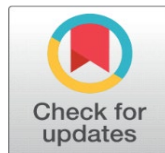
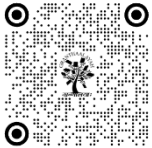


RUSSIA-CHINA COOPERATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST: STRATEGIC ALLIANCES AND ECONOMIC INFLUENCE IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

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ABSTRACT

Russia and China deepen Middle Eastern cooperation as the powers work to shift global balance of power. Both wield similar tools of diplomacy, economics, and security to underwrite their position throughout the region. It is an alliance not based on formal treaties but rather coordinated policies and shared presidential interests in counteracting the West. Russia has long-standing military and energy relationships with countries including Iran and Syria, using arms sales and joint projects for infrastructure to cement access and expand diplomatic ties. With its Belt and Road Initiative, port development, and energy contracts, China focuses on investment and trade and provides capital. Such actions breed trust and develop financial dependencies that expand China's leverage. Such coordination constricts the space for Western-led sanctions and facilitates alternative trajectories for regional players. In many cases, Middle Eastern governments leverage engagement with the Russians and the Chinese to negotiate better terms with Western partners. Though the two powers come to the region with different sets of tools, their strategies often overlap. "Less involved in armed conflict, China supports post-conflict reconstruction." Russia, by contrast, uses limited military power — and then negotiates political settlements. These roles have a symbiotic relationship, enabling them both to thrive without competing against one another. This cooperation is restructuring economic flows, and decision-making, across oil markets, telecommunications, and defence procurement. This allows more acceptance of non-Western governance models. Hence the Middle East is an important arena of multipolarity in practice. The results are far from certain, but the expanding footprint of Russia and China in the region has long-term implications for global diplomacy and trade routes — with a lingering counterbalance wherever Western influence wanes or is contested. A sample of 239 was collected to find the result of the study. The factors that impact Strategic Alliances and Economic Influence of Russia & China cooperation in a Multipolar World are Geopolitical Shifts and Strategic Objectives, Economic Cooperation and Trade, Military and Security Cooperation, and Diplomatic Influence.

Keywords: Russia-China Relations, Middle East, Strategic Alliances, Economic Influence, Multipolar World, Belt and Road Initiative, Military Cooperation, Regional Power, Western Influence, Geopolitical Strategy

1. INTRODUCTION

China did not enter the Middle East via the commonly assumed Soviet portals. China's early diplomatic interest in the region was evident at the Bandung Conference in 1955. When the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser asked China for military assistance to rebutting Israeli strikes on Gaza, Zhou Enlai deferred to the Soviet Union. He brokered mediation with Moscow, leading to the Czechoslovak-Egyptian arms deal that began Egypt's military alignment with the Soviet bloc. That development extended Soviet influence throughout Egypt, the Middle East and even into Africa, laying groundwork for Russia's later strategic footprint (Gorenburg, 2019). Multilateral frameworks provide China and Russia with a wider space in which to engage. Yet it is the bilateral ties that most of their influence in the Middle East manifests

through. From energy to trade, tourism, finance and infrastructure development. In these two domains, both governments establish stable partnerships with regional actors. Their interests in military technology, cybersecurity and defence logistics have made Western capitals nervous. These alliances do not only speak of the supply and demand economy but of ideological alignments as well.

Russia-China relationship is a significant and enduring partnership grounded in shared normative values rather than just strategic convenience. Despite differing interests and cultural identities, both countries resist Western influence and promote sovereignty and non-interference. The partnership is shaped by a dynamic of securitization and de-securitization, particularly in economic relations. Russia seeks to define an Asian identity in relation to China, while maintaining broader Asian engagements. Their cooperation increasingly influences global governance, with both acting as norm-makers in international institutions. The study underscores that their interdependence has far-reaching implications beyond bilateral ties. (Wishnick, 2017).

