



RESEARCH PAPER

Geopolitical Implications of the Russia-China Nexus: Power Dynamics and Regional Impact in Central Asia (2003-2023)

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ABSTRACT

The Russia-China strategic cooperation, spanning from 2003 to 2023, has been making a significant impact on Central Asia's geopolitical landscape. The abundant energy resources and commercial routes of the region further make focus of their collaboration. The study analyzed Central Asia's power dynamics and alliance formations, the economic and security ramifications of multilateral institutions, and the broader implications of the alliance's growing regional and global prominence. Both, standard and emergent approaches with inductive technique were employed to integrate the literary studies with international concepts, which offers a detailed understanding of emerging patterns and their regional implications. A thematic analysis assesses the geopolitical, economic, and security aspects of the Russia-China alliance. Understanding these dynamics is vital for assessing the changing character of regional geopolitics in Central Asia, the rapid nature of the alliance, and the significant consequences to the United States of America.

Keywords: Sino-Russian Relations, International Political Economy, Strategic Partnerships, Regional Alliance, Geopolitical Strategies

Introduction

Over the last two decades, Russia-China collaboration has transformed Central Asia. This alliance is shaped by history, culture, and strategic goals. Their partnership influences power dynamics and economic growth in the region. Both nations seek greater influence in a historically contested area. Their collaboration now characterizes Central Asia's changing geopolitical and economic landscape.

The Russia-China relationship has fundamentally altered regional power balances. Central Asia is at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Russia's historical prominence originates from its imperial and Soviet histories (Hymen, 1993). This legacy continues to influence the region's geopolitical landscape. Meanwhile, China's economic growth has altered the regional equilibrium (Pascha, 2020). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) illustrates China's increasing strategic importance. Central Asia's membership in the BRI demonstrates its significance in Beijing's aspirations. Infrastructure projects and economic linkages boost China's footprint in the region (Yaseen, Muzaffar & Shahbaz, 2023; Rolland, 2017).

Russia and China's relationship extends beyond economics to security concerns. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) are important venues. These entities foster regional integration and security cooperation (Alimov, 2018; Kirkham, 2016). They play an important role in establishing economic cooperation and stability. Their influence underlines Moscow and Beijing's expanding geopolitical alliance in Central Asia.

The Russia-China cooperation has prompted significant economic changes in the region. Chinese investment and trade expansion have transformed Central Asia's economy

(Aksenov et al., 2023). Infrastructure developments, such as transport and energy networks, improve regional connection. These projects help Central Asia into larger global markets. Economic transformations, on the other hand, bring with them strategic and regional adaptations. Nations face challenges as their economic and political orientations evolve.

The Russian-Chinese axis has transformed Central Asia's security situation. Their collaboration is bolstered by joint military training and intelligence exchange from many perspectives (Roseth, 2019). Moscow and Beijing's cooperation underlines their shared interest in regional stability. Their alliance seeks to tackle external dangers while safeguarding security. The international response to their collaboration exemplifies strategic complexities. The United States reacts cautiously, while the European Union and India assess the broader implications (Stromseth, 2019; White House, 2017; Batool, Muzaffar, 2024.). Their remarks raise concerns about Russia and China's growing influence. The extension of this cooperation has implications for global power dynamics and strategic calculations.

The research effort investigates the geopolitical consequences of the Russia-China nexus in Central Asia. It focuses on regional power dynamics. The study centers on new alliances and regional stability. It also assesses the functions of international organizations like the SCO and the EAEU. Global reactions to the Russia-China relationship are also discussed. The findings contribute to our understanding of Central Asia's geopolitical landscape. These findings are essential for legislatures creating a global strategy. Understanding these dynamics helps stakeholders navigate changing power systems.

Literature Review

Critics in the West have frequently expressed worries about mutual mistrust and conflicts of interest in the Sino-Russian relationship, questioning whether it is merely a ruse for personal conflict or a cover for underlying problems. While some think China poses a threat to Russia, others suggest that a good bilateral agenda has alleviated Moscow's fears (MacDonald & Parent, 2018). These conflicting opinions highlight the difficulties of the Sino-Russian relationship.

According to Thornton (1995), Russia's internal differences aggravate the situation, with some factions demanding a more moderate stance and others keeping authority over former Soviet territory. Central Asian leaders strike a balance between independence and appeasing Russia, a relationship complicated by asymmetrical reliance, historical linkages, economic concerns, and opposing ideological viewpoints. China's tremendous economic growth and military modernization influence geopolitical dynamics, whilst Russia seeks importance. China's development in Asia creates new problems for Asian countries and the United States. Despite partnering with its neighbors, China should not be feared or opposed. Realist theory and liberal institutionalism are insufficient for navigating the region, thus analysts must use various tools. Central Asia's nation-building, local conflicts, and geopolitical competition all impede regionalist aspirations. States embrace macro-regional structures such as the SCO, Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which strengthen regime security (Allison, 2008).

