

“Diplomacy of Heads of State”: Chinese Media about Xi Jinping’s Visit to Russia in March 2023

Wang Yu✉

Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia

wangyuiki@mail.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1986-8849>

Abstract. The visit of the President of the People’s Republic of China to the Russian Federation attracted a lot of attention from the Chinese media, which was manifested in a large number of publications on this topic in the media and social networks. The purpose of the study was to analyze news reports and messages on the Weibo social network about the state visit of the President of the People’s Republic of China to the Russian Federation and determine its role in strengthening bilateral relations between China and Russia. For the first time, the main principles of China’s foreign diplomacy, implemented in a particular state visit, were considered by the example of how they were perceived by public opinion. A content analysis of news reports from mainstream Chinese media showed that this diplomatic move is highly appreciated. The authors of the publications noted the high significance and effectiveness of this visit. A statistical analysis of publications on the Weibo social network showed that public opinion also generally assesses Xi Jinping’s visit to Russia positively, paying attention to the content side of Russian-Chinese relations. In general, strengthening and deepening the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Russia in the new era is a strategic choice made by countries based on the domestic political and domestic economic situation, which is in line with the fundamental interests of the peoples of the two countries and the development trend of international relations. The results of the study showed that China has always pursued an independent foreign policy, and promoting the development of Russian-Chinese relations at a high level is a strategic choice made by China, taking into account its internal development and overall diplomatic strategy.

Keywords: PRC media, new media, Russian-Chinese relations, community of common destiny, relations between heads of state

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Introduction

The President of China Xi Jinping paid a state visit to Russia from 20th to 22nd March 2023. This was Xi Jinping’s first foreign visit since taking office as President of China for his third term and his ninth since 2013. It is obvious that the visit to Russia, being the first state visit to a foreign country after re-election, reflects the importance of this diplomatic direction for Xi Jinping. Let us note that in the context of the Ukrainian crisis, Western sanctions against Russia and foreign political pressure on China, Xi Jinping’s visit to Russia took place in accordance with normal diplomatic practice, which reflects a high degree of trust between the two countries and a high level of bilateral relations.

The Chinese media paid much attention to the coverage of Xi Jinping’s state visit to Russia and praised its results. This state visit received even more attention by the Chinese media than Xi Jinping’s previous foreign trips in any other period.

Officially, the Chinese Foreign Ministry described Xi Jinping’s visit to Russia as a journey of friendship, cooperation and peace. Chinese state media noted that the main purpose of this visit to Russia is to raise the Russian-Chinese “comprehensive strategic partnership of the new era” to a new level, to continue to expand the Russian-Chinese economic and trade cooperation and thus show the outside world that China is an independent state, and Russian-Chinese relations have not suffered either from the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, or from diplomatic and economic pressure from Western countries like the United States.¹

The visit of the Chinese President to Russia in 2023 reflects the established practice of mutual visits and bilateral summits between China and Russia for more than 20 years. The Chinese media note that Xi Jinping’s visit took place, “despite the fact that the global international situation is complex and volatile, and regional conflicts are increasing”.² It is especially noteworthy that in a complex international situation, when the whole world pays great attention to the huge risk of escalation of the Ukrainian crisis, the state visit of President Xi Jinping to Russia carries «the Chinese people’s ardent expectation of good-neighborly friendship and deepening of cooperation, as well as common expectations of the international community in an effort to avoid escalation of risks of war and intensification of the crisis, demands of peace and stability».³ In that connection, the relevance of the proposed topic is beyond doubt.

The article aims to analyze news reports and messages in the «Weibo» social network about the state visit of the Chinese President to the Russian Federation; to determine its role

1 联合早报. 于泽远: 习近平访问俄罗斯的观点. (Lianhe zaobao (Singapore newspaper). Yu zeyuan: Highlights of Xi Jinping’s visit to Russia). Available from: <https://www.kzaobao.com/shiju/20230320/135477.html>

2 Xi Jinping held a video meeting with German Chancellor O. Scholz. Russian.news.cn Available from: <https://russian.news.cn/20220510/bc72a58036de4625b0ad023f0b07e6be/c.html>

3 解放日报. 深度 | 习主席为何访俄? 学者: 遵循惯例, 因应需要, 让世界看到大国交往的样子. Jiefang zhibao (Shanghai newspaper). Depth | Why did President Xi Jinping visit Russia? Scientist: Follow the usual practice, respond to needs and let the world see what exchanges between great powers look like). Available from: <https://www.shobserver.com/news/detail?id=594145>

in strengthening bilateral relations between China and Russia in the context of the Chinese foreign policy concept «community of common destiny».

The theoretical basis of the study, along with the works related to the analysis of Chinese-Russian relations, were also the works of Chinese scientists: Lu Nanquan [7], Sun Zhuangzhi [8], Da Wei [4], Dong Qin [3], Zhong Feiteng [9] which describe the building of a new type of relationship between big powers China and Russia, Yu Xiaodi [10], Wang Mengjie [1] and Wang Linkong [2] were used in describing the strategy of global governance. The article by Dietham A. Schoyfele and David Tewkesbury «Framing, agenda setting and priming: evolution of the three media effects models», published in the *Journal of Communication*, in 2007 [11], was also used.

Materials and Methods

The reports of the official mass media of the People's Republic of China were used: *Zhenmin zhibao* (en. People's Daily), *Guangming zhibao* (en. Guangming Daily), Xinhua news agency, Sina Weibo (representative of new media).

