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Ideological consolidation of the alliance: the Russia-China summit

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Chinese leader Xi Jinping's participation in the Kremlin's commemorations of the 80th anniversary of victory in World War II (the Moscow Victory Day Parade) was combined with a four-day official state visit (7–10 May). Following a summit meeting on 8 May, joint statements were issued affirming the deepening of bilateral relations and the pursuit of global strategic stability, along with a declaration on intensifying cooperation to strengthen the authority of international law. In addition, intergovernmental agreements were signed on mutual support and the protection of investments, along with more than 20 cooperation agreements between ministries (covering, among other areas, trade facilitation) as well as between media organisations and research and educational institutions.

The visit was primarily political and propagandistic in nature, with a pronounced ideological dimension. Its aim was to demonstrate the durability of the Russian–Chinese strategic alliance. Notably, special emphasis was placed on enhancing media, propaganda, and educational cooperation, which is intended to coordinate the information war against the West and to win public support for a partnership that has, thus far, largely remained a project of the ruling elites.

Commentary

- **The visit served as a political demonstration of the resilience of the Russia–China strategic partnership in response to US President Donald Trump's assertive foreign policy** and his stated ambition to 'pull Moscow away' from Beijing. Summit documents included a wide array of accusations against Washington and its allies, both in Europe (NATO) and in Asia (AUKUS, Japan). These ranged from provoking nuclear conflict and threatening the security of other nuclear powers by strengthening and expanding military alliances, to undermining the global economic order (through sanctions and trade policies), dismantling the arms control system, pursuing hegemony, and engaging in neocolonial practices. China once again reaffirmed the 'strong internal momentum' of its relationship with Russia, stating that the partnership is 'not directed against third parties', and clearly signalled that it is unconcerned by the ongoing dialogue between Moscow and Washington.
- **Beijing and Moscow reaffirmed their traditional mutual support on regional issues that define the points of contention in their relations with Washington and its allies.** Russia reiterated its backing of China's stance on the Taiwan issue. In turn, China stated that

ending the conflict in Ukraine requires addressing its 'root causes', upholding the principle of indivisible security, and taking into account the 'legitimate interests and security concerns' of the parties involved – language that echoes Russia's demands toward NATO and Washington made in late 2021 and early 2022. Both sides expressed their intent to further strengthen military and military-technical cooperation, including through enhanced coordination, expanded scope and geographic reach of joint exercises, regular joint patrols, and the sharing of operationalexperience.

- **For the first time, significant attention was devoted to cooperation in the media, education, science, and culture sectors.** This was reflected in numerous agreements signed between universities, media organisations, and cultural institutions. Russian media has increasingly featured Chinese-related themes and content promoting the bilateral relationship, aimed at coordinating anti-Western messaging and fostering deeper public support for the alliance in both societies. Initiatives serving this objective include a newly signed action plan for joint film production between Russia's Ministry of Culture and the China Film Administration, as well as six memorandums of cooperation between Russian and Chinese media organisations. This collaboration is also intended to expand the ideological foundations of the alliance by rooting it in historical narratives. The myth of eternal Sino-Russian friendship has now been reinforced with a new theme of shared bloodshed in the joint struggle against Nazi Germany and militarist Japan.
- **At the ideological and symbolic level, the summit reaffirmed China's leadership within the partnership.** The Russian side officially designated the Chinese leader as the principal guest of the anniversary celebrations. The content of the signed agreements increasingly reflects Chinese concepts and initiatives, notably the so-called 'community with a shared future for mankind'. Moscow appears to accept this dynamic, as it generally aligns with Beijing's worldview. Adopting China's narrative and terminology represents a relatively minor concession for Russia, but carries significant symbolic and political weight for China.
- **In economic terms, the summit did not yield any breakthrough decisions.** The two sides are continuing gradually to enhance their economic cooperation, particularly in high-tech sectors, e-commerce, the supply of mineral and agricultural resources, and efforts to build resilience against Western (especially US) financial sanctions. One likely disappointment for Moscow was the lack of progress on the long-discussed Power of Siberia 2 gas pipeline project. However, after many years of negotiations, a new bilateral agreement on mutual investment protection and support was signed. Despite this, doubts remain as to whether it will lead to increased Chinese capital investment in Russia – Moscow has long complained about its insufficient level. The limited Chinese investment is not due to a lack of legal frameworks, but rather stems from key deterrents– Western sanctions, as well as corruption and bureaucracy in Russia.