Russia and China's strategic collaboration poses a serious threat to the West, as their military activity and assertiveness in global regions have the potential to dramatically damage European security and strain the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) attitude. China's response to the Ukraine war, inspired by Sino-Russian relations, is consistent with its handling of Sino-Russian relations throughout the last few decades (Yaseen, Muzaffar & Aman, 2022). However, 2022 has shown the limits of the Sino-Russian cooperation and the compatibility of their visions of a desired

international order. China's response to the crisis might have serious economic, political, and security ramifications, including trade dynamics, energy supply interruptions, geopolitical realignments, and strained diplomatic relationships. The conflict's aftermath could have an impact on regional defense cooperation and alliances, potentially changing security plans and partnerships (Stallard&Rozman, 2023).

There lies research gap in various perspectives to judge the emerging nature and possible depth of the alliance between Russia and China to safeguard their mutual interests and reduce the US dominance in Central Asia, particularly and worldwide, generally. China's growing economic influence challenges Russia's traditions and security dominance in Central Asia and Russia's military and technological advancements surpass China's such developments. Yet, both are committed to help each other in the weaker fields. Limited research examined the consequential impact of the Ukraine War in the region, with one part of the alliance as direct invader. The developing role of the regional cooperation organizations and changing nature of interdependence of regional countries also needs to be explored.

Material and Methods

This study used a mixed-methods approach to investigate the geopolitical ramifications of the Russia-China nexus in Central Asia from 2003 to 2023. It used literature review, data analysis, and deduction. This approach explains power shifts in the region. Economic changes reflect the alliance's growing influence. Security arrangements adapt to geopolitical transformations rapidly. It incorporates a variety of theoretical frameworks, including both standard and emergent approaches. Realism and Neorealism are traditional theories that help us comprehend the alliance's structural origins and security interdependence. Emerging theories, such as Regional Security Complex Theory and Geoeconomics, provide new perspectives on regional security dynamics and economic policies. To achieve a complete knowledge, an inductive technique integrates literary studies with international relations concepts, which offers a detailed understanding of emerging patterns and their regional implications. The data is presented in flowcharts, graphs, and statistics tables, while thematic analysis synthesizes qualitative data from governmental documents, scholarly articles, and media stories. The work acknowledges limitations such as data accessibility and trustworthiness, and follows ethical principles when using secondary data.

Results and Discussion

Historical Context and Evolution of the Nexus

Sino-Russian Relations from Cultural Affinities to Security Alliances:

The investigation examined China and Russia's intricate histories and cultural relations. It investigated strategic ties formed via mutual migration and shared customs. Diplomatic institutions played an important part in their expanding relationship. Economic interdependence boosted their collaboration over time. Military collaborations strengthened their strategic alignment.

The history of migration between Russia and China is divided into five periods: pre-1650s, 1650s-1860s, 1860s-1920s, 1930s-1980s, and since the 1990s. Prior to the 1650s, there were irregular exchanges and an increase in trade, however migration decreased between the 1930s and 1980s due to political supremacy. Since the 1990s, Russian migration to China has increased, cementing national identities and promoting ethnic integration. Both great nations are shifting to capitalism and controlling substantial regions. Knowledge sharing is influenced by its cultural elements, which include both universalist and particularist cultures. Understanding cultural differences is critical for

international business (Kireev, 2016). Miasnikov (1987) emphasizes almost 400 years of difficult diplomatic relations between Russia and China, which began in 1608, with territorial disputes in the 17th century. Territorial conflicts, a Russo-Chinese Agreement, and ideological differences all contributed to a Sino-Soviet split in the twentieth century. Currently, the Sino-Russian alliance promotes military cooperation, economic collaboration, and shared geopolitical goals.

Hsu and Soong (2014) and Muzaffar and Khan, (2016) analyze Sino-Russian ties after the Cold War, with a focus on Moscow's interests in Northeast Asia and energy resources. The strategic alliance has strengthened political connections, facilitated conflict settlement, and expanded bilateral trade. Aksenov et al. (2023) underline the alliance's influence on Europe and the United States due to international sanctions. While Russia's efforts have little impact on the United States, they cause disruptions in the global supply chain, resulting in higher commodity prices in Europe. The Belt and Road Initiative, as well as the increased Sino-Russian connection, provide European countries with long-term opportunities. MacFarlane (2006) investigates the post-Cold War Sino-Russian rapprochement as impacted by mutual views and ideological variables. Dueben (2013) underlines the persistent and expanded Sino-Russian reconciliation as a result of considerable institution-building between the countries, which has transformed top-level encounters, increased their frequency, and broadened possibilities for communication and collaboration between China and Russia.

