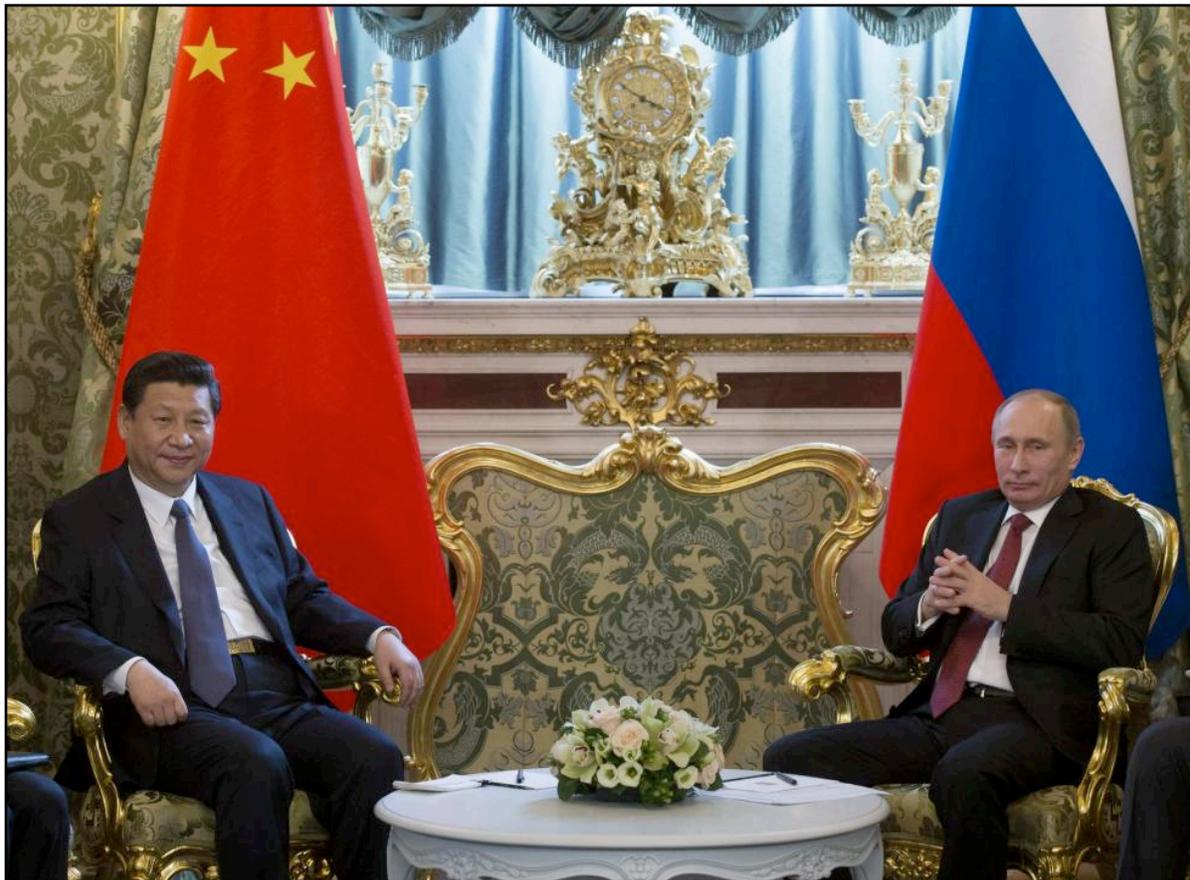


Don't Misinterpret China-Russia Relationship

Chinese President Xi Jinping chose Russia as the first foreign country to pay state visit. During his visit, he signed with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin a joint statement, which included support to each other in the right to choose the path of development as well as social and political systems, and firm support in core interests involved in each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and security.

Some analyses speculate that this is China seeking Russian backing, in a bid to counter increasing US influence in Asia-Pacific, and specifically, China is trying to make Russia take sides in the disputes concerning Diaoyu Islands with Japan.





China and Russia Are Not Allying against the US

China and Russia understand that the US is an important player in regional and international affairs. The two countries both attach great importance to their relationship with the US.

Development is among Russia's top policy goals. Having joined in the World Trade Organization with the US support, the country is willing to further the economic ties with the US and to promote bilateral trade and cooperation. In the political and security perspective, Russia is seeking to enlarge the cooperation with the US in counter-terrorism, Afghan stability and the DPRK nuclear issue, and at the same time, to reduce the disputes and confrontation concerning the anti-missile system, Syria and Iran issues.

China is not making Russia an ally against the US. China has reaffirmed that China-Russia strategic partnership is not targeting a third party. The relationship is rather a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination. Even though the US "rebalancing" increases the uncertainties in the region, China still believes that it is for all parties' interests to achieve peaceful co-existence, sharing of interests and cooperation.

Xi's choice of Russia as the first country in his overseas visits testifies the great importance both sides attach to the development of their relations as well as the special and strategic nature of the relationship. There is no need to exaggerate the impact on the US.

China Is Not Seeking Russia's Support to Face up to the US in Territorial Disputes

The disputes concerning the Diaoyu Islands with Japan has escalated since Japanese government insisted carrying out the so-called "purchase" of the Islands last year. Although the US said that it would not take sides in the territorial disputes between China and Japan, at the same time, the country confirmed with Japan that the Diaoyu Islands fall within the scope of the US-Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security.

In this context, it attracts extensive attention that China-Russia statement signed during Xi's visit this time, since it involved the support in each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and security.

Some believe that Russia is backing Beijing in the Diaoyu Islands and counter the US influence in regional issues. However, this may be misinterpretation and misunderstanding about China and Russia's positions.



First, this content in the joint statement between the two countries is not new. In September 2010, then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev issued a joint statement with President Xi Jinping's predecessor Hu Jintao during his visit to Beijing. The statement emphasized mutual support for each other's core interests. Russian reiterated its support for China defending national unity and territorial integrity, and firmly supported China's stances and principles on issues related to Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang.

Accordingly, the statement issued by Xi and Putin is not the first time that China and Russia touched upon core interests and territorial issues. Actually, it is normal for China and Russia to support each other on the issues concerning core interests as the two countries share strategic partnership.

Second, China does not aim at an advantageous position in the territorial disputes by Russia's support. Seeking support from the US is Japan's trick. China always makes the claim of sovereignty with the backing of historical facts, and believes that support from any third party in any forms will not change the truth.

Third, Russia is not taking sides in the territorial disputes between China and Japan. China and Russia both have territorial disputes with Japan. In recent years, Japan also escalated the tension with Russia concerning the Kurile Islands. However, neither China nor Russia takes sides in the other's territorial disputes with Japan. China and Russia insist that territorial disputes should be solved by related parties through talks and negotiation. They oppose the US influence in regional territorial disputes.

Accordingly, the joint statement should be interpreted as consolidation and improvement of the bilateral relationship. It has laid out the priorities of future bilateral cooperation and called for a new type of great-power relations in the international arena.

The US has claimed that "rebalancing" is aimed at coordination and cooperation with regional countries. Misinterpretation of the strengthening of China-Russia relationship as an approach to counter the US and its main ally in North East Asia Japan will lead to wrong policy directions, and accordingly undermine the US interests.

Source: China US focus, <http://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/dont-misinterpret-china-russia-relationship/>