the development plans for the Eurasian Economic Union and the Belt and Road Initiative with a view to intensifying practical cooperation between the EAEU and China in various areas.” This move helps to solidify Beijing’s dream for a Polar Silk Road and access to natural gas.

While much has been made of Sino-Russian cooperation, China's pragmatic approach is more emblematic of their goal to “further increase China’s international standing and influence and enable China to play a greater role in global governance” and maintain growth in the Chinese economy. China’s stance on “state sovereignty and territorial integrity...against attempts by external forces to undermine security and stability in...adjacent regions” as it applies to Russia's invasion of Ukraine remains consistent with China’s view on Tibet, Taiwan, and the South China Sea.

Iranian Drones in Ukraine

30 Oct 2022 - Drones are again at the center of attention in Ukraine as Russia has turned to Iran to supply them with Shahed-136 munition loitering drones. Drones have been extensively used to monitor and attack Ukrainian military forces and infrastructure targets. There is strong evidence Russia uses drones rather than cruise missiles due to the relatively low cost and availability of equipment.

-The Shahed-136, designated by Russia as Geran-2, fills the need for Russia to have a loitering munition, that is cheap and harder to detect. Like the WWII V-2 rocket, it induces an aspect of terror when employed against civilian targets as Russia did last weekend in Kyiv.

-The Iranian Shahed-136 is built by the Iranian company HESA (Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industries), known for seeking and obtaining banned military and nuclear technology.



-Estimated to cost \$20,000-\$30,000 per drone, Iran minimized cost and weight by using a wooden two-blade push propeller and using hardened paper (using synthetic formaldehyde resin) paper for the wing. This gives it a remarkably low radar cross section although it remains susceptible to visual observer detection and AAA targeting given their loud noise signature (Ukrainians describe it as a “flying lawn mower” or “flying moped”). A Ukrainian military soldier stated “It’s very difficult to see these drones on radars”.

-Iran claims a 1,100-1,600 NM range with a 66-88lbs munition for the Shahed-136. It uses GPS guidance that can receive targeting data, but not yet able to transmit back to the operator.

-The Shahed-136 lacks any external optics and therefore can’t be remotely piloted. They fly along a sequence of geographic waypoints guided by satellite navigation, either GPS or Russia’s GLONASS satellite network. It that can receive targeting data, but not yet able to transmit back to the operator.

-Russia launches drone salvos from both Belarus and Crimea to attack into Ukraine, particularly targeting Kyiv. The White House stated the US has evidence Iranian troops are “directly engaged on the ground” in Crimea supporting Russian drone attacks on Ukraine’s infrastructure and civilian population.

-Open-Source reporting indicates that at least 20 Iranian Shahed-136 drones and an additional SA-21 air defense system were delivered to Belarus’ Luninets airfield, located around 50 kilometers from Ukraine’s Rivne Oblast.” General Kenneth MacKenzie, the former head of the US Central Command (CENTCOM) recognized Russian drone wave attacks’ effectiveness in an interview with a US news channel. “If you launch enough of them, the theory is that you will be able to overcome air defenses because they fly at low altitudes and they are very cheap to produce,” adding that Iran produce “thousands” of them.

-Strikes have occurred on combat positions, striking tanks and armored vehicles, while others struck civilian infrastructure, such as power plants, apartment buildings and the port city of Odesa.

-Declassified US intelligence findings showed that Russians faced technical problems with the Iranian drones soon after taking delivery of the weapons in August, leading to the deployment of Iranians to Crimea.

-Russia launched an estimated 223 Shahed-136s into Ukraine while only one of every five makes it to their target.