Zhenmin zhibao was founded in 1948 and is the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China; it actively promotes the policies and regulations of the CPC and the Chinese government, records the changes and development of Chinese society. The newspaper *Guangming zhibao* is a mass media which is directly subordinated to the CPC Central Committee. This newspaper covers important events in China and abroad, as well as provides information on the state of Chinese society, culture and other important areas of life. The news agency Xinhua is one of the largest news portals in Chinese, known as "the most influential website of China".⁴

Launched in 2009, Sina Weibo is an interactive platform for microblogging, and is one of the most common social networks in China. As of the end of 2019, the number of monthly active users reached 516 million (11). Combining and comparing information from these different sources revealed features of the representation of Xi Jinping's visit in the state media of China and in the blogosphere, which gives a more diverse view of the reaction of Chinese society to Xi Jinping's visit to Moscow.

Social surveys and statistics were used.

The main method of the research was the content analysis, which allowed showing the representation of the course and results of Xi Jinping's visit to Russia in terms of the subject, topic, form, relationship and sources of information. The results of the content analysis reveal the general political significance of President Xi Jinping's visit to Russia and the strategic direction of bilateral relations between China and Russia.

The method of quantitative analysis was also used to study the headlines of the media describing Xi Jinping's visits to Russia from 2012 to 2023.

⁴ Xinhua news agency - the official news agency of the Chinese government.

Results

As we know, "the XX Congress of the CPC defined the structure and basic principles of the new Chinese diplomacy at the highest level, it also outlined its key objectives on strategic deployment of the new system of international relations" [5]. It should be noted that the principles that China adheres to in its diplomacy have always been «firmly pursuing an independent and peaceful foreign policy, firmly adhering to a mutually beneficial and mutually advantageous strategy of openness», which allows "China to make a significant contribution to the building of world peace, global development and the protection of the international order".⁵ These principles are an updated official understanding of the role of China in the development of China's international relations. This approach also explains the role of China as a major country in the international community, which is the basis for the understanding by the Chinese leadership of the important role of stable development of the Russian-Chinese relations in maintaining global strategic balance and stability, even in increasingly complex international relations.

The representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China noted that the basis of the diplomatic course of China is the "diplomacy of heads of state", which predetermines the importance of bilateral meetings at the level of heads of state. Thus, *Zhenmin Zhibao* said that after Xi Jinping met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2023 Russian-Chinese relations could become a priority for China's foreign relations. In particular, the newspaper stressed that "as Russia is the largest neighboring country and partner for comprehensive strategic cooperation, Russian-Chinese relations occupy a priority position in the foreign policy of both countries".⁶ Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang also noted the role of Russian-Chinese diplomacy at the level of heads of states: The Russian-Chinese diplomacy of the heads of states is an opportunity for the major powers to agree on strategic mutual trust and good-neighborliness, laying a model for a new type of international relations.⁷ The diplomacy of the heads of states is the highest form of foreign policy relations, which forms the general picture of the world of the country's diplomacy, providing ideological leadership and strategic choice for solving the current international and regional problems.⁸ "Foreign policy" adheres to a similar assessment: President Vladimir Putin also attaches great importance to personal diplomacy and tends to rely on personal friendly contacts with other leaders in strengthening inter-ethnic relations. Putin is also undoubtedly the

⁵ Qin Gang: China to Strengthen Partnership with Central Asian Countries. Available from: <https://tass.ru/press-relizy/17224575?ysclid=lm5c2h66q704613104>

⁶ 人民日报. 以宽广视野、长远眼光看待和把握中俄关系. *People's Daily* (the official print edition of the CPC Central Committee). Treat and understand Sino-Russian relations in a broad and long-term perspective). Available from: http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2023-03/24/nw.D110000renmrb_20230324_2-02.htm

⁷ 外交部网站. 秦刚: 世界越是动荡不安, 中俄关系越应稳步向前. *Chinese Foreign Ministry website*. Qin Gang: The more restless the world that is the more stable Sino-Russian relations should develop). Available from: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/wjbzhd/202303/t20230307_11036845.shtml

⁸ 中新网. 李治: 以元首外交为引领, 中国外交迈向新征程. *China News*. Qin Gang: The more restless the world that is the more stable Sino-Russian relations should develop). Available from: <https://www.chinanews.com.cn/gn/2022/12-19/9917465.shtml>

foreign leader who gets along best with Xi Jinping.⁹ "Diplomacy of heads of states" clearly manifests itself in the distinctive features of birthday celebrations of both leaders.

Russian President Vladimir Putin published an article called "Russia and China: a future-bound partnership" in People's Daily newspaper noting his confidence

that our friendship and partnership, based on the strategic choice of the peoples of the two countries, will continue to grow and strengthen in the name of the well-being and prosperity of Russia and China. This will undoubtedly be facilitated by the current visit to Russia of the Chinese President <...> Russian-Chinese relations have reached the highest level in their history and continue to grow, in terms of quality they surpass the military-political alliances of the Cold War.¹⁰

Over the past decade, China and Russia have insisted on strengthening and developing bilateral relations based on the principles of non-alignment, non-confrontation and non-direction against third parties. According to Tianmu News – this is a model of relations, where each side respects the other one, coexists peacefully and cooperates with the partner on the model of mutually beneficial relations. Over the past years the relations between the two countries have changed from "mutually regarded as friendly countries" to constructive partnership relations, from the status of "partners in strategic cooperation" to "partners in comprehensive strategic cooperation".¹¹

Member of the State Council and Foreign Minister Qin Gang noted in China Newsweek that after the XX Congress of the CPC Xi Jinping made a state visit to Russia, thus opening a new page of diplomacy of the heads of states, which is consistently carried out by China. Special time was chosen for the visit, the international context of this bilateral meeting is very complex, which gives it rich subtext and will give fruitful results. This is an important decision, made by the Central Committee of the CPC led by Xi Jinping; it is focused on China's internal development and the general situation in the world. This decision reflects China's independent and peaceful foreign policy and its desire to promote world peace.¹²

Li Zigo, the director of the Eurasian Institute of the Chinese Institute of International Studies, gave his analysis to the visit of the Chinese leader to Russia in China Newsweek:

This is the first visit by a Chinese head of state since the election of a new collective leadership in China, and also the ninth visit by Xi Jinping to Russia since he led the country. Another visit

⁹ Alexander Gabuev. China's Pivot to Putin's Friends. Available from: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/06/25/chinas-pivot-to-putin-friends-xi-russia-gazprom-timchenko-sinopec/>

¹⁰ Vladimir Putin's article for People's Daily newspaper, Russia and China: A future-bound partnership. President of Russia (Kremlin.ru). Available from: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/70743> (accessed 02.06.2023).