By 1985, trade between China and Middle Eastern states was just \$1.7 billion. China's initial outreach was primarily aimed at Palestinian leftist movements, technical cooperation and scholarships. China was not an ideological expansionist like the Soviet Union and its use of party influence. It emphasized pragmatic, issue-oriented relationships because of domestic restrictions. Now, the state of the world in the wake of a Russian invasion of Ukraine and the multipolarity has been reaffirmed anew with cooperation between Russia and China, who also positioned themselves as relevant players in the Middle East.

The Middle East and North Africa region has historically been a battleground for influence between the Soviet Union and China. Events like the Israel-Hamas conflict, as well as Houthi forces attacks on commercial routes in the Red Sea, have opened space for China and for Russia to test their diplomatic moves. In both governments' narratives, the incident was an opportunity to draw attention to perceived failings of United States foreign policy and to proclaim their claims to be stabilising actors. Although neither provided direct military support, both states took the opportunity of the crisis to advocate for dialogue and call for ceasefires and offered to cooperate with international partners on security maintenance (Ozsaglam, 2019).

Dynamic security conditions and an increase in regional conflicts call for flexibility. China and Russia intend for their relationship to be regarded not only as an economic partnership, but also a political actor that could help regional stability without getting involved in domestic politics. Their approach distinguishes them from the United States and Europe, which tend to tie cooperation to governance reforms or human rights benchmarks. This multipolar arrangement enhances China and Russia's leverage by preventing them from competing directly with one another. Russia, not as able in economic terms, maintains influence through long-standing military relationships and energy exports. They redefine how power works in the Middle East by operating through different channels while pursuing overlapping outcomes, with Russia and China at the same table negotiating their newly brokered arrangements. They provide alternatives to traditional Western partnerships, especially for states that face diplomatic isolation or desire a non-interventionist ally. Their cooperation does not need a formal alignment but is based on common interests and mutual acknowledgment of strengths.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Russia and China continue to shape their presence in the Middle East, both through multilateral platforms and through direct bilateral ties. Such actions are part of a wider regional realignment towards other global frameworks. Nonetheless, Russian and Chinese influence in the Middle East is primarily built on bilateral relationships rather than purely institutional frameworks. Both states' sustained engagement with regional partners in energy cooperation, trade, finance, and tourism are also key sectors of engagement, as well.

Russia and China now seek alignment, holding joint military exercises and presenting unified diplomatic fronts in the face of regional confrontations. The war between Israel and Hamas and the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea provided both governments opportunities to address regional insecurity and take on the primacy of United States foreign policy in the region. Russia and China operate in complementary but not identical areas, and they negotiate a balance between shared interests and competition. This uneven yet common engagement has given rise to a novel force field for regional action. Both countries seek to expand their respective spheres of influence within a broader multipolar paradigm. As Silvius (2019) observes. In 2019, Russia submitted the Persian Gulf Collective Security Concept. It involved the creation of an "Organisation for Security and Cooperation in the Persian Gulf," a framework in which regional powers could

process through a multilateral mechanism reminiscent of the 1991 Madrid Conference that included Israel and its regional adversaries. But China's success tamped down Russia's proposal, diminishing its visibility and momentum. Chinese influence in Middle Eastern diplomacy has also been recognized by Russian media. While Russia and China promote a narrative of a strategic partnership, their relationship is marked more by asymmetry and mutual dependence than genuine alliance. China's growing economic clout has increased Russian dependence, particularly in energy and investment. Russia, however, continues to pursue autonomy and hedges against over-reliance on China. Despite public affirmations of unity, geopolitical competition and mistrust remain. The partnership appears more tactical than deeply integrated, shaped by external pressures and shifting global dynamics.

Bolt and Cross (2018) explored that Chinese energy policy is designed to avoid excessive reliance on any one country. For any individual energy source, no country provides more than 10–15 percent of China's full imports in most cases. China has stepped up its imports of discounted Russian crude oil after the conflict in Ukraine began in 2022. China also adopts a coal, oil, gas, hydrogen, and nuclear power strategy that integrates its overall energy strategy, enabling it to respond to unforeseen changes in supply or price.