According to Lukin (2021), the relationship between Russia and China has greatly strengthened since the early 2000s, with China being Russia's top commercial partner in 2009. In 2018, bilateral trade exceeded \$100 billion USD. This shift was especially significant following the Ukraine conflict in 2014, when Russia sought a strong ally to fight Western pressure and protect its market dominance. China intended to get access to Russia's natural resources, highlighting the necessity of Sino-Russian economic cooperation. Economic links between the two countries grew, with China becoming a key consumer for Russia, increasing crude oil imports and natural gas through projects such as the Russian Power of Siberia pipeline. Russia provided food and liquefied natural gas to China. The construction of automotive and rail bridges across the Amur River underscored their growing economic isolation from the United States, promoting interest in Russian commodities as a more secure supply in the face of naval blockades or trade embargoes.

Dynamic growth in trade: Since the mid-2000s, China has become a significant trading partner for Russia, with Russia-China trade surpassing Russia-Germany trade by 2010.

Table 1
Russian trade with China growth in billions of US\$

Year	Russia-China Trade (US\$ Billion)	Russia-Germany Trade (US\$ Billion)	China's Share in Russia's Imports (%)	China's Share in Russia's Exports (%)	Russia's Share in China's Turnover (%)
2005	29.1	57.3	-	-	2.5
2010	59.3	57.2	-	-	2.8
2015	68.0	45.1	-	-	3.1
2020	107.8	49.1	-	-	3.5
2022	190.3	56.3	-	-	4.0
2023	240.1	50.2	36.5	30.5	4.2

Source: Adapted from Kluge (2024), and developed by the authors.

The table illustrates that Russia-China commerce increased dramatically after the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, with China accounting for 36.5% of Russia's imports and 30.5% of its exports by 2023. Despite this expansion, Russia's trade portion of China's turnover has risen from 2.5% to more than 4% after 2022. The trade relationship has

become increasingly unequal, with Russia acquiring high-value, technology-intensive exports like machinery and electronics while exporting mostly fossil fuels, metals, and agricultural products. The trade momentarily plummeted during the invasion and Western sanctions, but it quickly recovered, hitting a record high of \$8.8 billion by December 2022. Chinese exports to Russia increased in the second half of 2023, particularly in vehicles, due to the collapse of Russia's domestic production capacity and the withdrawal of Western automakers.

Despite the anticipated stronger economic ties, Moscow had difficulty in obtaining significant Chinese investment. Chinese businesspeople saw joining the Russian market as high-risk due to low profit margins, despite their interest in Russia's natural resources such as hydrocarbons, wood, and minerals, which were also available in neighboring nations. Military cooperation played an important role in Russia-China's strategic relationship. Collaborative exercises began in 1981, gained traction in 2005, and took a significant turn in 2018 when China joined in Russia's Vostok strategic exercises (Roseth, 2019). However, tensions heightened when air forces collided over critical regions such as the Takeshima islands in July 2019, revealing potential obstacles to the Sino-Russian military cooperation.

There is some disagreement about whether better relations between Moscow and Beijing will lead to a long-term Security partnership (Russian officials refer to them as "allies" when assessing the scope of their strategic partnership). Furthermore, a lack of transportation and energy infrastructure, hazardous terrain, and harsh winters impede Russia's trading appeal (Denisov et al., 2021). Furthermore, while Russia has traditionally been a major arms supplier to India, in the 2010s, Moscow began to contemplate selling its most advanced conventional weaponry, fighter jets, and surface-to-air missile systems to China. Beyond armament, Moscow and Beijing expanded their cooperation into important sectors, with Russia promising to help China develop the Missile Attack Early Warning System (EWS), which is critical to both nations' strategic deterrence capabilities (Krummenacher&Schmeidl, 1997; Kulacki, 2016).

Cultural, Economic, and Security Dynamics in Central Asia

This section of the research explored Central Asia's landscape dynamics, focusing on Russia-China collaboration, socio-cultural exchanges, and educational initiatives. It examined economic integration, trade patterns, infrastructure projects, and energy resource exploitation within the Belt and Road Initiative.