¹¹ 潮新闻. 十年九次出访俄罗斯, 向世界传递什么信号? Tianmu News. Nine visits to Russia in ten years - what kind of signal does this send to the world?. Available from: <https://tianmunews.com/news.html?id=2425490>

¹² 中国新闻周刊. 郑立颖. 习近平访问俄罗斯, 为何是 "重大决策"? The periodical China Newsweek. Zheng Liying. Why is Xi Jinping's visit to Russia an "important decision?". Available from: <http://news.inewsweek.cn/world/2023-03-24/17976.shtml>

proves that China and Russia consider bilateral relations as the most important diplomatic direction. President Xi Jinping's visit also shows that Russian-Chinese relations are not aimed at third parties and will never be influenced by third parties. China firmly pursues an independent foreign policy, will continue to develop in accordance with the established direction, reflecting the stability and durability of Russian-Chinese relations.¹³

According to Zhong Feiteng's assessment made in his article on a new type of relationship between great powers and the innovation of Chinese diplomatic theory, in accordance with the strategy of «great powers diplomacy» promoted by Xi Jinping, China adheres to the common idea of diplomatic organization of relations between powers, aimed at creating the basis for relations between great powers with «common stability and balanced development», paying special attention to Sino-American relations, Russian-Chinese relations and Sino-European relations [9:128].

The concept of a new type of relations between powers was first introduced at the time of Jiang Zemin's leadership of the CPC and the People's Republic of China. The so-called "new type" of relations differs from the model of relations in which the powers belonged to two camps during the Cold War marked by struggle of ideologies and "friends and enemies" distinction. After Xi Jinping came to power, the discussion of this concept focused on how to avoid falling into the Thucydides' trap¹⁴ between the powers. The goal was to create a stable system of foreign policy relations that would promote China's economic and political growth under the leadership of the Communist Party. The establishment of a new type of relationship was originally aimed at diplomacy with the United States as well. Da Wei, Director of the Center for Strategic and Security Studies at Tsinghua University, said that during the visit of the then Vice President of China Xi Jinping to the United States in February 2012 he officially invited China and the United States to build a "new type" of relationship between the two powers. Chinese leaders positioned themselves as ideologists of diplomatic relations, while the United States reacted by not caring about the concept itself, but focusing on its practical implementation. Thus far, as Da Wei notes, no form of partnership has been established between China and the United States, as the United States still view China as a competitor, and Sino-American relations are mired in the turmoil of the trade war [6:7].

As a result, Xi Jinping's diplomatic strategy, according to Radio Free Asia, was addressed to Russia, with which China sought to establish relations of a new type.¹⁵ As the strategic rivalry between China and the US grows stronger, China and Russia become

¹³ 新华社. 综述: 共建 "一带一路" 为中哈合作注入新的生机与活力. (Xinhua News Agency. Review: Joint construction of the Belt and Road will give new vitality to Chinese-Kazakh cooperation). Available from: http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2022-09/14/content_5709676.htm

¹⁴ The "Thucydides trap" in political science is a situation in which the fears of a stronger power about the rapid growth of a new rival country themselves escalate the confrontation between them and can become the root cause of a serious conflict)

¹⁵ 自由亚洲电台. 专栏 | 军事无禁区: 建立新型大国关系—习近平访俄战略意图. (Radio Free Asia (RSA). special section. The military does not have a forbidden zone: The establishment of a new type of relations between the great powers is Xi Jinping's strategic intention to visit Russia). Available from: <https://www.rfa.org/mandarin/zhuanlan/junshiwujinqu/mil-03302023135942.html>

closer, according to this information resource, but the People's Republic of China does not seek military-political alliances, since it is in the interests of China to maintain a balanced development of relations among the major countries.¹⁶

The Chinese Government has repeatedly pointed out that the Russian-Chinese relations adhered to the principles of "non-alignment, non-confrontation and non-opposition to third parties". During the visit to Russia, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin issued a joint statement on deepening comprehensive strategic cooperation and partnership in the new era and confirmed this principle by saying that Russian-Chinese relations are not like military-political alliance of the cold war period. But the West still questions the veracity of these claims and worries that China and Russia are headed for a military alliance. This concern stems from the statement of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2021 that China and Russia "are not allies, but more than allies":

The Chinese side highly appreciates the positive statements of Russian President Vladimir Putin on Russian-Chinese relations. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Russian-Chinese "Treaty of Good Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation" and, over the past 20 years, the two countries have always adhered to the view that it is necessary to develop long-term good-neighborly relations of mutually beneficial cooperation on the basis of non-alignment to blocs and the absence of confrontation, and as well as on the relations between the two countries not being directed against third countries. China and Russia are not allies, but more than allies.¹⁷

