CGTN: Head-of-state diplomacy anchors growing China-Russia partnership

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Ahead of Russian President Vladimir Putinâ??s visit to China from May 19 to 20, CGTN has published an article examining the evolution of China-Russia relations at a historically significant moment.

The piece highlights how sustained head-of-state diplomacy has strengthened political mutual trust and how China and Russia have developed a model of major-country relations characterized by mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, offering a clear example of stability and continuity in a turbulent world.

BEIJING, May 17, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) â?? At the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin will pay a state visit to China from May 19 to 20, a fresh demonstration of the close high-level exchanges that have become a distinctive feature of China-Russia relations in the new era.

Putinâ??s visit comes at a historically significant moment. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the signing of the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation and the founding of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), as well as the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination.

Over the past decade, head-of-state diplomacy has played a central role in steering bilateral ties through a rapidly changing global landscape. Since 2013, Xi and Putin have maintained frequent interactions. Xi has visited Russia 11 times, while Putin has traveled to China 13 times, underscoring the enduring strength and strategic nature of bilateral relation

Head-of-state diplomacy provides strategic guidance

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â??The frequency and depth of their interactions are rarely seen anywhere else in the world,â?• said Zhao Long, a research fellow at the Center for Russian and Central Asian Studies at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies.

He noted that the two leaders have met more than 40 times over the past decade, and that head-of-state diplomacy has become a strong pillar of the high level of mutual trust and a key driving force behind practical cooperation across a wide range of sectors.

In March 2013, Russia became the first country Xi visited after taking office as Chinese president. In 2019, the two sides upgraded bilateral relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, the highest level in the history of bilateral relations.

In 2025, Putin visited China to attend the SCO summit and commemorative events marking the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese Peopleâ??s War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War. On February 4 this year, Xi and Putin held a video meeting to discuss future development of bilateral ties and their coordination on international platforms.

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Under the guidance of the two heads of state, China and Russia have continuously deepened political mutual trust and firmly supported each other on issues concerning their core interests, including sovereignty, security and development. The two sides have also strengthened coordination on major international platforms such as the United Nations, SCO, BRICS, APEC and the G20, jointly opposing unilateralism and contributing to build a multipolar world.

Xi has previously stated that China and Russia have explored a new path for neighboring major countries to get along with each other, characterized by non-alliance, non-confrontation, and not targeting any third party, setting an example of a new type of major-country relations.

Practical cooperation reaches new heights

With deepening political mutual trust, the two countries have achieved fruitful results through extensive practical cooperation across fields such as trade, energy, and culture.

Faced with global headwinds, the two countriesâ?? economic and trade cooperation has continued to expand, with the two sides actively advancing the alignment between the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Eurasian Economic Union. More than 70% of China-Europe freight trains under the BRI pass through Russia en route to Europe, with the number of trips continuing to reach record highs.

China has remained Russiaâ??s largest trading partner for 16 consecutive years. According to the latest data from Chinaâ??s Ministry of Commerce, bilateral trade reached $227.9 billion in 2025, surpassing the $200 billion mark for the third consecutive year. In the first quarter of this year, bilateral trade totaled $61.2 billion, up 14.7% year on year.

People-to-people exchanges have also continued to flourish. The two countries have jointly organized a range of exchange programs over the years, including language years, tourism years, youth exchange years and cultural years.

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During the 2024-2025 China-Russia Years of Culture, the two countries held a series of cultural exchange activities. The original Chinese dance drama Wing Chun was performed at Moscowâ??s Bolshoi Theatre, while performances in China by Russiaâ??s Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra and the Bolshoi Ballet were met with overwhelming demand. In 2025, China and Russia also introduced a mutual visa-free policy, triggering a tourism boom between the two countries.

From deepening political mutual trust to expanding practical cooperation and growing people-to-people exchanges, China and Russia have continued to strengthen their bilateral friendship.

Against a backdrop of growing global uncertainty, the upcoming meeting between the two heads of state is expected to further advance bilateral ties, deliver greater benefits to the two peoples, and contribute more stability and positive momentum to a changing world.

https://news.cgtn.com/news/2026-05-17/Head-of-state-diplomacy-anchors-growing-China-Russia-partnership-1NdoTiyrmVi/p.html

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