

A b s t r a c t s

Contours of Power China and Russia: Unequal Alliance

Jürgen Osterhammel
Imperial Histories
China and Russia in International Orders

Within the framework of international orders, relations between Russia and China can be described as bilateral diplomatic and economic relations between great powers. However, they can also be characterised and explained as partly parallel and partly intertwined curves of imperial rise, decline, and resurgence. These curves were staggered and asymmetrical. Only in the exception has a balance of power between the two actors existed in equilibrium.

Rudolf A. Mark
The Historic Silk Road
Trade Routes, Merchants, Goods in the Middle Ages

The Middle Ages experienced a “globalisation” of its own. From the 9th to the 12th century, the Eurasian expanse was crisscrossed by a network of trade routes, warehouses, and transshipment points through which long-distance trade was conducted. The Silk Road stretched from what is now China through Central Asia, Russia, Ukraine, and East Central Europe to Western Europe and the Levant. The passage of time and the type of goods trafficked determined the choice of routes. Goods of all kinds as well as slaves were transported overland, on inland waters, and across the sea. At its greatest extent, the Silk Road system stretched over more than 8,000 km. The merchants, among whom Jews played an important role, spoke numerous languages. Cashless trade was already known in the Khazar Empire. The Silk Road’s system of trade and communication had a significant impact on the modernisation and transformation of the old world.

Gerd Koenen
Reactionary Revisionists
Russia and China in the Putin and Xi Era

China and Russia are revisionist powers. For a decade now, they have been striving to improve their position in global politics by means of territorial expansion, an approach many thought had been overcome. Neither pursues its form of revisionism from a position of strength and stability, although in China's case, this might appear to be the case given its economic dynamism. Putin and Xi are driven by their own grandiose fantasies – and by the conviction that they must realise these in their limited lifetime and tenure. The West finds itself in a new pre-world war constellation. Escalation into global war is not inevitable. Political, economic, and military means of containment are available. The war in Ukraine, in a more felicitous scenario, could help resolve international tensions if the country is not abandoned.

Michael Rochlitz
Reversal of Roles
Determinants of the Economic Paths of Russia and China

China is a giant, Russia a dwarf by comparison. This is true economically, demographically and now militarily as well. In just a few decades, the ratios between the two states have been reversed. As recently as the 1950s, the Soviet Union played a significant role in the economic development of the nascent People's Republic of China. Several failed attempts at reform have turned Russia into an autocratic commodity state with institutions antithetical to liberal economics. The invasion of Ukraine has deprived Russia of almost all development potential. China, on the other hand, has been able to exploit its potential since Deng Xiaoping's reforms and the opening of the country in the 1970s. The renewed intensification of authoritarian rule and the aggressive foreign policy under Xi Jinping are endangering Chinese successes. But China still has the potential to become the world's largest economy and to challenge the United States.

Roland Götz
Asymmetric Interdependence
China and Russia's economies in comparison

China, with a population ten times larger and an equal amount of arable land, produces six times as many goods and services as Russia. In terms of gross domestic product valued at purchasing power parity, China ranks first in the world, Russia sixth. In Russia, a significantly larger share of GDP goes to private consumption as well as government final consumption expenditures than in China, and Russia is more militarised. In China, the investment rate is twice as

high than in Russia, which has been one reason for its strong economic growth, along with the strong increase in the labour force. At the same time, 25 percent of China's inhabitants live in absolute poverty; in Russia, 4 percent. China is a far more important trading partner for Russia than Russia is for China. China determines the scope and intensity of economic integration with Russia and is guided only by its own interests.

Power and Law

Nicola Spakowski

Xi Jinping

A “Strong Man” for a “Strong Nation”

As both general secretary of the Communist Party of China and his country's head of state, Xi Jinping wields more power than any Chinese leader since Mao. Practices such as collective party leadership or term limits have been abandoned. Xi Jinping embodies authoritarian rule's claim to power and China's rise as a world power. State propaganda casts him as a “strong man” and fatherly leadership figure. His “manly action” and “Confucian” composure are considered aspects of the regime's stability and legitimacy.

Fabian Burkhardt

Vladimir Putin

Personalized Power at War

Russia's political system is highly personalised. All relevant decisions, including the war against Ukraine, are made by autocrat Vladimir Putin. Despite defeats on the battlefield, his regime appears stable. But the war reveals the paradox of personalised rule: Putin claims that the “special military operation” was necessary to forestall a larger war that the United States had planned against Russia. He admits weaknesses, but claims Russia will emerge as a strong state. In fact, it's the other way around: Putin's regime appears strong because it started the war and is terrorising Ukraine. In Russia, the war penetrates every nook and cranny of society. But it is obvious that the war was Putin's biggest mistake and will contribute to the permanent weakening of his regime and Russia.