If to interpret lexical meanings of this statement, the word «more» seems to mean «to be superior, to be better». This inevitably causes anxiety and scepticism among some Western leaders who have survived the Cold War. According to Lianhe Zaobao, some of them are concerned that the meeting of the heads of China and Russia will lead to the provision of various types of military assistance by China to Russia, that close cooperation between China and Russia could threaten the existing international order. The question of whether Xi Jinping would provide Russia with additional military assistance, including lethal weapons and ammunition, with a tacit misunderstanding of what "more than allies" means, has become a major topic of discussion in the Western media. However, the Chinese media have always denied these assumptions, and the Chinese Foreign Ministry has strongly denied it. In addition, according to the analysis of Chinese experts, from the point of view of Xi Jinping's diplomatic strategy to create a basis for "overall stable and balanced development" of relations between the powers, the probability of providing military assistance to Russia is small. Otherwise, it would disrupt balanced development between the powers and have serious consequences for China itself.¹⁸ After Xi Jinping's visit to Russia, Vladimir Putin said in an interview with Russian media that "we are not creating any military alliance with

16 Ibid.

17 Beijing commented on Putin's words about relations with China - RIA Novosti, 22.10.2021 (ria.ru). Available from: <https://ria.ru/20211022/kitay-1755763431.html?ysclid=lhm7okshuk981185202>

18 联合早报. 拜登相信中国未提供武器给俄罗斯. (Lianhe Zaobao. Biden believes that China did not supply weapons to Russia). Available from: <https://www.kzaobao.com/world/20230326/135856.html>

China. Yes, we have military-technical cooperation, we do not hide, but it's transparent, there is nothing secret"¹⁹.

It should be noted that China has always adhered to the strategy of peaceful development, and Russian-Chinese relations have always been independent and free from interference and provocation by third parties. China's involvement in the settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is Xi Jinping's most significant initiative to establish relations of a new type between powers. Mediation in the settlement of the conflict will strengthen Russian-Chinese relations; will make it possible to oppose Western Europe, to oppose the United States and to promote the People's Republic of China's strategy to create a new model of relations between great powers, which should ultimately change the international order.

In continuation of this logic, Qiu Wenhan, the reporter of Jiefang zhibao, refers to the assessment of the current stage of development of Russian-Chinese relations made by Feng Shaolei, Director of the Russian Research Center and the Peripheral Research Center of the East China Normal University:

The current situation is different from the Sino-US-Soviet triangle in the Cold War. First, with regard to China and Russia, they are completely unwilling to return to a state of <...> high military confrontation and high ideological confrontation. Secondly, the international environment has changed. Now all parties are under a network system linked by the market. You have me and I have you. It is difficult to separate one from another. Once a confrontation occurs, it will be a disaster for everyone.²⁰

Thus, Russian-Chinese relations are becoming an important part of China's system of international relations, which has long attached great importance to the development of a healthy, stable and close Russian-Chinese strategic partnership. President Xi Jinping's visit to Russia is a standard regular diplomatic activity between the heads of China and Russia, who for a long time have maintained close cooperation, reflecting close cooperation between the countries themselves. The current international situation has undergone profound changes and the world has entered a new period of upheaval and change. China and Russia are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and major countries with economic and political significance. Russian-Chinese relations not only relate to bilateral cooperation and practical cooperation in various fields between the two countries, their influence and role in the international arena go far beyond bilateral relations. The reason why President Xi's visit attracted wide international attention is also due to the fact that since Russia launched a special military operation in Ukraine, the Ukrainian crisis has become stronger, and there are no signs that disagreements between Russia and Ukraine can be resolved through peaceful consultations. Some Western countries, especially NATO countries led by the United States, continue to participate indirectly in this conflict, which

19 Putin refuted claims that cooperation between Russia and China is a threat to the West (tass.ru). Available from: <https://tass.ru/politika/17370957?ysclid=lhm8jf113e932086115>

20 解放日报. 袁雯涵. 大三角将如何摆动. (Jiefang zhibao (Shanghai newspaper). Qiu Wenhan. How the triangle will swing). Available from: <https://www.jfdaily.com/staticsg/res/html/journal/detail.html?date=2021-05-25&id=3144648&page=04>

further complicates the Ukrainian crisis. The international community hopes that peace will come to the region as soon as possible and that the conflict will soon be over. In this context, international public opinion will no doubt associate President Xi Jinping's visit with diplomatic mediation in resolving the Ukrainian crisis.

Lu Nanquan, in the journal of Xinjiang Normal University back in 2015, assessing the prospects of Chinese-Russian relations noted that for China, relations between powers, border relations, relations with developing countries and multilateral relations constitute the overall picture of the international diplomatic strategy system. Russia is not only a large country, but also the largest country with which China borders. The development of relations with Russia is an important measure for China's diplomatic strategy and is of great strategic importance [7:20–28].

Russia and China have similar views on major international political issues and on cooperation in international affairs; the status of relations with China is constantly improving. In Xi Jinping's article "Forge ahead to new prospects of friendship, cooperation and joint development of China and Russia", published in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, the President noted that "China and Russia are the largest neighbors, strategic partners of comprehensive cooperation, and China considers the relations between China and Russia as one of the main priorities in diplomacy".²¹ The leaders of both countries stressed that the development of Russian-Chinese relations has driving forces within the countries themselves. So Russian President Vladimir Putin noted that the Russian-Chinese partnership:

surpasses Cold War-time military-political alliances in its quality, with no one to constantly order and no one to constantly obey, without limitations or taboos. We have reached an unprecedented level of trust in our political dialogue, our strategic cooperation has become truly comprehensive in nature and is standing on the brink of a new era. <... > In fact, today, the Russia-China relations serve as the cornerstone of regional and global stability, driving the economic growth and securing the positive agenda in international affairs. They provide an example of harmonious and constructive cooperation between major powers.²²

"Xinhua's review of the President's visit was symbolically entitled «Advancing the past and Opening up the future, steady and long-term progress to comprehend the historical significance of President Xi Jinping's visit to Russia in four dimensions ». It noted: «the plans to create a new vision and new measures for the development of the Russian-Chinese comprehensive strategic partnership are an important part of President Xi Jinping's visit to Russia».²³ During the visit, the heads of the two states signed "Joint Statement by the President of Russia and the President of China on the Plan to Promote

²¹ Vladimir Putin's article for People's Daily newspaper, Russia and China: A future-bound partnership// President of Russia (Kremlin.ru). Available from: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/70743>

²² Ibid.

