

My Sources

Introduction

The cable tray and handling ring connectors' proportions from the North Korean state media image on the left are identical to the cable tray and handling ring connectors shown in the missile debris from the 2 January Kharkiv attack on the right.

https://www.dia.mil/Portals/110/Documents/News/Military_Power_Publications/DPRK_Russia_NK_Enabling_Russian_Missile_Strikes_Against_Ukraine.pdf

Russia has launched the biggest air attack on Ukraine since the beginning of its full-scale invasion, the Ukrainian military told CNN, with an unprecedented number of drones and missiles fired at targets across the country, killing at least 31 people and injuring more than 150 others.

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/29/europe/ukraine-russia-airstrikes-intl-hnk/index.html>

The latest round of attacks by Russia began Friday with its largest single assault on Ukraine of the war, as fighting along the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line has subsided into grinding attrition amid winter. / Russia fired almost 100 missiles of various types in the attacks, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on X, formerly Twitter. / In his nightly address, Zelenskyy said that since Dec. 29, Russia has used almost 300 missiles and more than 200 Shahed drones against Ukraine.

<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-kharkiv-kyiv-2b23b1163c859a645b485d5c38035369>

The aft motor section from a North Korean system pictured on the left matches the physical characteristics shown in the missile debris on the right. // The debris in Ukraine visually matches the missiles in the images from North Korean state media.

https://www.dia.mil/Portals/110/Documents/News/Military_Power_Publications/DPRK_Russia_NK_Enabling_Russian_Missile_Strikes_Against_Ukraine.pdf

The conclusions of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) follow U.S. assertions that Russia received ballistic missiles and artillery rounds from North Korea after the country's leader, Kim Jong Un, met Russian President Vladimir Putin for a rare summit last September.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/debris-analysis-shows-russia-using-north-korean-missiles-ukraine-us-military-2024-05-30/>

Ukrainian forces shot down 45 Iranian-made Shahed drones fired by Russia on the first night of the year, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Sunday.

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/ukrainian-forces-shot-down-45-iranian-made-drones-fired-by-russia/>

The support China is providing includes significant quantities of machine tools, drone and turbojet engines and technology for cruise missiles, microelectronics, and nitrocellulose, which Russia uses to make propellant for weapons, said the officials.

<https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/12/politics/china-russia-support-weapons-manufacturing/index.html>

Transistors made by the Chinese semiconductor company, VBsemi, were found in the onboard satellite navigation system of a Russian air-launched cruise missile, according to the study. A video-processing integrated chip produced by China's Pulse Electronics helped power a Russian Orlan 10 drone. And VBsemi chips were also found in the navigational system of an Iranian-made Shahed-136 kamikaze drone.

<https://www.semafor.com/article/05/29/2023/after-finding-chinese-chips-in-russian-weapons-ukraine-confronted-beijings-envoy>

President George W. Bush characterized North Korea, Iran, and Iraq as “an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world,” in his January 29 State of the Union address.

<https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2002-03/press-releases/bush-labels-north-korea-iran-iraq-axis-evil>

The three principal partners in what was eventually referred to as the Axis alliance were Germany, Italy, and Japan.

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/axis-powers-in-world-war-ii>

A number of commentators have dubbed Russia a “mafia state”. It is certainly a catchy epithet, but what does it actually mean? / The Kremlin does not control organised crime in Russia, nor is it controlled by it. Rather, organised crime prospers under Putin, because it can go with the grain of his system. There is a very high level of corruption in Russia, which provides a conducive environment for organised crime.

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/23/how-organised-crime-took-over-russia-vory-super-mafia>

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All four countries see the United States as the primary obstacle to establishing these spheres of influence, and they want Washington's presence in their respective regions reduced.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/axis-upheaval-russia-iran-north-korea-taylor-fontaine>

Interview with Nicole Grajewski (5/31/24): “[The axis] is more of a group of nations that are discontented with the nature of U.S. and Western leadership in international order.”

2004 - Ten new countries join the EU: Czech Republic, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. This was the largest single enlargement in terms of people, and number of countries. 2007 - Romania and Bulgaria join the EU.

https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/6-27-members_en

1999 - Czechia, Hungary, Poland. 2004 - Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

<https://www.nato.int/nato-welcome/>

Russia's brief war against Georgia in 2008 was a signal that the Kremlin was determined to make the West heed its warning about expanding NATO into Russia's erstwhile empire, which it now claimed as a privileged sphere of influence.