Following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Central Asian nations sought collaboration and integration within and outside the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Initially, efforts were aimed at building global organizations, coordinating economic reforms, and developing a single language. Progress, however, was hampered by Russia's reliance and desire for individual independence. Economic disparities, little diversification, and weak economic ties, which were primarily dependent on Russia, remained a hurdle. The ruble zone discussion underlined Moscow's resistance to give authority, which resulted in hyperinflation and economic setbacks. Ethnic variety, particularly the Russian and Uzbek diasporas, caused problems with borders, language, and ethnic hostilities. Geographic proximity, economic interdependence, military presence, and historical linkages have all had an impact on Russia-Central Asia relations (Hyman, 1993; Menon, 1995).

The Sino-Russian relationship in Northeast Asia combines collaboration, competitiveness, and strategic maneuvering. Both countries share a long border and seek to diminish American influence. Tensions remain high following the collapse of the Soviet Union, resulting in fresh conflicts and disputes throughout Central Asia and the post-Soviet world. Emerging Eurasian countries, including Russia, China, India, Turkey, and Iran, are

challenging the US-led global system and emphasizing regional cooperation. President Xi Jinping announced the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013 to enhance global economic, infrastructure, and cultural connections along the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The BRI coincides with global development goals by fostering long-term growth and elevating impoverished regions. Despite criticism and regional disagreements, the BRI demonstrates China's commitment to joint development and overcoming geopolitical problems. essential Asia is essential to their bloc building and external policy projection, reflecting Russia's historical engagements and current reorientation towards the Asia-Pacific region (Lukin, 2018; Samay, 2022). According to Rolland (2017), the BRI aspires to improve regional connectivity across the world's largest continent by establishing a huge network of physical and intangible infrastructures. The United States has paid little attention to the Belt and Road Initiative, instead focused on concerns such as the South China Sea and the Korean Peninsula. The Chinese government has made significant investments in the BRI, with twelve financial institutions backing it. The current outlay is approximately \$200 billion USD, with 64 billion-dollar deals inked. Central Asian countries, which are wealthy in minerals and energy resources, have traditionally encouraged cross-border trade. However, economic links remain underdeveloped as a result of differing recovery strategies, a reliance on Russia, discrepancies in indicators, geopolitical interests, political instability, and overlapping global political interests. To achieve deeper economic integration, coordinated initiatives such as industrial clustering are required, with a focus on common goals and united trade and economic spaces (Umarkulov, 2018).

According to Pascha (2020), the EU is improving infrastructure connectivity with East Asian nations such as China and Japan by expanding the BRI and Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). The BRI aspires to strengthen international trade channels, however it has received criticism from countries such as the United States for its execution, risk factors, debt, and lack of transparency. Concerns regarding sustainability and geopolitical ramifications continue to arise. Debt repayment and potential compromises also create uncertainty. The success of the BRI might have a substantial impact on international trade dynamics.

Multilateral Organizations and Regional Integration

Investigating how regional integration, economic cooperation, and security arrangements among member states are promoted by multilateral organizations such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Russia and China's "dragon bear" cooperation is gaining traction in regional security forums and economic ties, attracting international attention. China spends substantially in Geneva's Standard Development Organizations (SDOs), such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), which establish global technical norms. Despite their distinct economic frameworks, both countries seek for tougher regulations on public subsidies, demonstrating commonalities in goals. China and Russia lag behind major Western nations in financial contributions to United Nations (UN) agencies, with China emphasizing on collective rights and Russia on information security. Both countries send personnel to UN entities to increase their influence. The SCO is gaining traction because to its financial resources, which contribute to regional communication infrastructure and job prospects. Despite its modest improvement, the SCO's usefulness in conflict avoidance remains unknown. The SCO has parallel objectives with the West and prefers cooperation over confrontation on the world scene (Matveeva&Giustozzi, 2008).

The Security Council of Central Asia (SCO) is a regional group that addresses non-traditional security challenges in Central Asia, with a focus on maintaining regimes and combating the 'three evils' (terrorism, extremism, and separatism) while preserving

sovereignty. Through an elite-driven form of regional cooperation, the SCO has effectively persuaded Central Asian nations to handle security concerns while preserving their sovereignty. However, the next 5-10 years are critical for the SCO's expansion, as success is required in a variety of areas to establish itself as a key regional organ of cooperation in Central Asia (Aris, 2009). Kirkham (2016) investigated the dynamics of the SCO and CSTO, two Eurasian macro-regional organizations, concentrating on their "protective integration" function. It emphasizes the relevance of regional institutional architecture while raising concerns about potential hegemonic regionalism promoted by big countries such as China and Russia. The neo-Gramscian approach investigates the EAEU's potential as a Russian-led counter-hegemonic movement, concentrating on institutionalisation and potential inefficiencies caused by state capitalism norms. The global international relations landscape is experiencing transformation, with interconnection, technology improvements, and regional integration affecting larger regions. The Greater Eurasian Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a prime example of a hybrid model for interstate regional cooperation, bringing four nuclear countries together and strengthening its strategic position. Its overall approach prioritizes transportation development, trade facilitation, and strategic collaboration (Alimov, 2018).