²³ Xinhua: the visit of the President of China to Russia will be a trip of friendship, cooperation and peace (tass.ru). Available from: <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/17306981?ysclid=lm9pbep31245874958>

Table 1. List of Xi Jinping's foreign policy visits to Russia from 2013 to 2023

Date	Place	Information
March 2013	Moscow	Both sides signed the «Joint Statement of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on mutually beneficial cooperation and deepening of the comprehensive strategic partnership».
September 2013	Saint-Petersburg	To participate in the G20 Summit.
February 2014	Sochi	To participate in the opening ceremony of the 22nd Winter Olympics.
May 2015	Moscow	The «Joint Statement of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on Interconnection and Cooperation in the Construction of the Economic Belt of the Silk Road and the Eurasian Economic Union» was issued.
July 2015	Ufa	Attended the 7th BRICS Leaders Summit and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Leaders' Summit.
July 2017	Moscow	Statement by China and Russia on the Korean Peninsula Issue and Statement on Further Deepening of Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation and Partnership Issued.
September 2018	Vladivostok	To participate in the 4th Eastern Economic Forum.
June 2019	Moscow/Saint-Petersburg	To pay a state visit to Russia and take part in the 23rd St.Petersburg International Economic Forum, hold talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin and lead Sino-Russian relations to a new era of Sino-Russian comprehensive strategic partnership.
March 2023	Moscow	China and Russia signed joint statement "On deepening of comprehensive strategic partnership in the new era" and "Statement on the plan to promote the key directions of Russian-Chinese economic cooperation until 2030".

Source: website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China²⁴

the Key Elements of Russian-Chinese Economic Cooperation until 2030", which provides for the promotion of the qualitative development of Russian-Chinese trade and economic cooperation, maintaining the momentum for the rapid development of trade in goods and services between the two countries, and commitments to significantly increase trade between the two countries by 2030. The document clarifies that both sides will engage in bilateral economic cooperation in eight key areas, including expansion and optimization of trade structure, development of interconnected logistics systems and increasing the level of financial cooperation. Bilateral trade between China and Russia increased by 116 per cent over a 10-year period, effectively strengthening the material basis of relations between the

²⁴ Available from: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/wjdt_674879/wsrc_674883/

two countries and providing an important impetus for their further economic and social development.²⁵

Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang noted: "The interaction of heads of states is a compass and a benchmark in Russian-Chinese relations".²⁶ For many years, no matter how the international situation changed, the heads of China and Russia always maintained close communication and exchanged regular visits. Since 2013, the leaders of China and Russia have been at the helm of steady, healthy and stable development of bilateral relations. Over the years, relations between the two countries have gone from «mutual respect» and the status of "friendly countries" to comprehensive strategic cooperation. "Under the guidance of the two heads of states strategies, comprehensive strategic cooperation and partnership between China and Russia in the new era will continue to move forward at a higher level".²⁷

Since Xi Jinping became China's national leader in 2012, heads of China and Russia have met more than 40 times. Even during the coronavirus epidemic, Putin and Xi Jinping maintained contact through video meetings and telephone communication.

The newspaper Hangzhou zhibao (Hangzhou Province) noted:

Over the past decade, the top leaders of China and Russia have met 41 times at bilateral and international events. Such frequent and high-quality political exchanges between the two heads of state are quite rare in the world diplomatic arena, and form a model of relations between the big powers through the diplomacy of the heads of state.²⁸

From past reports on state visits we see that the interaction between the heads of China and Russia has many peculiarities. For example, in the process of communication between Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, the words "old friend", "mutual benefit", "joint use" and "win-win outcome" are often used. From constructive partnership to strategic partnership, from developing a comprehensive strategic partnership to a comprehensive strategic partnership in a new era, these transformations in status show that relations between the two countries have gradually entered a new phase. China and Russia have different historical and cultural traditions, and their bilateral relations were bad during the Cold War. However, over the past 30 years, the two countries have reached a turning point and development in their relations with each other, as their relations serve the fundamental interests of the peoples of the two countries. According to researcher Sun Zhuangzhi, this was influenced by both the political decisions of the leaders and the active participation of various government departments [8].

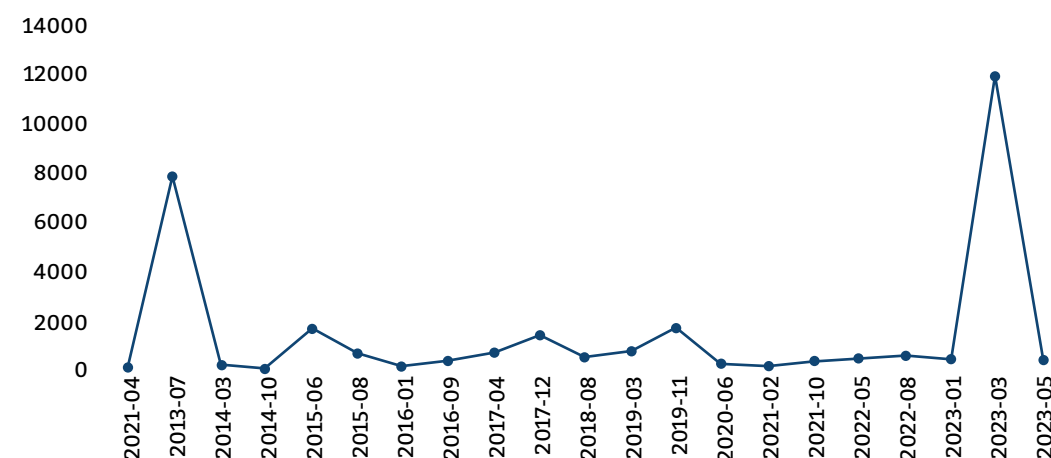
25 新华社。述评：继往开来 行稳致远——从四个维度领悟习近平主席访俄的里程碑意义。(Xinhua News Agency. Overview: Advancing the past and Opening up the future, steady and long-term progress - to comprehend the historical significance of President Xi Jinping's visit to Russia in four dimensions). Available from: http://www.news.cn/world/2023-03/24/c_1129462327.htm