There are some Russian firms in these sectors, but in some cases, much smaller players. China and Russia are also courting Gulf SWFs, but the Chinese have made more public progress. The energy dynamic of China and the Gulf is not unilateral. Last year, Saudi Aramco took a final investment decision to build a major refinery and petrochemical complex in northeast China, under a previous agreement made in 2019. Qatar Energy signed a \$6 billion contract with China State Shipbuilding Corporation to build eighteen LNG carriers. That was preceded by a \$762 million deal in 2021, cementing ongoing cooperation between Gulf suppliers and Chinese companies.

In 2015, the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) entered into a cooperation agreement with the Saudi Public Investment Fund, later agreeing to seek investment opportunities in Russia in 2017. The UAE offers a useful case for comparison. In 2022, the UAE sold \$32.5 billion in goods to China and bought \$57.7 billion. Meanwhile, exports from the UAE to Russia in 2022 amounted to just \$2.47 billion, while Russia's exports to the Emirates totaled \$8.1 billion. Much of that trade was in gold and diamonds. China also seeks a free trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council, which is consistent with its more general trade strategy. Russia, meanwhile, has turned toward trade relationships with Iran.

Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union signed a free trade agreement with Iran, further extending Russia's economic influence in the region via a narrow but nonetheless strategic corridor. Since the launch of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, global participation has steadily increased. By April 2020, it covered 138 countries and 30 international organisations. The BRI is one key component of a global framework of cooperation within which China takes part in the BRICS (the group of Brazil, Russia, India, and South Africa). It is a platform for member states to foster shared approaches to trade, develop and international governance. There is a generalized agreement among analysts observing the emergence of new global alliances that the advent of multipolar systems is a response to structural imbalances in the international order. A key issue running through all these assessments is the longstanding dominance of the United States and its partners. Analysts point to the ways that the exercise of political and economic power by states in the Global North has frequently resulted in economic instability and political strife in some parts of the Global South.

Malle and Silvana (2017) explored the evolving dynamics of Russia–China relations in the context of changing global power structures. It argues that both countries have moved from historical mistrust to strategic cooperation, driven by shared interests in counterbalancing Western dominance. The partnership has deepened in areas such as energy, infrastructure, and defense, especially following Western sanctions on Russia. China's economic rise complements Russia's resource wealth, enabling mutual benefit. However, underlying asymmetries remain, particularly in economic power. The paper concludes that while the relationship is not a formal alliance, it reflects a growing convergence of geopolitical interests and pragmatic cooperation.

According to Korolev (2020), this model of international relations has tight shackles on the possibilities of independent national development of less industrialized countries and of the disadvantaged sections of the West itself. Many scholars view the current coalition-building process as a tactical response to that imbalance. In the past two decades alone the Western powers the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union — have carried out multiple interventions framed as initiatives for international peace or democratization.

These include military operations and proxy conflicts that have created political conditions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The BRICS+ dynamic finds justification in the prospect of a newly resourced platform for non-Western states

to coordinate or devise economic and diplomatic responses to multilateral initiatives without resorting to established Western institutions. BRICS was initially established in 2006 as BRIC, comprising Brazil, Russia, India, and China. South Africa was added in 2010, expanding the group's regional footprint.

Kazantsev et al. (2021) examined the geopolitical positioning of Central Asian countries amid intensifying influence from both Russia and China under the framework of "Greater Eurasia." It highlights how these nations navigate complex relations, balancing Russian security presence with China's growing economic engagement, particularly through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The authors argue that Central Asia is not merely a passive space but actively shapes its external relations to maximize autonomy. The concept of Greater Eurasia reflects both cooperation and competition between Moscow and Beijing. While formal rivalries are avoided, subtle strategic tensions persist. The study suggests that the region will play a pivotal role in shaping future regional order.