SCO member states' trade volumes and economic impact: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has seen a major increase in mutual commerce among its member states, owing to China's economic expansion. In 2000, trade volumes totaled only \$30.33 billion, with Russia, China, and Kazakhstan contributing the most. By 2015, mutual commerce has increased sevenfold to \$219.53 billion, with China's part growing dramatically. The addition of India and Pakistan in 2017 increased the scale of mutual commerce, which reached \$602.94 billion by 2019. Trade dynamics between China and other SCO member nations improved considerably following the organization's inception, with Chinese trade more than doubling by 2017.

Table 2
Volume of mutual trade between SCO member states (2000-2019)

Year	Trade Volume (US\$ Billion)	Key Events Impacting Trade
2000	10.5	Baseline Year
2007	65.1	Trade increased 6.2 times compared to 2000
2008	61.54	Global Financial Crisis caused a decline
2014	129.82	Gradual recovery and increased trade
2015	125.3	Impact of Ukraine crisis & Western sanctions on Russia
2017	180.5	India and Pakistan joined the SCO, trade volume doubled
2019	278.3	Trade reached 26.5 times the 2000 level, but growth slowed due to global economic challenges

Source: Adapted from Li & Wang (2021), and developed by the authors.

Table 2 in the referenced paper most likely illustrates the dynamics of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)'s large growth in bilateral trade volumes between 2000 and 2019. The graph depicts a rapid increasing trajectory, with an average yearly growth rate of 31.8%. By 2007, trade had increased dramatically, reaching 6.2 times the baseline year. However, the 2008 global financial crisis caused a dramatic reduction in commerce, which fell to US\$ 61.54 billion. Following a recovery period, trade volumes climbed again, reaching US\$ 129.82 billion by 2014. However, the growth rate was slower, averaging about 3.6% each year. The graph may possibly indicate a modest decrease around 2015 as a result of the Ukraine crisis and Western sanctions on Russia. The entrance of India and Pakistan in 2017 resulted in a considerable increase in trade volume,

more than doubling from 2016 to 2017. Trade volumes were nearly 26.5 times higher in 2019 than in 2000, despite a 1.5% growth rate due to global economic concerns.

Table 3
The mutual trade turnover between the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2019 in US dollars

Export/Import	China	Russia	Kazakhstan	Uzbekistan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	India	Pakistan	Total Exports
China	/	49,484	12,807	5,044	6,312	1,612	74,924	16,183	166,368
Russia	57,321	/	14,287	3,908	1,559	953	7,308	169	85,506
Kazakhstan	7,823	5,602	/	1,981	604	653	1,573	2	18,239
Uzbekistan	1,763	2,035	1,206	/	634	190	10	94	5,931
Kyrgyzstan	81	281	347	139	/	57	3	2	911
Tajikistan	84	37	103	144	10	/	0.3	0.1	380
India	17,279	2,871	194	2	/	/	/	/	21,777
Pakistan	2,037	141	83	22	2	/	66	/	2,360
Total Imports	86,389	60,452	29,027	11,433	9,152	3,498	83,885	17,636	301,472
Consolidated Trade Turnover	252,757	145,958	47,265	17,365	10,062	3,878	105,662	19,996	602,945
Specific Gravity (%)	41.9	24.2	7.8	2.9	1.7	0.7	17.5	3.3	100

Source: Adapted from Li & Wang (2021), and developed by the authors.

The table provides a comprehensive examination of trade interactions between Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states, with a focus on imports and exports. The data is grouped by nation and includes the total value of imports and exports, consolidated trade turnover, and specific gravity. China is the main trading partner, accounting for 41.9% of all SCO commerce. Russia has the second-largest trade turnover, with exports of \$85.506 billion and imports of \$60.452 billion. India, a new member, has a considerable trade volume of \$105.662 billion, with exports of \$21.777 billion and imports of \$83.885 billion. Kazakhstan, a smaller member, accounts for 7.8% of overall SCO commerce, with exports to other members reaching \$18.239 billion and imports totaling \$29.027 billion. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have smaller trade volumes inside the SCO. Tajikistan and Pakistan also contribute less to overall commerce volume. China and Russia lead, accounting for around two-thirds of the total.

Impact of SCO free trade area: The Economic Community of South East Asian Nations (ECOSOC) has seen GDP and trade growth. Member nations like China and Russia benefit from economic cooperation. India has also gained from regional integration within the organization. Non-SCO regions such as NAFTA and the EU faced minor GDP losses. Trade diversions and competitive pressures may have contributed to these declines. China's significant welfare increase underscores its regional influence.