26 中央广电总台央视新闻客户端。秦刚谈中俄关系：不结盟、不对抗、不针对第三方。(China Media Group. Qin Gang talks about Sino-Russian relations: non-aligned, non-confrontational, not directed against third parties). " <https://news.cri.cn/xiaozhi/6f71beee-9d71-ae9c-104b-4c0627828f41.html>

27 Russia and China Create Foundations for Multipolar World - Russia's Regions (gosrf.ru). Available from: <https://www.gosrf.ru/rossiya-i-kitaj-sozdayut-osnovy-mnogopolynarnogo-mira/?ysclid=lmhainkztx416090753>

28 Ibid.

Table 2. Publication activity of news portals covering Xi Jinping's visits to Russia from 2013 to 2023



Source: Baidu Statistics Media Index²⁹

The study analyzed the statistics of publications of the Chinese media devoted to the meetings of the heads of Russia and China, and joint visits of the leaders of the two countries over the past 10 years, that is, during Xi Jinping's term as President of China.

According to Baidu's figure above, there are two peaks in the publication activity of news portals: the first was when Xi Jinping first became President of China and first visited Russia in 2013, which was Xi Jinping's first state visit in office; the second is a visit to Russia in 2023, that is, after the end of the pandemic and the beginning of his third term.

Let's consider the assessment of Xi Jinping's visit in the Chinese press during and immediately after the visit:

1. Zhenmin zhibao: The visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Russia opens a new era of comprehensive strategic cooperation and partnership between China and Russia. The newspaper Zhenmin zhibao noted in its report that the visit took the Russian-Chinese relations to a new stage. President Xi Jinping and President V. V. Putin have reached a number of important agreements, giving new impetus to Russian-Chinese relations and the development of cooperation between the two countries.

2. The newspaper Guangming zhibao: the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping takes place in an extremely difficult international situation and is of great importance for Russian-Chinese relations, regional stability and world peace, and the development of bilateral relations between China and Russia is necessary to ensure stability and peace in the entire Eurasian region.

29 URL: <https://index.baidu.com/v2/index.html#/>

3. China News Agency (ChinaNews): Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin met to build mutual trust and move to a new level of comprehensive strategic cooperation and partnership between China and Russia. The meeting between the Chinese President and the Russian President further strengthened mutual trust between the leaders of the two countries and demonstrated the spirit of pragmatic cooperation in the Russian-Chinese relations, and the leaders of the two countries have reached a number of agreements and fully contributed to the in-depth development of Russian-Chinese relations.

4. Xinhua Agency: Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Vladimir Putin held talks in the Kremlin. The Heads of States signed the "Joint Statement of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on deepening comprehensive strategic cooperation and partnership in the new era" and "Joint statement by the President of the Russian Federation and the President of the People's Republic of China on the development plan of key directions of Russian-Chinese economic cooperation until 2030". The news agency Xinhua noted that the talks between the leaders of the two countries were characterized by a deep exchange of views, rich and comprehensive content, which gave new impetus to the development of comprehensive strategic cooperation and partnership between Russia and China in the new era.

5. Information Network Qiushi (public-political magazine, official print organ of the CPC Central Committee): This is the first visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Russia since he was re-elected in 2022. The development of a comprehensive strategic partnership based on cooperation between China and Russia in the new era has given new impetus, has brought more stability to a complicated international situation and has had an important and far-reaching impact on the promotion of a multipolar world and the democratization of international relations.

6. China Central Television: The strategic leadership of the heads of China and Russia will give a powerful boost to bilateral relations, improve the well-being of the peoples of the two countries and make a great contribution to the development and progress of the world.³⁰

Thus, the Chinese media generally consider Xi Jinping's visit to Russia an important stage in the development of Russian-Chinese relations. Numerous personal agreements and signed documents mean that cooperation between the two countries is getting even closer. China and Russia have shown a propensity to deepen cooperation in many areas, which has received wide attention and positive assessment from the Chinese media.

During the research the data of users of the Chinese social network Sina Weibo were collected and analyzed in the form of their comments on the state visit of Xi Jinping to Russia. According to user discussions, most of them expressed support for the visit of the Chinese President to Russia, believing that China and Russia play an important role in world affairs. Here is what some users write:

30 央视网. 国际热评: 经贸务实合作为中俄关系发展注入强劲动力 (China Central Television. International hot Review: Pragmatic economic and trade cooperation has given a powerful impetus to the development of Sino-Russian relations). Available from: <https://news.cctv.com/2023/03/22/ARTIfSFBc5qYvVqLDkMuH2wv230322.shtml>

1. 中俄两国是好朋友, 互相支持, 这次访问有望加强两国的合作. ("China and Russia are good friends who support each other. This visit is expected to strengthen cooperation between the two countries").

2. 希望习主席的访问可以加强中俄关系, 为两国人民带来更多利益. ("I hope that the visit of President Xi Jinping can strengthen Russian-Chinese relations and bring more benefits to the peoples of the two countries").

3. 中俄两国在经济和安全领域需要更多的合作, 习主席的访问肯定会有所帮助. ("China and Russia need to deepen economic and security cooperation and President Xi's visit will definitely help it").