Jia (2020) found that the relationship between Russia and China is primarily pragmatic, shaped by converging strategic interests rather than deep-rooted trust or shared ideology. While both countries have strengthened ties in response to Western pressure, particularly after the Ukraine crisis and Western sanctions on Russia, the partnership remains asymmetrical. China's growing economic dominance has made Russia increasingly dependent, especially in areas like energy exports and infrastructure investment. Despite increased cooperation, Russia remains cautious of China's expanding influence, particularly in Central Asia, and seeks to maintain strategic autonomy. The study notes that their relationship lacks strong institutional frameworks, suggesting that it is more tactical and flexible than a formal alliance. Ultimately, the partnership is driven more by external necessity than internal cohesion.

Russia and China remain at the helm of fostering these alignments, especially benefitting from long-term alliances focused on energy, trade, and infrastructure. The new shape of BRICS+ points to new forms of influence and collaboration in a world marked by structural change and competing approaches to interaction between states. This is another sign of change, specifically the burgeoning role of energy in Russia-China bilateral trade, which adds a quantifiable measure to the triangulation of regional and global market relationships. Russia's trade structure has continued to be the energy sector.

Since the beginning of the Ukrainian conflict, agriculture has emerged as one of the areas of growing cooperation between the two countries. In 2022, a framework agreement was signed between the Russian-led New Land Grain Corridor (NLGC) group and China's Chengtong International Investment. The agreement concerned the formation of agro-industry infrastructure and supply chains from the South Urals to the Russian Far East and increasing exports of grains, legumes, and oilseeds, with a planned target volume of US\$19.6 billion. The NLGC provides a logistic interlink between China and the member nations of the European Economic Union (EAEU), comprising Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia. In 2022, cargo turnover between Russia and China reached 120 million tonnes.

Chinese FDI into Russia was only US\$3 billion for 2022, accounting for a mere 0.7 percent of Russia's total accumulated foreign investment. In contrast, Russian FDI in China was US\$10 billion, less than 0.4 percent of China's cumulative FDI. These figures illustrate the modest role of mutual investment within the overall economic relationship. In addition, there has not been any announcement related to new projects within the framework of China's initiative of the Belt and Road (BRI) in Russia since the beginning of the Ukraine conflict. This pause in activity associated with the BRI may indeed indicate cautionary planning on the part of Chinese policymakers, given the global uncertainties and the inherent risks of deeper investment in Russia in the current environment. Energy and agribusiness trade continues to grow, backed by infrastructure development and joint planning of supply chains. Direct investment, on the other hand — despite political accords and structured commissions — is still limited. This imbalance indicates that trade integration is continuing with limits on long-term financial commitment conditioned by structural and geopolitical risks. According to Therme (2022) Russia and China always wrap their cooperation in the idea of multipolarity. Their economic integration — notably in energy, agriculture, and logistics — is helping to reshape trade flows throughout Eurasia. But whether this cooperation will hold sustainable will depend on both parties' ability to expand investment ties and support large-scale infrastructure projects beyond the extractive industries. This trend shows increasing economic interdependence but also illustrates the limits of strategic convergence considering political pressure and economic uncertainty.

Russia and China have both increased their political and economic engagement in the Middle East, driven by a desire to challenge Western dominance and assert influence in a multipolar global order. While Russia projects military power and positions itself as a key security broker, China advances its Belt and Road Initiative and economic diplomacy. The two powers often coordinate at multilateral forums, promoting non-intervention and sovereignty principles. Though not

formal allies, they complement each other's strengths—Russia's hard power and China's economic resources—especially in countries like Iran and Syria. Their cooperation in the region aims to create a counterbalance to U.S. influence, while preserving their strategic autonomy. The partnership also supports authoritarian regimes, offering alternatives to Western-led liberal models. Joint efforts include energy deals, arms sales, and infrastructure investments. However, some tensions remain over long-term goals and regional leadership. Nonetheless, their alignment in the Middle East exemplifies a broader convergence in challenging Western hegemony.

2.1. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study is to investigate the factors affecting Strategic Alliances and Economic Influence of Russia & China cooperation in a Multipolar World.

