

Russia and China since the cold war have been known to have challenged the global order dominated by the USA. The relations between them have although been with a lot of ups and downs but post the collapse of the Soviet Union there has been an increase in cooperation between both the nations. Russia and China post-1991 have been cooperating in various platforms like BRICS(Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization), RIC (Russia, India, China) and they have been usually on the same side coming at the United Nations Security Council especially in the resolutions placed by the United States or its allies. Usually in the conflicted areas of the Middle East, especially in the case of Syria, they have been actively against the resolutions of NATO countries.

Both the Nations have been challenging the unipolarity of the global world order and have been active players in challenging the USA's hegemony in International Politics. Moscow and Beijing have their areas of prime importance namely Ukraine, Syria and North Korea. The USA's interventionist role in Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan has threatened both the states and pushed them into extreme distrust. The "Russian Threat" and the "Chinese Threat" of the NATO nations against these countries have played a vital role in their foreign and defence policies. China purchased weapons over \$2 billion from Russia and has always engaged in joint military exercises. Economic relations are also booming as Russia, China is Russia's biggest trading Asian partner and China sees Russia as a treasure of natural resources for its huge expanding exports in the global market. They have similar interests in the CIS countries but China's policies to make huge investments for greater connectivity in that region has caused Russia to be cautious of their actions but in 2010 China recognized CIS region as Russia's domain and upheld its interest in the region.

Nonetheless, the major bone of contention for these countries is to balance the hegemony of the USA in the international politics and despite of having varied differences they are associated with a shared interest of countering the unipolarity and that makes us believe that they would be in neared proximity when it comes to global issues. The new era of friendship began in 2001, with the treaty of good neighbourliness and friendly cooperation where the countries agreed on cooperating in defence, trade and diplomatic relations. As strange as it may sound but according to many analysts the lynchpin for their good relations is the growth of the United States in global politics.

The tremendous hegemony of the United States has resulted in the world and most importantly the major post-cold war players the need for balancing the power. Russia and China are the lead contenders to challenging this hegemony and hence their shared interest

is driven by this. The scope of this paper is to get down to the core values of their relations post-1991 and to introduce the limitation of their relationship and to answer some critical questions about their checkered history. The rationale of the study is to make sense of global politics and the only way to do it is to look beyond the perceptions of the west into the interests of Sino-Russian relations and not to portray them as the enemies of the glorious order dominated by the United States as it is done in most of the studies in the west. This paper in no way will try to present a cynical view of the growth in Sino-Russian relations but will try to put out a balanced study from various views. The paper will focus more on Russia's side in their relations.

Brief Historical overview of Sino-Russia Relations:

The Sino-Russia relations date back to the 17th century from the consolidation of Siberia, eventually moving past Siberia both the countries signed an agreement in 1896 where China allowed Russia to build a railway in its territory in return Russia would help China against external interventions which were likely from Japan. Post Revolution in both the countries and Post World War II, they faced immense loss in terms of economic and human resources and China under Mao was learning just starting out to be a communist state. Learning from consistent attacks diplomatically from the United States, China had to resort to increasing closer ties with the Soviet Union and in the 1950s they concluded the Treaty of Friendship alliance and mutual assistance. The relations went fine in the early part of the 50s but in the latter part of 50s, there was a clear fall out between them. There were disagreements on issues of National Interest, ideology and Security. Khrushchev's reforms were not agreed by Mao and there was a fall out in the 60s.

Over the late 60s, a dispute broke out between Russia and China and China sought to improve its relations with its ideological adversary the United States which resulted in worsening the relations between Russia and China. The United States taking advantage of this situation amped up the anti- Soviet sentiment and started pursuing its interests. The United States and China joined hands against the Soviet Union in the 70s. During the backdrop of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979, the relations between China and the United States peaked with an exchange of military technology which raised the Soviet tensions to the zenith.