<https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/05/rogue-power-russias-wartime-foreign-policy?lang=en>

Since 1999, as far as I can see, the president has pursued two main goals: To preserve the unity of Russia and to restore its status as a great power in the global arena. He has achieved both. / There is no doubt that the accession of the U.S.S.R.'s former allies in Eastern Europe and the Baltic states to NATO has done nothing to bolster Russia's security and has weakened Moscow's strategic position. At the same time, the information war Moscow has been waging in relation to NATO expansion, and the attempts to politically counter the alliance's advance to the east, have not only failed to reduce the negative consequences for Russia, but deepened them.

<https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2019/08/20-years-of-vladimir-putin-how-russian-foreign-policy-has-changed?lang=en¢er=russia-eurasia>

Iran always fiercely resisted foreign domination; Iran often sought a benevolent ally from outside the region to support its quest for sovereignty; and Iran wished to be seen as a serious power deserving of respect. / The Islamic Republic continues this profoundly ingrained and historically conditioned struggle for Iranian independence. It views the West as irredeemably imperialistic. The long history of Western hegemony in Iran—and Iranians' fierce resistance—explains a lot of the regime's defiance of the West. / Iran is increasingly confident in its foreign behavior because it sees itself as a serious global player.

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/iran-history-foreign-policy/>

Iran's foreign policy appears to reflect overlapping and at times contradictory motivations, including countering perceived threats from the United States and U.S. partners like Israel; positioning Iran as the defender of Shia Muslim communities and other groups that the Iranian government characterizes as oppressed, such as the Palestinians; and the pursuit of Iran's geopolitical interests. To promote its priorities, Iran has backed a number of political and armed groups in the Middle East.

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47321>

According to senior military officials and independent analysis by the Global Terrorism Trends and Analysis Center (GTTAC), which provides data to the State Department's Counterterrorism Bureau, most attack unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) used in the world today originate from Iran.

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/iransource/iran-drones-uavs-proliferation-us-policy/>

Iran has the largest and most diverse ballistic missile arsenal in the Middle East.

<https://iranprimer.usip.org/resource/irans-ballistic-missile-program>

Since its ill-fated attempt to effect unification under communist rule through the illegal invasion of South Korea in 1950, North Korea steadfastly pursued the vision of unification led by its regime,

encapsulated in the rallying cry of “One Korea.” / Despite acute economic adversities, North Korea has persisted in disproportionately allocating resources to the advancement of its nuclear weapons. <https://www.38north.org/2024/02/decoding-north-koreas-changing-policies-a-south-korean-perspective/>

The Chinese Communist Party points to this history to claim Taiwan. / Taiwan sits in the so-called “first island chain”, which includes a list of US-friendly territories that are crucial to Washington's foreign policy in the region. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-59900139>

“Taiwan is a sacred and inseparable part of China's territory. Owing to reasons known to all, Taiwan has since 1949 been separated from the mainland. To bring about the complete reunification of China is the common aspiration of all the Chinese, both in the country and overseas. The Communist Party of China and the Chinese government take the completion of the grand cause of China's peaceful reunification as their historical mission and have made protracted efforts towards this end.” https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/200011/t20001117_697847.html

Southeast Asia holds a special place in Chinese foreign policy owing to geography, historical economic ties, and the migration of millions of ethnic Chinese to the region. / In official terms, Beijing pursued friendly coexistence and peaceful development with its neighbors from the reform and opening-up period until the 18th Party Congress in 2012. Shortly thereafter, Xi Jinping began prioritizing a highly proactive form of neighborhood diplomacy, with the goal of turning China's neighborhood areas into a “community of common destiny” (also translated as a community of shared destiny or future). https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/FP_20191119_china_se_asia_stromseth.pdf

Interview with Nicole Grajewski (5/31/24): “[The axis] is more of a group of nations that are discontented with the nature of U.S. and Western leadership in international order.”