3. METHODOLOGY

A sample of 239 participants were collected from people in different ministries. The method of sampling was "Judgemental Sampling" for collection of data and examination was done by "Explanatory Factor Analysis" for results.

4. FINDINGS

The table demonstrates demographic details, it shows that 52.72% are Male, 47.28% are female. Looking at the age, 28.87% are between 40 to 45 years of age, 34.73% are between 45 to 50 years of age, and 36.40% are above 50 years of age. With regards to Type of Ministries, 29.71% is Defense Ministry, 38.91% is Commerce Ministry, and 31.38% is Education Ministry.

Participant's Details

Variables	Participants	Percentage
Gender		
Male	126	52.72%
Female	113	47.28%
Total	239	100
Ages in years		
40 to 45	69	28.87%
45 to 50	83	34.73%
Above 50	87	36.40%
Total	239	100
Type of Ministries		
Defense Ministry	71	29.71%
Commerce Ministry	93	38.91%
Education Ministry	75	31.38%
Total	239	100

"Factor Analysis"

"KMO and Bartlett's Test"

"Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy"		.766
"Bartlett's Test of Sphericity"	"Approx. Chi-Square"	4058.309
	df	91

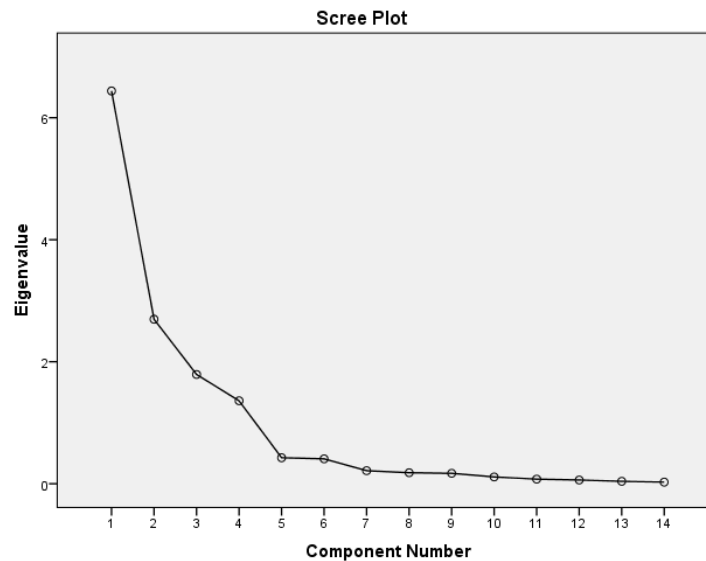
	Significance	.000
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"KMO and Bartlett's Test", value of KMO is .766

"Total Variance Explained"

"Component"	"Initial Eigenvalues"			"Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings"		
	"Total"	"% Of Variance"	"Cumulative %"	"Total"	"% Of Variance"	"Cumulative %"
1.	6.439	45.990	45.990	3.763	26.876	26.876
2.	2.696	19.259	65.250	3.709	26.491	53.367
3.	1.791	12.793	78.043	2.558	18.274	71.641
4.	1.360	9.713	87.756	2.256	16.114	87.756
5.	.426	3.045	90.800			
6.	.408	2.914	93.714			
7.	.214	1.529	95.244			
8.	.181	1.290	96.534			
9.	.171	1.219	97.753			
10.	.112	.797	98.550			
11.	.076	.542	99.092			
12.	.061	.436	99.529			
13.	.040	.283	99.811			
14.	.026	.189	100.000			

The four factors contribute towards explaining total 87.756% of variance. Variance explained by Geopolitical Shifts and Strategic Objectives is 26.876%, Economic Cooperation and Trade is 26.491%, Military and Security Cooperation is 18.274%, and Diplomatic Influence is 16.114%.