Table 4
The SCO's Free Trade Area's effects on the member nations' macroeconomic

Country	Change of GDP, %	Change of Import, %	Change of Export, %	Change of Welfare, Million US dollars
China	0.25	0.59	0.69	1389.3
Russia	0.17	0.96	1.55	520.9
Kazakhstan	-0.01	0.87	1.38	23.5
Kyrgyzstan	-0.02	4.42	4.07	15.4
Tajikistan	0.09	1.13	1.71	5.5
Uzbekistan	0.08	0.95	1.42	18.2
India	0.09	2.14	2.11	451.9
Pakistan	-0.01	3.72	2.87	81.1

NAFTA	-0.02	-0.03	-0.03	-268.0
EU	-0.03	-0.04	-0.04	-796.6
Other countries of the world	-0.04	-0.05	-0.07	-9.9

Source: Adapted from Li & Wang (2021), and developed by the authors.

The table examines the SCO's economic impact on different countries. It highlights GDP growth and shifts in imports and exports. Welfare changes are also considered in the analysis. The data likely show the effects of SCO trade policies. Economic agreements and cooperation may have influenced these results. Key findings include China's GDP increase of 0.25%, Russia's GDP increase of 0.17%, Kazakhstan's GDP decrease of 0.01%, Kyrgyzstan's GDP decrease of 0.02%, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan's modest GDP increase of 0.09%, India's GDP increase of 0.09%, Pakistan's slight decrease in GDP by 0.01%, the NAFTA region's GDP decrease of 0.02%, the EU's decline of 0.03%, and other countries experiencing a 0.04% decrease in GDP. The research reveals that the SCO's economic operations could have a substantial impact on member countries and other global regions. The Greater Eurasian Partnership, a joint initiative of the EAEU and the BRI, has stepped up its integration efforts to challenge China's growing influence. The EAEU intends to integrate Europe and Asia economically, primarily through logistics and infrastructure. However, the effort was launched amid the Russian-Ukraine crisis, and the mutual embargo between Russia and the EU made cooperation difficult.

Global Responses and Influence

Analyzing how other major international and regional players including the US, the EU, India, and others have responded to the expanding sway of the China-Russian alliance in Central Asia and the consequences this has for world geopolitics. According to Korotayev and Grinin (2012), the Sino-Russian relationship is being reassessed due to deteriorating US-Russia relations and complicated dynamics. Russia and China are drawn to one other as potential counterbalances to the United States, despite concerns about Taiwan and China's scepticism of the close alliance. Geopolitical disputes have a lengthy history. Labor movement to Russia helps to ease Central Asia's social and political volatility, but a global economic downturn may interrupt this mobility, worsening internal social and political turmoil. Addressing the growing threat requires coordinated action by Central Asian states, Russia, China, the EU, and the United States. Collaboration through institutions such as the SCO, EAEU, and CSTO, with prospective involvement of India and Pakistan, is critical. Combating the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is a top priority for Central Asia, Russia, China, and European countries (Yaseen, Muzaffar & Naeem, 2019; Yaseen, Muzaffar & Naseem, 2018). Strategic planning and collaboration are required to effectively combat this huge danger (Grinin&Korotayev, 2014). The American Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis and Starr (2005) stressed the significance of distinguishing Central Asia from the Caucasus and reassessing the Caspian's role in 'Eurasia'. They aspired to turn Afghanistan and its surroundings into 'Greater Central Asia', with safe sovereignties and open governance. However, issues occurred as a result of the United States' strategic compartmentalization and concerns over the Ferghana Valley. Russia's role helps to stabilize Central Asia, but cooperative economic projects and increased cooperation among Russia, China, the United States, and Central Asian countries are needed to ensure regional stability. The Sino-Russian alliance threatens the post-Cold War international order, as the region remains at the margins of global economic ambitions (Akaev&Pantin, 2014).

Discussion

The Sino-Russian relationship has grown significantly, particularly in trade, driven by shared interests that exceed existing differences. China has become Russia's principal trading partner, with trade volumes exceeding \$100 billion USD by 2018 and continuing to rise, particularly following the Ukraine conflict in 2014. Despite the difficulties in bringing

major Chinese investment into Russia due to perceived market risks, both countries have shown a strong commitment to addressing these obstacles. Military cooperation between Russia and China has become an important component of their strategic partnership, driven by shared worries about Western military dominance, particularly from the United States.