Alexander Libman

Negative Convergence

A Comparison of Authoritarianism in China and Russia

Autocracy research has flourished in recent decades. This had much to do with developments in Russia and China. The findings provided a picture of modern autocracies that differed from traditional regimes: Russia has been an electoral

autocracy since the 1990s, China an institutional one. Since the mid-2010s, both states have developed into the classic type of personalist autocracies.

Björn Alexander Düben

Obsessed with “Internal Security”

The Entente of the Autocrats in China and Russia

China and Russia have become close partners. Shared geopolitical interests do not provide a convincing explanation for this rapprochement. Positive norms hardly play a role either. Rather, the cause is to be sought in the increasingly similar authoritarian systems of rule in both countries. At the heart of this lies the principle of “sovereignty,” which they want to defend against “external interference.” The rulers share in their opposition to the liberal West and their enormous interest in maintaining power. Fear of democratic movements and “colour revolutions” is a constant theme. To prevent this, Beijing and Moscow are working closely together. They act as protective powers for other autocratic regimes and weaken the influence of liberal democratic systems worldwide.

Angelika Nussberger, Lauri Mälksoo

International Law à la russe

Multipolarity versus Universality

International law is supposed to provide universally binding norms for the peaceful coexistence of states with equal rights. For some years, Russia has been turning away from this principle of universality and trying to establish its own regional international law regime, referencing a “multipolar world order.” For Russia, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law are no longer the pillars of international law, which also influences domestic structures. Rather, Russia sees itself as a “historical great power” and is reclaiming absolute state sovereignty. The associated claim to non-interference in internal affairs takes precedence over normative commitments, especially when it comes to human rights issues. Russian politicians and diplomats consider treaty obligations and duties to be anachronistic and irrelevant. They justify this by saying that the contracting parties have adopted a hostile position toward Russia. Russia is taking an axe to international law.

Björn Ahl

Norm-Taker or Norm-Maker?

China’s Attitude towards International Law

China’s attitude towards international law moves in a dialectical field of tension. Chinese domestic practice for implementing international treaties is primarily aimed at flexibility. It selectively adopts and adapts the content of international law to advance China’s national interests. At the same time, the People’s

Republic acts as the guardian of the status quo of the international legal order. In Chinese jurisprudence, the discussion surrounding the foreign-policy concept “community of common destiny” points in a similar direction. The legal effects of this concept lie, on the one hand, in consolidating existing international law and, on the other hand, in certain modifications that serve to legitimize and stabilize authoritarian rule.

Conflict and Cooperation

Gudrun Wacker

China’s Balancing Act

Russia’s Ukraine War and the Implications for Taiwan

China and Russia share a close partnership. It is based mainly on shared ideas of world order. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine forces Beijing to perform a balancing act between this friendship, the preservation of long-held principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty, as well as the continuation of cooperation with the West, which is essential out of economic and technological interests. China and Taiwan are closely following Russia’s war against Ukraine and the West’s response. Observers see parallels in the constellation of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine with the dispute between China and Taiwan. Beijing and Taipei are drawing different lessons from Russia’s aggression and the course of the war.

Janis Kluge

With Risks and Side-Effects

Russia’s Economic Relations with China and the West’s Sanctions

Moscow’s war against Ukraine and the sanctions imposed by the West have led to a sharp intensification of economic relations between Russia and China. Trade in particular rose sharply after a brief slump in spring 2022. China is supplying Russia with many of the things Moscow can no longer import from the West or produce on its own. The importance of the Chinese yuan has increased significantly for Russia due to the sanctions. At the same time, the sanctions are also hindering the expansion of cooperation in certain areas. Chinese companies continue to invest little in Russia. Cooperation is stalling, especially in high-tech sectors. For Russia, trade with China is currently crucial in order to mitigate the effects of the sanctions. However, there is no prospect of any integration with China as there once was with the West.

Frederik Brekk, Rimma Rusnac, Richard Weitz
Shift in Weight
Russia's Military Cooperation with China

Since the end of the East-West conflict, Russia has been supplying armaments to China. Militarily and technologically, Russia was once far superior to China. In the meantime, however, China's defence industry is now able to produce cutting-edge technology on its own, from air defence systems and fighter planes to intercontinental ballistic missiles. The Chinese market for Russia's defence industry is shrinking. The People's Liberation Army still benefits from the Russian armed forces through joint manoeuvres and officer training in Russia, as these bring in lessons learned from combat in Chechnya, Syria, and Ukraine. It is only a matter of time before Russia becomes the junior partner in arms and military cooperation with China.