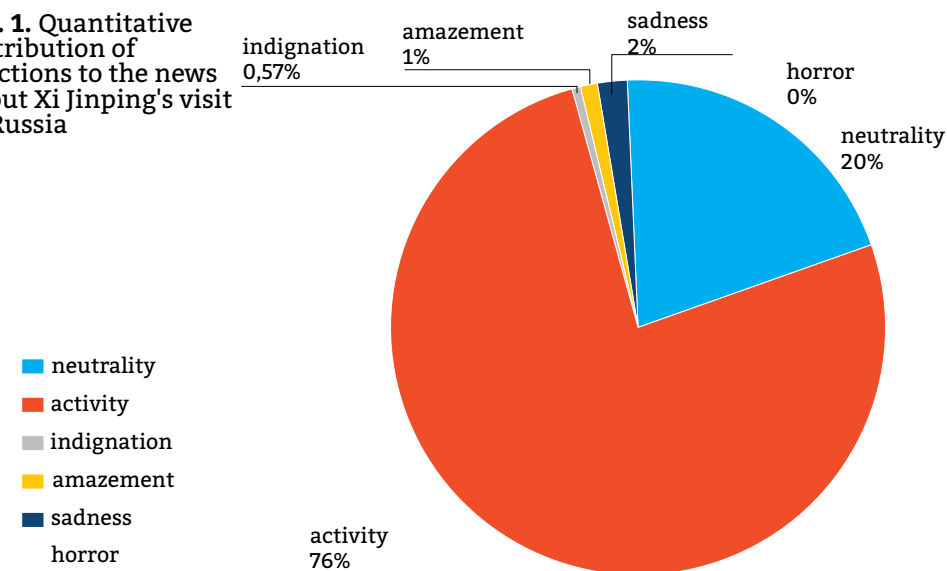
Some users also drew attention to the specific content of Xi's visit, namely trade and energy cooperation. Below are some users' opinions:

1. 希望习主席能够促进中俄贸易往来, 减少相互依赖. ("I hope that President Xi Jinping can promote Russian-Chinese trade cooperation").

2. 能源是中俄关系的重要领域, 希望习主席能够推动能源合作. ("Energy is an important area of Russian-Chinese relations, and I hope President Xi Jinping will be able to promote energy cooperation").

3. 中俄两国可以在基础设施建设和技术合作方面加强合作, 我期待习主席能够提出更具体的计划. ("China and Russia can strengthen cooperation in infrastructure construction and technical cooperation. I look forward to more concrete results from Xi Jinping's visit").

Fig. 1. Quantitative distribution of reactions to the news about Xi Jinping's visit to Russia



Source: Sina Weibo³¹

31 Exclusive. Xi Jinping's speech at the XX National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party 16.10. 2022: deda14 —(livejournal.com). Available from: <https://deda14.livejournal.com/959148.html?ysclid=lhmbcvitoh166755164>

In general, users of the Chinese site Sina Weibo gave a positive assessment of Xi Jinping visit to Russia, highly appreciated the prospects of cooperation and development between the two countries, and drew attention to specific issues and the results of the visit.

According to the statistics of emotions in the social network on the news about the visit of the Chinese President, it is possible to distinguish six different reactions: positive, neutral, anger, surprise, sadness and fear. The statistical distribution of these reactions is shown in the figure (Fig. 1):

From the diagram you can see that attitude to Xi Jinping's visit to Russia according to Weibo data is mostly positive, which is confirmed by 70% of positive reactions. Users are optimistic about bilateral relations and cooperation between China and Russia and hope that this visit will help strengthen cooperation and boost development between the two countries. At the same time, users pay attention to the specific content of this state visit, hoping to strengthen cooperation in the field of trade, energy, infrastructure construction, etc. Some users expressed a restrained position, negative reactions have also been noted, but for the most part positive attitudes can be seen.

Xi Jinping's visit to Russia is, on the one hand, a reflection of head-of-state diplomacy and the creation of a new type of relationship between major powers, and on the other hand, China's desire to become more involved in global governance, to which separate attention should be given.

China's active participation in reforming and restructuring global governance is an important strategic step taken at the XX Congress of the Communist Party of China. The report at the XX Congress noted that:

China will take an active part in the reforming and development of global governance, implementing its own concept of global governance based on the principles of mutual consultation and joint building of the future of mankind; firmly adhere to genuine multiculturalism, promote the democratization of international relations, promote the development of global governance in a more just and rational direction.³²

China's participation in global governance in 2023 is presented in Table 3.

The concept of global governance is the theory of governance put forward by Secretary-General Xi Jinping in a report to the XIX CPC Congress on 18th of October 2017. He stressed that "joint discussion, joint construction and joint use" is the content of China's global governance concept.³³ China is an important country involved in global governance, and in this regard Xi Jinping noted that "strengthening global governance and advancing global governance reform is the overall direction of Chinese diplomacy". The President of the People's Republic of China also notes: "We put forward the initiative "One Belt – One Way", establish a new type of relations based on mutually beneficial cooperation, and adhere to the concept of "community with a shared future for mankind in accordance

³² Ibid.

³³ 人民网. 全球治理观. (the Internet version of "People's Daily". overview global governance). Available from: <http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0823/c413700-30246392.html>

Table 3. China's participation in the global governance system for 2023

Date	Actions
February, 21	Chinese Foreign Ministry Published "The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper"
February, 24	On the occasion of the first anniversary of the Ukrainian crisis, the paper "China's position on the political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis" was published.
March, 6-10	Saudi Arabia and Iran reach historic reconciliation after 5 days of bilateral dialogue in Beijing.
March, 15	During a high-level dialogue between the Communist Party of China and the world's political parties, Xi Jinping first proposed the Global Civilization Initiative.
March, 20-22	Xi Jinping paid a state visit to Russia, during which the heads of China and Russia signed a joint statement emphasizing the importance of resolving the Ukrainian crisis through peaceful negotiations.