China's involvement in Russia's Vostok drills in 2018 enhances cooperation. These exercises also demonstrate their common position against external threats. Cultural linkages and shared historical experiences enhance Sino-Russian cooperation. Several bilateral and multilateral platforms facilitate conflict settlement and policy collaboration. Despite their differences, both nations align their interests when confronted with common difficulties. Economically, Russia and China regard interdependence as critical to their national interests. Military fears about Western influence motivate their strategic alliance.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan cooperate with China on BRI projects. Kyrgyzstan deepens connections with Russia through infrastructure and trade agreements. The United States maintains its influence in Central Asia through military relations. The European Union supports economic unity through trade measures. India strikes a balance between collaboration with the United States and engagement with the SCO. Pakistan remains strategically engaged with the US. China's Belt and Road Initiative strengthens Central Asia's linkages to Europe. Russia's energy exports have a global impact on geopolitical alignments.

Shifting trade dynamics and geopolitical implications in Japan and Australia:

The global trade landscape has seen significant shifts in recent years, with major economies like Japan and Australia reevaluating and adjusting their trade relationships with key partners such as the United States and China.

Table 5
Japan's overall trade volume with the United States and China in 2020

Trade	US (Billion US\$)	China (Billion US\$)
Exports	102.1	163.85
Imports	150.1	141.4

Source: Adapted from Shahzad& Khan (2022), and made by the authors.

Table 5 depicts the trade volume between Japan and its two main trading partners, the United States and China, for 2020. The data show how Japan's trade is split between these two major economies, emphasizing the relative importance of each partner in Japan's overall trading portfolio. The data could disclose whether Japan relies more on trade with the United States or China, providing insights into Japan's economic strategy and geopolitical alliances.

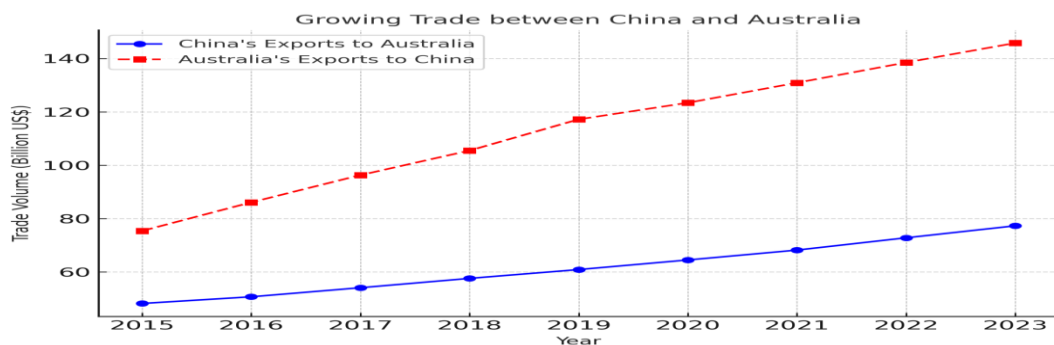


Figure 1. Growing trade between China and Australia. Source: Adapted from Shahzad& Khan (2022), and redeveloped by the authors.

Figure 1 shows the increasing trade volume between China and Australia over a specified period. It reflects the deepening economic ties between the two countries, likely

driven by Australia's export of raw materials and China's demand for these resources. The trend may indicate how Australia's economy has become increasingly integrated with China's, affecting its trade policies and potentially its geopolitical stance.

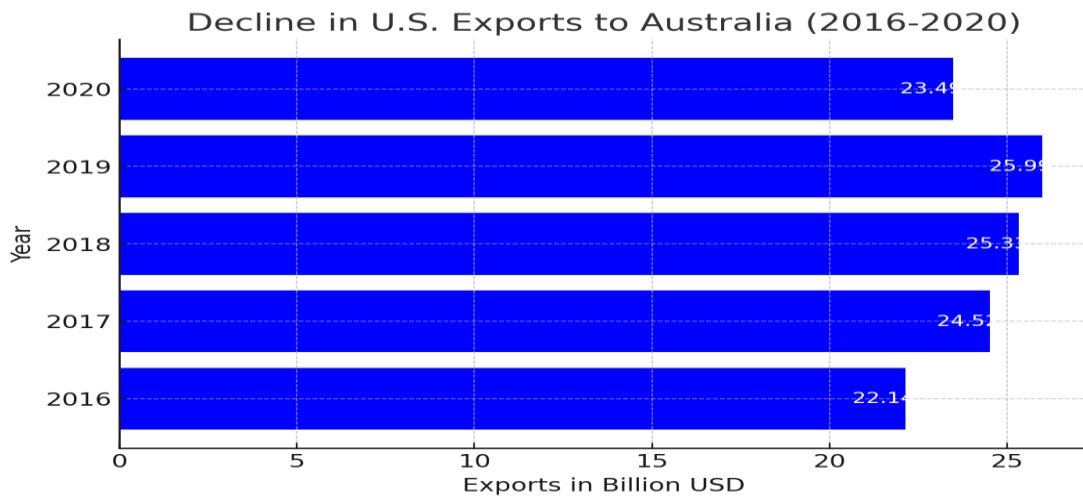


Figure 2. Australia has seen a decline in US exports over the past five years. Source: Adapted from Shahzad& Khan (2022), and redeveloped by the authors.

