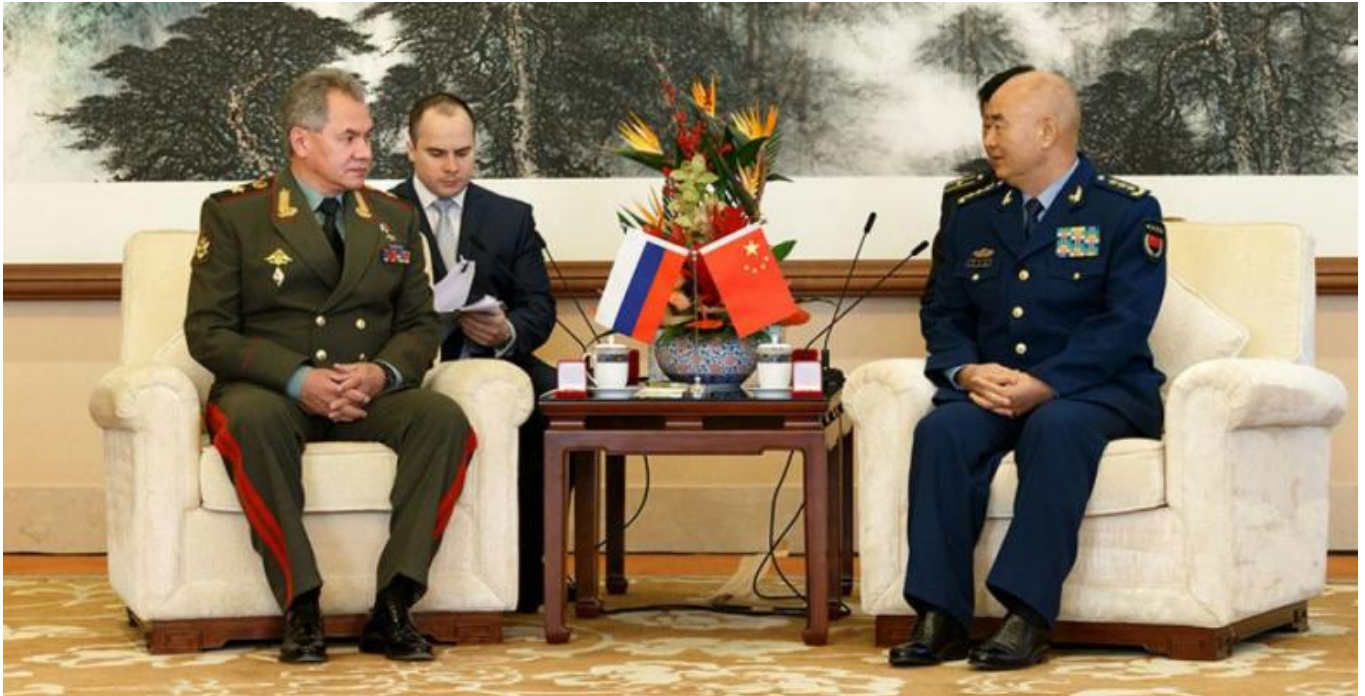

Russia-China military ties 'at all-time high,' no threat to other states

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Military cooperation between Russia and China poses no threat to other states, but is aimed instead at countering global threats and challenges, including international terrorism, according to Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu.

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"Bilateral military cooperation [between Moscow and Beijing] is not directed against other states, does not pose a threat to them, but contributes to peace and stability on the Eurasian continent and beyond," Shoigu said at a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Chang Wanquan in Beijing on Wednesday. He is there for the 21st meeting

of an intergovernmental commission on military and technical cooperation between the two states that will look into the fragile situations in Syria, Libya, and Iraq.

"The conflicts in Central and Eastern Asia don't end, the wounds won't heal, especially in Northern Africa and the Middle East. I certainly keep in mind the ongoing events in Syria, Iraq and Libya," Sergei Shoigu said ahead of the meeting.

He also noted that cooperation between the two countries *"is at an all-time high"* and *"continues to steadily expand each year."* It is especially apparent in the economic sphere. Last year, trade between China and Russia was about \$68 billion while the projects for the next 4 years is \$200 billion.

China has been an [active](#) buyer of Russian defense technology. Just this month, Russia announced the delivery of S-400 defense systems to China by 2020. Beijing has also become the first state in the world authorized to buy the one of a kind system. According to media reports, the transaction amounted to around \$3 billion.

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"Moscow and Beijing... provide an example of a balanced and responsible attitude towards international problems. Russia and China cooperate effectively in various multilateral formats, such as the UN, BRICS, and SCO," Shoigu added.

The Minister noted that Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping have met on five different occasions this year alone, and that every meeting resulted in crucial decisions.

Shoigu also said that *"the expansion of ties with China in the area of defense is an absolute priority"* for Russia. The two countries have been closely cooperating in defense, having held a number of joint military [drills](#) since 2012, with the most recent taking place in September this year.

The massive *Joint Sea 2016* exercises took place in the disputed South China Sea.

The ambitious drills, which lasted eight days, took place in the air, coastal, and maritime zones of the disputed sea. In total, two submarines, 13 surface combat ships, more than 20 planes and helicopters, 12 armored personnel carriers (APC) and armored amphibious equipment took part in the drills from both sides. The drills included anti-submarine warfare, vessel rescue, joint air defense, and taking an island with amphibious and airborne troops. Both countries were keen to show off their military might, with a number of warships, including a missile destroyer and anti-submarine vessels, on display.

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Yet, with relations between Moscow and the West deteriorating over the past two years due to the Ukraine crisis and the sanctions that followed, Russia has seemed content to increase cooperation with its Chinese neighbor, and the entire region has profited from it, some experts believe.

"The development of China-Russia ties ensured stability in the region" for the past 20 years, which should serve as an example *"for everyone else in the world"* in terms of international relations, Li Yongquan, Director of the Institute of Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) said.

"Together we can become a center that can influence global processes," Boris Titov, Russia's ombudsman for entrepreneurs' rights, told RT on the sidelines of the Russia-China: towards a New Quality of Bilateral Relations international conference in June. Titov said that close cooperation between Russia and China is an irritant for the US, which has prompted its attempts to thwart a Russia-China strategic alliance. However, *"both Chinese and Russian leadership understand that we are better together and we are not so worried about America and its attitude to this issue."*