Following the bitter estrangement of the Sino-Soviet split that spanned the 1960s to the 1980s, China and Russia have become closer for several pragmatic reasons. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/putin-and-xis-unholy-alliance>

But this collection shows the Sino-Soviet alliance in turmoil from the very early 1960s: over the Sino-Indian border war; over a mass migration of Uyghurs and Kazakhs to the USSR in 1962; and over Khrushchev's handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis, to name only a few. The withdrawal of Soviet experts from the PRC and the cancelling of Sino-Soviet nuclear cooperation offered other strong signals that the honeymoon was over. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/sino-soviet-alliance-70-years-later>

In June 1950, Kim persuaded Stalin and China's Mao Zedong that he could forcefully reunify Korea. A United Nations Command army led by the US eventually repelled the DPRK advance, and only intervention by China saved North Korea from extinction. / By contrast, Beijing has cemented its trade dominance into a near-monopoly: in 2022, North Korea conducted almost 97% of its trade with China.

<https://www.iiss.org/en/publications/strategic-comments/2023/the-surge-of-activity-in-relationships-between-north-korea-and-russia/>

Post-Soviet Russia became an important supplier of arms and nuclear technology to Iran. With both countries now isolated by the West, the emerging alliance is based on common opposition to Western domination as well as a mutual need to circumvent sanctions.

<https://www.stimson.org/2023/russia-iran-converge-in-attempt-to-build-a-new-eurasian-order/>

By some measures, the United States has increasingly used sanctions as a tool in achieving foreign policy objectives over the last two decades.

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47829>

Economic sanctions are defined as the withdrawal of customary trade and financial relations for foreign- and security-policy purposes.

<https://www.cfr.org/background/what-are-economic-sanctions>

Although sanctions may be imposed on the entire economy of a foreign country, since the late 1990s they have more often targeted individuals and entities, government officials, groups of subnational actors, and specific economic sectors.

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47829>

Since 2006, the UN Security Council has passed nearly a dozen resolutions sanctioning North Korea for developing nuclear weapons and related activities. The United States and other countries have also imposed unilateral sanctions. / Sanctions are often felt most by ordinary families, not the elites who are their intended targets. Export restrictions on the textile, fishing, and coal industries and bans on working abroad disproportionately affect North Koreans who depend on these economies. Sanctions also frequently delay and suspend the delivery of international humanitarian aid by complicating customs and other bureaucratic operations.

<https://www.cfr.org/background/north-korea-sanctions-un-nuclear-weapons>

Between 1945 and 1990 sanctions were imposed worldwide in 104 instances; in two-thirds of these, the United States was either a key player or the sanctions were unilateral actions by the United States with no participation from other countries.

<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/sanctions-siege-warfare/>

On multitudinous occasions, these U.S.-led sanction regimes have been found to inflict asymmetrical burdens on impoverished foreign citizens, hinder democratization, and in the most serious cases exacerbate humanitarian crises in violation of international law.

<https://responsiblestatecraft.org/russia-sanctions/>

The United States not only restricts trade between the targeted state and those under its jurisdiction, but also works through allies and the United Nations to impose sanctions worldwide. UN sanctions must be approved by the Security Council, meaning that—in addition to the United States, Great Britain, and France—Russia and China have the right to veto any resolution. Thus, UN sanctions require widespread agreement and tend to apply to fewer countries and be less all-encompassing.

<https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/ineffective-immoral-politically-convenient-americas-overreliance-economic-sanctions#us-sanctions-law-practice>

These sanctions have had particularly devastating effects on the North Korean economy, as the UN resolutions target top export industries, preventing North Korea from bringing in external revenue that could be used for the country and its people. The list of industries directly targeted include: the mineral trade, seafood, textiles, and agricultural products, machinery and electrical equipment. // The impact of sanctions go beyond the country's economic development. By broadly impacting North Korea's national economy, sanctions inevitably take a humanitarian toll on the entire population by undermining their ability to survive. / Some of the biggest humanitarian challenges facing the country include "chronic food insecurity". [...] From hand-tools to aluminum wire, the long list of banned items affects many aspects of everyday life and presents serious challenges to social and economic development.// UN sanctions negatively impact North Korea's overall food production by banning seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural equipment and other types of machinery.