Scree Plot

“Rotated Component Matrix”

S. No.	Statements	Factor Loading	Factor Reliability
	Geopolitical Shifts and Strategic Objectives		.956
1.	Russia adopts foreign policy in Middle East for confirming itself as a global power	.941	
2.	Russia sees Middle East as key area to maintain its position as counter-balance to U.S.	.885	
3.	For China, Middle East is of strategic importance because of its energy requirements	.862	
4.	China being largest importer of oil has shown interest in steady access to Middle Eastern energy resources	.849	
	Economic Cooperation and Trade		.967
1.	Energy plays a dominant role in the Russian-Chinese relationship in the Middle East	.960	
2.	Construction of natural gas pipeline ties Russia to China is an example of collaboration	.913	
3.	Russia seeks to increase its economic impact by being a substitute energy supplier for China	.903	
4.	China's “Belt and Road Initiative” has been a vital feature of its strategy in the Middle East	.890	
	Military and Security Cooperation		.887
1.	Russia and China seek alignment, holding joint military exercises offering united diplomatic fronts	.920	
2.	Russia and China consider presence of U.S. military as a disrupting force	.837	
3.	China and Russia to cooperate with international partners on security maintenance	.826	
	Diplomatic Influence		.815
1.	Russia has diplomatic relations with Middle East by being mediator in regional conflicts	.926	
2.	China maintains neutral position, stressing economic cooperation regarding military involvement	.924	
3.	China's diplomatic efforts emphasis on developing trade relations, acting neutral in regional disputes	.606	

5. FACTORS OF THE STUDY AND ITS RELATED VARIABLES

The first factor is Geopolitical Shifts and Strategic Objectives, the variables it includes are Russia adopts foreign policy in Middle East for confirming itself as a global power, Russia sees Middle East as key area to maintain its position as counter-balance to U.S., For China, Middle East is of strategic importance because of its energy requirements, China being largest importer of oil has shown interest in steady access to Middle Eastern energy resources. Economic Cooperation and Trade is the second factor, its variables are Energy plays a dominant role in the Russian-Chinese relationship in the Middle East, Construction of natural gas pipeline ties Russia to China is an example of collaboration, Russia seeks to increase its economic impact by being a substitute energy supplier for China, and China's “Belt and Road Initiative” has been a vital feature of its strategy in the Middle East. Third factor is Military and Security Cooperation, the variables it includes are Russia and China seek alignment, holding joint military exercises offering united diplomatic fronts, Russia and China consider presence of U.S. military as a disrupting force, and China and Russia to cooperate with international partners on security maintenance. Last and fourth factor is Diplomatic Influence, it includes variables like Russia has diplomatic relations with Middle East by being mediator in regional conflicts, China maintains neutral position, stressing economic cooperation regarding military involvement, and China's diplomatic efforts emphasis is on developing trade relations, acting neutral in regional disputes.

“Reliability Statistics”

“Cronbach's Alpha”	“Number of Items”
.899	14

Total reliability of 14 items that includes variables for Strategic Alliances and Economic Influence of Russia & China cooperation in a Multipolar World 0.899.

6. CONCLUSION

Russia and China pursue strategies that are unaligned but complementary as they seek to broaden their cooperation in the Middle East. Russia employs military partnerships, energy exports and political ties to gain access and sway. On the other end of the spectrum, China cultivates long-term relationships through trade, infrastructure and financial investment. They work for regional governments seeking alternatives to Western influence. Participants don't form formal alliances but have regular coordination, especially in multilateral settings. Their presence helps multipolarity and gives more bargaining power to regional actors. China leads in trade and investment, while Russia is active in security and energy diplomacy. This separation enables each to engage without direct competition. While bilateral relations count for much more than multilateral platforms, BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization offer a framework. That shift in regional engagement mirrors a larger change in global power. Russia and China back this pivot with economic and political initiatives, but investment flows have been uneven. Their engagement reconfigures trade, energy and diplomacy throughout the Middle East. It is strikingly one of the new patterns of a world where relations between multiple powers no longer broach a single dominating actor. The factors that impact Strategic Alliances and Economic Influence of Russia & China cooperation in a Multipolar World are Geopolitical Shifts and Strategic Objectives, Economic Cooperation and Trade, Military and Security Cooperation, and Diplomatic Influence.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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