

## **Deepening Ties Between Russia and China**

During Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Beijing on 16 May 2024, the strengthening bond between China and Russia was evident, amid escalating tensions with Western nations. This visit, Putin's first since commencing his fifth term, occurred during the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, now in its third year, highlighting the critical timing of this diplomatic engagement.

Putin's trip underscores the partnership established in Feb 2022, demonstrating Russia's growing economic reliance on China amidst international sanctions. With bilateral trade hitting \$240 billion last year, China has become an essential partner for Russia, providing an alternative to Western markets.

This alliance extends beyond economic ties, with Russia diverting some of its energy exports to China. In addition, China supplies high-tech components to Russia's defense industries, helping them circumvent Western sanctions. Joint military activities, including exercises and long-range bomber patrols over the Sea Of Japan and East China Sea, further exemplify the deepening relationship.

While China maintains an official stance of neutrality, its actions indicate support for Russia. The Chinese government has backed Russia's narratives against provocations and proposed a peace plan that implied allowing Russia to retain its territorial gains, a suggestion swiftly rejected by Ukraine and Western allies.

The Russia-China alliance challenges the US-led Western democratic order, promoting a global framework that questions the established multipolar world order. This strategic ambiguity introduced by their partnership poses a significant challenge for global stability.

The solidarity between Russia and China serves as a deterrent against Western sanctions or aggressive measures, as such actions could provoke a response from both powerful nations. To navigate these complexities, global partners must engage in dialogue with Russia and China to understand their strategic goals. Strengthening diplomatic efforts and building a web of partnerships are key to mitigating the risks associated with the Russia-China alliance.