Stephen Blank
Dangerous Friends
The Sino-Russian Military Alliance

For a decade now, Russia and China have been cooperating in the arms production and military policy. Selective cooperation is increasingly turning into a structural one. With regard to arms exports, Moscow has dropped its reservations about know-how transfers to Beijing. Now, it is supplying weapons-grade uranium, which China can use to expand its nuclear arsenal. China and Russia's common front against the United States, on the one hand, and Russia's war against Ukraine and China's conflict over Taiwan, on the other, are welding the two regimes together. The closer the alliance between China and Russia, the more likely India's break with Russia. The military alliance between the two autocracies poses a threat to the liberal world.

Morena Skalamera
Political Lubricant
Russian Energy for China

For years, China has sought to meet its growing energy needs, diversify its fossil fuel imports, and strengthen its security of supply. Russia plays a central role in this effort. Oil has been flowing to China since 2011, gas since 2015. By selling more to China, Russia has been trying to compensate for the European markets lost due to the annexation of Crimea and the war of aggression against Ukraine. There are limits to this expansion. In energy policy as well, China has the greater leverage and can dictate prices and conditions.

Temur Umarov

**Cooperation instead of Conflict
Russia and China in Central Asia**

China's importance in Central Asia is growing. This applies both in terms of economics and security policy. All the same, Russia remains an important player in the region. The shift in power does not lead to conflicts between Beijing and Moscow. Common interests in Central Asia and global politics override potential competition. In particular, maintaining the stability of the region's authoritarian regimes and shielding them from Western influences is a stated common goal. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan benefit from this situation. Their unilateral dependence on Russia is not being replaced by a new dependence on China. Rather, equilibrium between Beijing and Moscow provides them room to manoeuvre.

Lukas B. Wahden

**Big Words, small deeds
Russia and China in the Arctic**

Russia's war against Ukraine is even having an impact on the Arctic. Conflict and confrontation dominate relations between Russia and the western countries bordering the Arctic Ocean. In protest of Russia's policy of war, the Western countries have suspended all cooperation with Russia. The Arctic Council is paralysed. At the same time, climate change is transforming the region. The extraction and shipping of natural resources is getting profitable. Russia is counting on cooperation with Chinese companies. But investments and returns to date have fallen far short of Moscow's expectations. Military cooperation between Russia and China in the Arctic remains weak as well.

Vasilii Kashin, Aleksandra Yankova

**Gateway to the East?
Regional Cooperation on the Border between China and Russia**

Cross-border cooperation between regions in Russia's far east and China's northeast is poorly developed. The regional economies on the Russian side are small, and the infrastructure is poorly developed. In highly centralised Russia, there was always a lack of funding and investments for regions far away from Moscow. Local elites also contributed to the fact that numerous cooperation agreements and framework programs were never implemented. But in February 2022, an upheaval took place in Russia's foreign economic orientation so that now, for the first time ever, there is a chance of overcoming the obstacles that have stood in the way of cooperation between the territories along the Sino-Russian border.

Mattia Nelles
Whose Bread I Eat, Whose Song I Do Not Sing
China, Russia, and Ukraine

China is Ukraine's largest trading partner. Almost ten percent of Ukraine's agricultural land is leased to Chinese companies. Ukraine is China's most important supplier of corn and barley. China, too, therefore suffers from Russia's disruption of Ukrainian grain exports across the Black Sea. Nonetheless, Beijing is not lobbying Moscow to resume the grain export agreement, nor is it committed to persuading Russia to end the war and withdraw from Ukraine. China is pursuing a policy of "pro-Russian neutrality." It is willing to sacrifice its own interests in Ukraine to achieve this.

Reinhard Veser
On the Right Side of the Barricades
Lithuania's Confrontation with China

After Taiwan opened a trade office in Vilnius in late 2021, China removed Lithuania from its customs system and pressured international companies to stop doing business with Lithuania. This is not the first conflict between Beijing and Vilnius. Lithuania's own experience with communist rule influences its view of China: Lithuanian politicians criticize the repression of national minorities and Beijing's right-wing nihilistic approach to Hong Kong. They see parallels between Russia and China and warn of the political and military threat that emanates from them. They are confirmed by China's de facto support for Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The Chinese ambassador to France recently denied the sovereignty of the Baltic states. Such statements reinforce the Lithuanians' critical attitude toward China.

Valentin Krüsmann, Julia Langbein, Beril Ocaklı, Tamás Peragovics
The New Silk Road Ten Years On
Results from Hungary, Serbia, Georgia, and Kazakhstan

It has been said that the New Silk Road allows China to assert its interests by financing and implementing major infrastructure projects. Further, within its partner countries, China raised expectations of "win-win" situations that were not fulfilled. Results in Hungary, Serbia, Georgia, and Kazakhstan show that local actors and conditions influence Chinese engagement more than was previously assumed. China is expanding its presence in countries and regions that are also of particular interest to Russia. By doing so, it is becoming a competitor for Russia, not a partner.