The relations between Russia and China during the early 80s started to tone down tensions and under Gorbachev, the ties increased in science and technology, education and cultural exchanges and Sino- Russia relations were a priority to him. Soviet de-escalated from the border and withdrew from Mongolia and Afghanistan. In the Beijing Summit both the sides

agreed to end the dispute and resolve not to use force against each other. By the 1990s they reached an agreement and normalized the relations.



Image source: TRT World

Towards a Multipolar world

The global anarchy has resulted in contestations for power in the past century. Early 20th Century it was Britain and France, Post World War II it was the USA and the USSR and post 1991 it remained to be dominated by the United States. The Russian Foreign Policy continues to struggle for a Multipolar world under Putin. The claims of 'Greater Russia' felt to be true after the annexation of Crimea, it sent a message that Russia is still an influential power in the global political arena and it was not to be taken lightly about.

Russia and China's cooperation can be seen in multilateral organizations. Multilateral organizations and cooperation with multiple international organizations are against the idea of unipolarity and a message to the United States that it cannot intervene unilaterally. Russia foreign policy is highly driven by the threat of the United States in the global arena and hence it can be seen its enthusiastic participation in multilateral organizations and especially the ones which include China as well. China's engagements with International

Organizations are prominent and are given credits to the fact as it wants to occupy its agency as a superpower and is driven by it.

Engagements in International Organizations

The cooperation of Russia and China can be most prominently seen in the United Nations Security Council as both the nations have Veto Powers and they mostly stand united against the West. The issues relations to Iraq, Libya, Myanmar and anything to do with intervention are staunch oppositions as they have been led by examples left by the NATO in the middle east and Kosovo as well. Russia is most likely to use Veto and China is a bit reserved as it does not want to be the only opposition in matters that are not related to its very close interests.

In the crises of Syria, China and Russia have been always diplomatically saving Assad's regime by Vetoing in the UNSC. The push for responsibility to protect doctrine and the interventionist policy of the west unites Russia and China in these issues. Especially after Arab Springs and the role of the west, China has been vocal against its opposition to such actions.

BRICS along with SCO are other forums where Russia and China have played a vital role. The rise of BRICS is motivated for being an alternative voice for western organizations and institutions. They converse on the issues not only economics and financially but they want to make BRICS as a platform for International Issues and Politics. They have been issuing joint statements on the forum of G20 and they have also been an active voice for pushing reforms in the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. The BRICS development bank and other banks like Asian development bank and New Development Bank are seen as an alternative to Bretton woods Institutions and the hegemony of the west over them.



Soldiers from China's People's Liberation Army march toward Red Square during the Victory Day military parade marking the 75th anniversary of the Nazi defeat in Red Square in Moscow, Russia, Wednesday, June 24, 2020 / Image source: AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko

Dilemmas of Security Cooperation

All that has been the relations between both the countries the security and strategic positions on the issues relating to the other has been a debate for political analysts. Does Russia support China on the South China Sea conflict? Does China support Russia in Ukraine and Georgia? The ties of Russia and China post-1991 has seen incredible growth from Constructive Cooperation in the 90s to in 2016, comprehensive strategic partnership on various issues. The term alliance used for their partnership is both right and wrong, although they have been calling each other a natural ally but the statement only means rhetorical to some analysts and literal for others. Post-1991 China and Russia have interactions on various governmental and military levels and their interactions have been extremely close with regards to their foreign affairs and defence ministries. The cooperation militarily has only been on the upward trajectory. At present, they cooperate on various international security and regional security issues, things that seem to be similar for both of them.

As soon as they established diplomatic relations, they also entered into defence cooperation which led to the formation of rules for their military cooperation. There have been four types of military cooperation and military drills mechanisms continuously over a period of and intervals less than 2 years to one year that have been in a place where each mechanism interacts on various other issues. The first Mechanism is the meet between the defence ministries where they share their perceptions of external threats and issues. Secondly, Annual security interactions between the chief of staff of both the countries which lead to various defence drills. Thirdly, the interactions on national security issues, this has been most discussed as issues related to national security has been discussed with another nation and this led to issuing of statements of revolutions sponsored by the USA in the middle east and criticisms against the unilateral sanctions put by the USA on other countries. Lastly the interaction between both the nations on the issues of Asia's security especially related to the bases of the USA in South Korea and Japan. The nuclear issue of North Korea and the threat from the USA towards it is a predominant concern of both the countries.