Source: China Internet Information Center (Website)³⁴

with the trends of the time".³⁵ This concept is based on the construction of a new type of international relations and the formation of the common destiny of mankind, which has already become the general principle of China's participation in the management of global affairs and relations with other countries. Guided by this principle in global governance, China adheres to the concept of joint problem-solving and common development, expands the points of convergence of interests of countries around the world, promotes the initiative "One Belt – One Way", promotes cooperation and exchange among major countries and adheres to the principle of sincerity, which contributes to the common development of mankind" [1: 17-20].

China's expert Dong Qin noted that participation in global governance reflects China's need for more Chinese experts to express their views on how to build a new model of global governance, which implies the need to strengthen China's role in global governance, to be more proactive and to broaden its voice. The aim of China's participation in this process is to achieve compliance with the principle of «joint consultation, joint construction and joint use» [3: 87].

In a report at the XX Congress of the CPC Xi Jinping noted that the concept of «joint consultation, joint construction and joint use of the concept of global governance» and the initiative "One Belt – One Way" are important components of the concept of "community of human destiny" and represent an effective way and practical platform for building the «community of common destiny for mankind» through "joint consultations, joint

³⁴ Available from: http://news.china.com.cn/txt/2023-03/22/content_85184720.htm

³⁵ 中国政府网. 习近平在中共中央政治局第二十七次集体学习时强调推动全球治理体制更加合理公正, 为我国发展和世界和平创造有利条件. (The State Council of the People's Republic of China network. During the 27th collective study of the Politburo of the Communist Party of China, Xi Jinping stressed the importance of promoting a more reasonable and fair system of global governance and creating favorable conditions for the development of our country and world peace. October 13, 2015). Available from: http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-10/13/content_2946293.htm

construction and joint use" which, taken together, is the scientific underpinning of China's basic strategy for participation in global governance and is aimed at promoting a more just and reasonable international political and economic order.³⁶ Yu Xiaodi, devoted his article in the journal of Wuhan University of Science and Technology to the realistic background, main concepts and practical direction of the important speech of Xi Jinping on global governance. He noted that adhering to the principle of "joint consultation, joint construction and joint use", Xi Jinping took active actions to maintain multilateral cooperation, to form a new type of relations between the big powers, harnessing the power of the new industrial revolution to advance scientific and technological innovation and advance global healthcare governance and economic recovery from the epidemic, which was a practical demonstration of China's main methods in promoting global governance [10: 44].

The military conflict between Russia and Ukraine emphasized the urgency of the formation of new principles of global security governance. Xi Jinping first proposed a global security initiative on April 21, 2022, when he delivered a speech at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia, noting that "humanity is an indivisible community united by a common destiny", and formulated "Six principles" in the field of security, namely:

1. Stay committed to the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security;
2. Stay committed to respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries;
3. Stay committed to abiding by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter;
4. Stay committed to taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously;
5. Stay committed to peacefully resolving differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation;
6. Stay committed to maintaining security in both traditional and non-traditional domains.³⁷

Proceeding from respect for the legitimate security interests of all countries, restoration of confidence, strengthening unity, achieving mutual and global security and building an inclusive cooperative security mechanism, managing global security in China's understanding has become a sound choice to help build a global governance system [2:22-31].

Conclusion

Thus, the Chinese press noted that diplomacy at the level of heads of states facilitates close cooperation among great powers. The establishment of close and trustful relations

³⁶ Xi Jinping. Holding high the great banner of socialism with Chinese specificity, to struggle for comprehensive construction of a modernized socialist state. Report at the XX National Congress of the Communist Party of China on October 16, 2022. Further references to the report are made on this source. Available from: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/rus/zxxx/202210/t20221026_10792071.html

³⁷ Xi Jinping delivered a speech at the opening of the Boao Forum for Asia2022 - golosarmenii.am Available from: <https://www.golosarmenii.am/article/149008/si-czinpin-vystupil-s-rechyu-na-otkrytii-boaoskogo-aziatskogo-foruma-2022?ysclid=lhylupr4649826093>

between countries is of practical importance for regional security and stability and the building of national relations. It also strengthens global security and allows building mutually beneficial relations among countries.

Russian-Chinese relations have their own history and logic of development. Russia, as the largest neighboring country and a partner in comprehensive strategic cooperation, is a priority in the overall diplomatic and foreign policy of the People's Republic of China. China has always pursued an independent foreign policy, and promoting high-level Russian-Chinese relations is also a strategic choice, given China's overall domestic development situation and China's overall diplomatic strategy.

The historic visit of the Chinese President to Russia, which received the detailed coverage in the Chinese media, marked the "summit" of relations between the leaders of the two states. Strengthening and deepening of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Russia in the new era is a strategic choice made by the countries based on the domestic political and economic situation, which correspond to the fundamental interests of the peoples of the two countries, as well as trends in the development of international relations. A high degree of mutual trust between the heads of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation ensures the strategic leadership of the two countries in the international arena and provides a solid political guarantee of comprehensive strategic cooperation and partnership between China and Russia in the future.

All the diplomatic aspirations of the People's Republic of China, as set out in China's major party and state documents, and as the vast majority of Chinese society perceives it, are aimed at building a new type of international relations consistent with the "community of the common destiny" concept to realize the mission of joint global management and formation of a sense of responsibility of great powers. Therefore, China took part in the settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, trying to assume the role of peacemaker and put forward its constructive plan for the settlement of the conflict. This is also the focus of China's diplomatic efforts in mediating the resumption of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

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About the author

WANG YU. Postgraduate student of the Department of International Relations, World Politics and Diplomacy, Institute of International Relations, Kazan Federal University. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6902-5941>. Address: 1/55 Pushkin str., Kazan, 420111, Russian Federation. wangyuiki@mail.ru

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