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/ucm/cfis/secondary-sanctions/2022-09-14/submission-secondary-sanctions-and-sanctions-in-cyber-world-HRC-51-nodutdol.pdf>

As international concern about Iran's nuclear program increased, Congress, beginning in 2010, increased the scope of U.S. sanctions, targeting Iran's oil exports and other economic sectors in a bid to deny the Iranian government financial resources and compel it to make policy changes. / U.S. sanctions on Iran block Iranian government assets in the United States, ban nearly all U.S. trade with Iran (except food and agricultural commodities, medicine, medical supplies, and humanitarian-related goods), and prohibit foreign assistance and arms sales.

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12452>

Iran has purchased North Korean missiles since the 1980s, and more recently, North Korea is thought to have supplied weapons to Iranian proxy groups, including Hezbollah and possibly Hamas.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/axis-upheaval-russia-iran-north-korea-taylor-fontaine>

North Korea first began exporting military hardware to Iran during the Iran-Iraq War and has since been instrumental in the construction of Iran's defense industry infrastructure. North Korea provided valuable training, production materials, and entire weapons systems in exchange for Iranian oil exports.

https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2020/12/01/arms-for-oil-how-north-korea-and-iran-facilitate-each-others-security-strategies/#_edn3

Post-Soviet Russia became an important supplier of arms and nuclear technology to Iran. With both countries now isolated by the West.

<https://www.stimson.org/2023/russia-iran-converge-in-attempt-to-build-a-new-eurasian-order/>

Between 2010 and 2023, Russia and Iran carried out nine joint military exercises focused largely on terrorism, piracy, and search-and-rescue missions. // Beginning in 2019, Iran, Russia and China held annual naval drills in either the Indian Ocean or near the Gulf of Oman.

<https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2023/may/18/iran-russia-burgeoning-military-ties>

China is North Korea's biggest trade partner and arguably has the most leverage over Kim Jong Un's regime. / China accounts for more than 90 percent of North Korea's total imports and exports. / China regards stability on the Korean Peninsula as its primary interest in the bilateral relationship. Its support for North Korea ensures a buffer between China and the democratic South, which is home to around 28,500 U.S. troops and marines.

<https://www.cfr.org/background/china-north-korea-relationship>

Few countries have as significant economic ties with Tehran as Beijing does. China has for more than a decade been Iran's biggest trade partner, a long-standing relationship that has largely revolved around the oil trade.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/04/19/iran-china-israel-attack-oil-trade-economic-leverage/>

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the US, UK and EU, along with countries including Australia, Canada and Japan, have imposed more than 16,500 sanctions on Russia. Their main target has been Russia's money. / Western nations have also: banned exports of technology Russia might use for making weapons; banned imports of gold and diamonds from Russia; banned flights from Russia; sanctioned oligarchs - the wealthy business people linked with the Kremlin - and impounded their yachts. / Russia's oil industry has been another major target. The US and UK banned Russian oil and natural gas. The EU has banned seaborne crude imports.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60125659>

...targeted export bans in areas in which Russia is vulnerable due to its high dependency on EU supplies / This will contribute to degrading Russia's technological base and industrial capacity.

https://eu-solidarity-ukraine.ec.europa.eu/eu-sanctions-against-russia-following-invasion-ukraine/import-and-export-bans_en

Council Regulation (EU) 2023/427 of 25 February 2023 amending Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 concerning measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine provides for:
- Export restrictions: Transit restriction on dual-use items and firearms, their parts and ammunition.

<https://www.level-legal.com/en/news/eu-uk-and-the-us-impose-a-new-wave-of-sanctions-against-russia>

North Korea has sent Russia ballistic missiles and more than 2.5 million rounds of ammunition. // Since Russia's invasion in February 2022, Moscow has deployed more than 3,700 Iranian-designed drones. Russia now produces at least 330 on its own each month and is collaborating with Iran on plans to build a new drone factory inside Russia that will boost these numbers. // Moscow has been

among Tehran's top suppliers of weapons over the past two decades and is now its largest source of foreign investment.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/axis-upheaval-russia-iran-north-korea-taylor-fontaine>

Over the past six months, cargo ships have carried more than 300,000 artillery shells and a million rounds of ammunition from Iran to Russia, according to the officials and documents viewed by The Wall Street Journal. Intelligence about the shipments has been shared with the U.S., people familiar with the matter said.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-ships-ammunition-to-russia-by-caspian-sea-to-aid-invasion-of-ukraine-e74e8585>

In exchange, Tehran sought Russian fighter jets, attack helicopters, radars, and combat trainer aircraft worth billions of dollars. Iranian pilots reportedly started training in Russia on the Sukhoi Su-35, an advanced fighter jet, in the spring of 2022.