Image source: Xinhua

Economic and Energy Partnership

The sanctions against Russia and Trade wars between the US and China has resulted in their relations to be closer than ever. China is the second-largest economy and it exports a lot of finished goods and Russia is a treasure of Natural resources. At the start of 1991, their trade was around \$7 billion USD and now it is around \$100 billion. Primarily their

deals were for raw materials, minerals and textiles from Russia but their defence partnership also amounts to a lot of their trade relations. After Russia's pivot to the East, it has been increasingly developing trade and has been looking east and especially towards China for it. Russia has been concerned about majorly exporting raw materials to China as it would be in problems like Dutch disease and does not benefit from it but there has been a formula which postulates essentially that the monetary gain from selling the raw materials to China will be invested in various socioeconomic activities and diversified and not concentrate into one arena. China has also shown interest in buying Russian weapons which means that it would lead to Russia's modernization. Thirdly, China has already heavily invested in Russia which would mean benefits for both of them and it has laid out a long-term investment plan for it.

The innovative development of Russia 2020 is to put it in a track of innovation and development. This means research and development into technology, energy, and also arenas like shipbuilding etc. China also has a similar plan in similar areas and there has been an agreement for cooperation in research and innovation in 2006 between both the countries. They have an MoU with regards to the modernization of the Economy as the Russian economy's transition has not been very fruitful. There have been various deals on energy from nuclear to renewable sources. Russia-China energy relations are like a perfect missing piece of the jigsaw puzzle where Russia has been sitting on an abundance of energy resources and China is the highest importer of energy due to its huge productions and population. Russia sells China oil and natural gases cheaper than the West Asian countries.

Both countries are seeking to diversify their imports and exports. After the crises in Ukraine and the sanctions on Russia by the West it has been searching for partners and China, on the other hand, has been looking for other exporters as well, as it gets more than 50 per cent of its oil from West Asia. Another important point to note is the Russia China pipeline ensures China a regular supply of oil through land and it does not have to worry about maritime security especially as it passes through the strait of Malacca and the Indian Ocean.



Image source: CNN

Coronavirus and Sino-Russian relations

Corona Virus has pushed global politics to the ground, challenged the very borders that are political creations of the state, the virus transcended the boundaries of anthropogenic creations and has put the liberal and neo-liberal institutions of the 1950s to its feet. It clearly demarcated the fact that the institutions created post-world war cannot handle the crisis of modern times. A lot has been written about the post COVID world and the rise of China. But the important point to be noticed is the growing relations between Russia and China during the situation of dire distress for both the countries. Russia was one of the first countries to close the border and put a blanket ban on Chinese citizens to enter Russia post the outbreak. China after being able to control the situation has offered a helping hand in providing supplies to Russia.

Russia and China have been showing a united front on the international backlash faced by China and Putin and Xi have told them to not politicise the pandemic as it affects each one. Putin has been staunchly opposing attempts by the west to discredit China in the times of distress. Here are a few important points to be analyzed about much written Post COVID world and the anxieties of changing world order. Many political analysts have lynch-pinned the Sino-Russian relations to the sole unipolar position of the United States in International

Politics. If the rise of China as anticipated post-COVID and is the beginning of the downfall of the USA, does it imply the downfall of Sino-Russian relations as well? The west is at its weakest than ever, this provides an opportunity for China and Russia for pushing global reforms in place, from the dominance of the west in liberal institutions to promotion of their interests in the global arena. The USA's claim of the "Chinese Virus" has been deferred by Russia that shows the integrity of their relations. One can surely say that the Post COVID world would only strengthen Sino- Russia relations due to their major developments in the past two decades and uncertain but very real hegemony of the United States in global politics.