Figure 2 presents the trend of US exports to Australia, showing a decline over the past five years. The data could reflect shifting trade relationships, possibly due to Australia's growing trade with other countries, like China. This decline might suggest a weakening of economic ties between the US and Australia, which could have broader implications for their bilateral relations and US influence in the region.

Total Trade Volume Comparison (in Billion US\$)

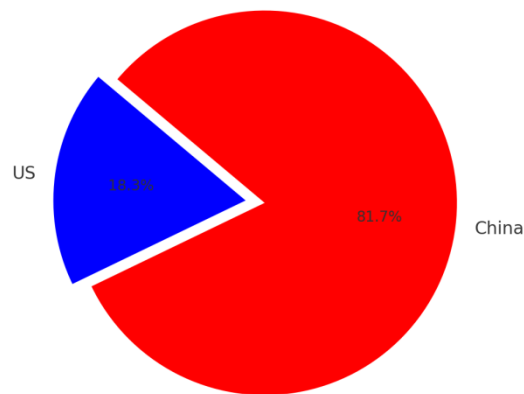


Figure 3. China and the United States' overall trade volume with Australia. Source: Adapted from Shahzad& Khan (2022).

Figure 3 compares Australia's overall trade volume to its two biggest trading partners, China and the United States. It clearly shows how Australia's commerce is balanced (or lopsided) between these two powers. The graph can show whether China has surpassed the United States as Australia's main trading partner, which could have substantial economic and geopolitical consequences, altering Australia's foreign policy and strategic choices. These changing trade patterns not only reflect changes in economic relationships, but they also have important geopolitical repercussions. As Japan and Australia manage their relationships with the United States and China, the consequences are likely to have an impact on regional stability and the global order.

The growing Sino-Russian partnership in Central Asia has prompted key powers to reconsider their tactics. The US prioritizes counterterrorism and security through military outposts. The EU focuses on economic cooperation and infrastructure development. India maintains balance in its relations with Russia and China. Turkey strengthens its commercial and political links in order to gain more regional influence. Iran cooperates with both countries while pursuing its own objectives. China and Russia's expanding influence on trade and security. These changes necessitate strategic planning to meet regional issues.

Conclusion

The Russia-China alliance in Central Asia is a strategic move aimed at countering US dominance. Both nations leverage their military and economic strengths to reshape power dynamics. This partnership grows stronger as the US faces economic challenges. Neorealism explains their cooperation by highlighting structural factors that drive states to align. Shared threats push Russia and China to strengthen their geopolitical position.

The Regional Security Complex Theory explains how security in neighboring states becomes interconnected. Central Asian nations increasingly link their security to Russia and China. This shift challenges US influence in the region. The deepening alliance affects the strategic calculations of these states. Many now align more closely with Moscow and Beijing. Geo-economics and Economic Statecraft highlight the use of economic tools in diplomacy. Russia and China invest heavily in infrastructure to expand influence. Trade agreements further integrate Central Asia into their economic sphere. This economic dependence reduces the appeal of US partnerships. Over time, regional states favor Russian and Chinese models over Western alternatives.

Recommendations

The growing Russia-China alliance presents a substantial challenge to US interests. This collaboration has the potential to destabilize regional stability and heighten global tension. To address these concerns, the US must reconsider its strategic strategy. Economic engagement can help to sustain influence in Central Asia. Renewing security cooperation with regional partners is also critical. To respond to evolving power dynamics, a flexible diplomatic approach is required. Multilateral participation can help to strengthen alliances. Preventative steps should be implemented to avoid inadvertent escalation. The US can better understand power transitions by combining concepts from Realism and Neorealism. The Regional Security Complex Theory emphasizes the need for proactive security policy. Geo-economics and Economic Statecraft both highlight the importance of economic means in sustaining influence. A well-rounded approach can assist the US traverse Central Asia and avoid further geopolitical turmoil. However, this emerging alliance between Moscow and Beijing needs not to hit the strategic concerns of US, because such measures which pose threats to the sensitive political, economic, and security interests of US, could escalate the regional and global conflicts in various spheres.

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