<https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2023/may/18/iran-russia-burgeoning-military-ties>

In addition to increasing exports of food to North Korea, Russia appears to have increased its exports of items prohibited by UNSC sanctions, such as oil. Russia reportedly has unfrozen \$9 million in North Korean assets, which is facilitating the DPRK's access to the world financial system. / we assess that Pyongyang is seeking military assistance from Russia, including fighter aircraft, surface-to-air missiles, armored vehicles, ballistic missile production equipment or materials, and other advanced technologies.

<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN12355>

North Korea's Hwasong-18 ICBM and its July 12, 2023 successful launch is likely the result of technical cooperation sourced to Russia. // This missile is equipped to penetrate existing U.S. ballistic missile defenses with countermeasures and deliver multiple thermonuclear weapons to targets in the continental United States.

<https://beyondparallel.csis.org/the-transfer-of-a-russian-icbm-to-north-korea/>

Their arrival on the battlefield makes the need for the West to send additional modern weaponry even more urgent, as Kyiv tries to seize on recent gains to retake as much territory as possible before winter sets in, they said. The Iranian drones appear to be a potential game-changer for the Russians.

<https://www.politico.com/news/2022/09/26/iranian-drones-ukraine-russia-war-00058802>

Publicly available customs data indicate that every month, China is exporting over \$300 million worth of dual-use products identified by the United States, the European Union, Japan, and the United Kingdom as "high priority" items necessary for Russia's weapons production. // China remains Russia's largest supplier of these controlled products. // In 2023, China was responsible for approximately 90 percent of Russia's imports of goods covered under the G7's high priority export control list.

<https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2024/05/behind-the-scenes-chinas-increasing-role-in-russias-defense-industry?lang=en>

In 2022, bilateral trade grew by 36 percent to \$190 billion. In 2023, it grew to \$240 billion, surpassing the \$200 billion mark in November, a goal that Xi and Putin initially intended to reach in 2025. China has imported energy commodities worth \$129 billion—mostly oil, pipeline gas, liquefied natural gas, and coal—that account for 73 percent of Russian exports to China, as well as metals, agricultural products, and wood.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/putin-and-xis-unholy-alliance>

High priority items refer to fifty dual-use products that are essential for manufacturing weaponry like missiles, drones, and tanks.

<https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2024/05/behind-the-scenes-chinas-increasing-role-in-russias-defense-industry?lang=en>

Dual-use goods are items that can be used both for civilian and military applications. These types of goods are heavily regulated because they can be classified for civilian use and then transformed for military purposes, or worse, used for terrorism.

<https://www.dowjones.com/professional/risk/glossary/dual-use-goods-definition/#:~:text=Dual%2Duse%20goods%20are%20items,or%20worse%2C%20used%20for%20terrorism.>

https://democrats-intelligence.house.gov/uploadedfiles/odni_report_on_chinese_support_to_russia.pdf

The U.S. government plans on Wednesday to announce wider sanctions on the sale of semiconductor chips and other goods to Russia, with the goal of targeting third-party sellers in China.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-widen-sanctions-sale-semiconductor-chips-russia-sources-say-2024-06-12/>

In 2022, China sold more than \$500 million worth of semiconductors to Russia, up from \$200 million in 2021.

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/09/28/how-surge-trade-with-china-is-boosting-russias-war.html>

At the same time, even though Beijing has strengthened domestic defense production and reduced arms deliveries from Moscow, it still relies on imports of the most advanced Russian weapons systems and technologies, especially in the aviation sector. For instance, between 2018 and 2022, 83% of Chinese arms imports came from Russia, with most deliveries consisting of helicopters and engines for aircraft that China has had difficulties producing. / Up to 40% of China's air force fleet depends on Russian-made engines. / Going forward, China may leverage Russia's growing economic and security dependence to in turn gain access to long-desired Russian engine technology.