Conclusion

The Sino-Russian relations have been through a rollercoaster of a journey from its disputed border and through cold war's ups and downs and the Post-Soviet era and their Relations have seen upwards trajectory although they cannot be called allies in the strictest sense but are very intimately connected with each other and terms like Quasi-Allies have also been used in defining their relations. Although there has been a difference in possible imagination of both the countries but what unites them is the urge and resistance towards the hegemony of the United States and the role it plays in international politics. They are opposed to the idea of unilateral interventions but choose to support the principles laid out by the United Nations in its approach than supporting Responsibility to Protect as promoted by the western nations. They have been on the same sides on the issues relating to West Asia and have been always promoting dialogue between the stakeholders than interventions. Both the nations are now having a trade of about \$110 billion USD and have been continuously engaged in financially and also military cooperation with each other. The "new strategic partnership" it is called about their economic and energy ties. Their relations work best in energy one is sitting on a lot of energy resources and other requires a lot of energy resources for its development. Their commitment towards the various multilateral organizations shows their zeal for the promotion of alternative world order and the one that is not dominated by the United States. BRICS and SCO have been pulled out to provide for organizations that do not have a need for the western approval of decisions that are made regionally and have been they have also moved into the arena of political and social.

Sino-Russian relations are a classic example of the partnership formed for balancing the power and their motives are not just ended their but China also aspires to be a global power in the near future but the same aspirations for Russia have somewhere dulled down and due to it having good relations with China only amps up its possibilities. Russia and China have remained distant from the issues that have created havoc in global politics relating to their

areas of interest. China has clearly stayed away from the Ukraine crisis and Russia remains silent on the South China Sea. Although these are issues they do not converge directly upon and hence they do not want to ruin their established relations over it. Their convergence in the United Nations Security Council and other multilateral organizations are commendable to the level of understanding. Corona Virus and the post COVID world have seemed to only look for a world with an alternative-dynamics and even stronger Russia-China relations.

References

1. Trends in Russia-China Relations Implications for India, Observer Research Foundation. by Nandan Unnikrishnan and Uma purushothaman
2. Sino-Russian Energy Relations *An Uncertain Courtship* by Erica S. Downs
3. Perspectives on the economic relations between China and Russia Article in Journal of Contemporary Asia · January 2006 by Richard Lotspeich
4. Russia-China relations *Current state, alternative futures, and implications for the West* by Arkady Moshes & Matti Nojonen (eds.)
5. Development Of Russian-Chinese Trade, Economic, Financial And Cross-Border Relations Russian International Affairs Council, Institute of Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences edited by I.S. Ivanov
6. Beyond the Nominal and the Ad Hoc: The Substance and Drivers of China-Russia Military Cooperation, *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Winter 2018) by Alexander Korolev
7. Sino-Russian Relations in a Changing World Order Author(s): Paul J. Bolt Source: Strategic Studies Quarterly , Vol. 8, No. 4 (WINTER 2014), pp. 47-69 Published by: Air University Press
8. The foreign policy of Russia by Robert H. Donaldson, Joseph L. Noguee And Vidya Nadkarni Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group London And New York

Links of the News Articles:

1. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/23/coronavirus-pandemic-china-eurasia-russia-influence/>

2.

<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/04/24/russia-says-coronavirus-origin-is-unknown-as-us-china-tensions-rise.html>

3.
<https://thediplomat.com/2020/03/how-will-the-coronavirus-outbreak-affect-russia-china-relations/>

4.
<https://www.cnbc.com/2020/04/24/russia-says-coronavirus-origin-is-unknown-as-us-china-tensions-rise.html>

5.
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2020-03-18/coronavirus-could-reshape-global-order>

6.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-coronavirus-gives-russia-and-china-another-opportunity-to-spread-their-disinformation/2020/03/29/8423a0f8-6d4c-11ea-a3ec-70d7479d83f0_story.html

CERTIFICATE COURSE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

SIX-WEEK ONLINE COURSE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
BY THE KOOTNEETI

JOIN TODAY!

team@thekootneeti.com
courses.thekootneeti.in
(+91) 120 4565994

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Kootneeti Team

Facebook Comments