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/sellers-remorse-challenges-facing-russias-arms-exports>

Russia also has some advanced military technologies that China still needs, despite the overall superior sophistication of Chinese defense manufacturing. These include S-500 surface-to-air

missiles, engines for modern fighter jets, tools for nuclear deterrence such as early-warning systems, stealthier submarines, and technologies for underwater warfare.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/putin-and-xis-unholy-alliance>

China has purchased large quantities of Iranian oil since 2020. // The support from China, Iran, and North Korea has strengthened Russia's position on the battlefield, undermined Western attempts to isolate Moscow, and harmed Ukraine. // Moscow retains an edge over Beijing in other key areas, including submarine technology, remote sensing satellites, and aircraft engines. If China can pressure a more dependent Russia to provide additional advanced technologies, the transfer could further undermine the United States' advantages. // China, for its part, has become Russia's most important lifeline. Beijing has ramped up its purchase of Russian oil and gas, putting billions of dollars into Moscow's coffers. Just as significantly, China provides vast amounts of warfighting technology, from semiconductors and electronic devices to radar- and communications-jamming equipment and jet-fighter parts. Customs records show that despite Western trade sanctions, Russia's imports of computer chips and chip components have been steadily rising toward prewar levels. More than half of these goods come from China.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/axis-upheaval-russia-iran-north-korea-taylor-fontaine>

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Kim Jong-Un visited Russia in September 2023. Soon thereafter, trainloads of North Korean artillery shells started rolling to Russian troops in Ukraine.

<https://www.wsj.com/world/the-war-in-ukraine-has-created-a-new-axis-of-evil-cd50a398>

Russian President Vladimir Putin praised his country's relations with Iran at a meeting in Moscow on December 7 with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. Since launching its full-scale war in Ukraine, Moscow has sought to deepen its economic and political ties with Tehran.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-putin-raisi-iran-moscow-meeting/32721077.html>

A high-level North Korean economic delegation was on its way to Iran, the North's state media said Wednesday, for what would be the two countries' first known talks since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://apnews.com/article/north-korea-iran-diplomacy-military-cooperation-russia-f82461908cb59a15a634747e9ab48f6c>

And as Russia grew increasingly authoritarian with Putin in charge since 2000, Beijing and Moscow teamed up at the UN Security Council, using their power as permanent members to push back against many of the positions and norms advocated by Western countries.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/putin-and-xis-unholy-alliance>

Russia and China [] vetoed a US-drafted United Nations Security Council resolution to strengthen sanctions on North Korea in a vote the US ambassador to the UN called dangerous, disappointing and likely to fuel Pyongyang's program to develop nuclear-capable missile systems.

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/26/asia/us-north-korea-united-nations-intl-hnk/index.html>

The United Nations Security Council [] turned down a resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and an Israel-Hamas hostage deal after Russia and China vetoed the measure proposed by the United States.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/un-security-council-fails-pass-us-resolution-calling-immediate-ceasefire-gaza-2024-03-22/>

The group is not an exclusive bloc and certainly not an alliance. It is, instead, a collection of dissatisfied states converging on a shared purpose of overturning the principles, rules, and institutions that underlie the prevailing international system.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/axis-upheaval-russia-iran-north-korea-taylor-fontaine>

From the interview with Andrea Kendall-Taylor (5/29/24): Some examples of nations that have important relationships with the axis include Belarus, Venezuela, Syria, and Kazakhstan.

Interview with Nicole Grajewski (5/31/24): “[The axis] is more of a group of nations that are discontented with the nature of U.S. and Western leadership in international order, I think. You know, they all have that commonality. There's an interesting grouping in the UN. It's called the Group of Friends in Defense of the UN charter, and it's pretty much every country that's an autocracy or upset about the way that international order seems to favor Western nations. That includes Venezuela, Bolivia, Belarus.”

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Confronting the axis will be expensive. A new strategy will require the United States to bolster its spending on defense, foreign aid, diplomacy, and strategic communications.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/axis-upheaval-russia-iran-north-korea-taylor-fontaine>

Interview with Andrea Kendall-Taylor (5/29/24): “It's definitely not an alliance, and none of these countries have an interest in forming an alliance. And I think the mistake we often make is holding these relationships up like we assume that their relationships and partnerships should look exactly the way that ours do, like our NATO allies and that we are gonna fight together and we're interoperable, it's just the wrong criteria to apply. That's not how they do business.”

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