

THE STRATEGIC TRIANGLE: US, CHINA, AND RUSSIA IN GLOBAL SECURITY GOVERNANCE

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Abstract

Paradigm adjustments in the balance of power in the ever-changing world of international politics inevitably impact the status quo. Concerning this matter, it has been observed that the rivalry between the US, China, and Russia has significant consequences for the structure of international security on a global and regional scale. On one side, China wants to spearhead a paradigm shift in global security governance towards a new era of "partnership and mutually beneficial outcomes" and seems unhappy with the US-centric framework. China has been inconsistent in its posture towards Russia despite supporting Russia's narratives and viewing Russia as a possible ally in the crisis in Ukraine. According to this, the potential for collaboration and confrontation in China's foreign and security policies appears to be ongoing. On the one hand, the US sees military engagement in particular regions and the promotion of democracy and human rights by the US as problematic; on the other hand, US officials see Russian and Chinese backing for repressive governments as unproductive. However, the United States and China could cooperate on peacekeeping, global stability, and avoiding unintentional escalation. Given the changing dynamics between these three superpowers and how they affect international security, it is crucial to grasp better their objectives and how they could work together or clash in different parts of the world. With these ideas in mind, this study will evaluate the global chessboard where these big countries fight a complex war for domination. In pursuit of this goal, the study aims to elucidate the dynamic character of international security frameworks and how this triangular power dynamic affects security environments worldwide. The dynamic relationship between Russia, China, and the United States influences the current global order. This paper aims to provide a broad overview of this relationship.

Keywords: US-China-Russia Rivalry, International Security, Global Security Framework, International Order, Geopolitics.

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Introduction

Significant shifts in American strategic focus were ushered in by the 2017 and 2018 US National Security and Defence Strategies, respectively. There has been an apparent change in priorities, with strategic competition with Russia and China taking precedence over the low-intensity battles with nonstate actors that have been common since 2001. The focus has largely been on Asia and Europe, while this competition is meant to have worldwide consequences¹. In the last ten years, we have seen Russia's decline in geopolitical and economic clout, the US's steady ascent to the top, and China's meteoric rise in various industries, which has unquestionably increased its influence worldwide. Though the likelihood of a major confrontation is low, some experts predict that tensions may rise between Russia and China soon. Contrary to earlier hopes for amicable ties grounded in the dynamics of the balance of power theory, tensions between China and the US have escalated in recent years². The United States can take unique actions compared to other major global economic powers, while China lags in projecting offensive military capabilities, technical innovation, and sustained economic strength. This capability reinforces the continued supremacy of the United States. This paper is categorised under multi-polarity as the framework of security in the international system. Analysing the connections between the US, China, and Russia, the paper finds that this system of relations produces intricate power relations that define the world's security system. It employs this framework to evaluate the effect of their relations on international relations, hence the areas of shared or conflicting interests, namely Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe.

Keeping these ideas in mind, this paper will discuss how the geopolitical and strategic interactions among Russia, China, and the United States have changed. The basic idea is that we will talk about how the US stands on international security in the face of cooperation between Russia and China and how much of an impact this tripartite relationship has on regional and global security. China and Russia have been allies since the Cold War ended, and their partnership has grown more robust in the last decade, according to Mazarr et al.³ Prominent US analysts agree that the rising cooperation between Russia and China harms US interests. Thus, it is no longer acceptable to view the relationship as nothing more than a pragmatic alliance with limited significance for America.

Several factors, some of which serve as catalysts and others as obstacles, affect the level of cooperation between Russia and China. At this time, the advantages of working together surpass the disadvantages. You cannot treat the

US as a constant in these dynamics, even while conventional US measures to discourage such coordination may fail. On the contrary, the relationship between Russia and China is very susceptible to changes in American policy and behaviour. If the US wants to change the global power dynamics so that it is more advantageous to itself, it must strengthen its economic, diplomatic, and military capacities⁴. In light of these considerations, this article aims to analyse the rising relevance of the alliance between China and Russia since the Cold War and, more specifically, during the last decade. In addition, it delves into how prominent US analysts view this partnership as hurting American interests by minimising its impact on international geopolitics.

Interpreting the Factors Influencing the Sino-Russian Relationship Russia and China's cooperation is fueled by their mutual geopolitical and security worries. Aiming for increased regional domination and perceiving US efforts as incursions on their strategic interests, both states seek to counterbalance what they perceive as the dominant influence of the United States. US missile defence systems, military monitoring near Russian and Chinese borders, and long-range attack capabilities are specific areas of concern. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping are more likely to work together in the face of perceived external threats because they have pessimistic views about American and allied intentions. They view world events and the international system through this unified lens. Their security cooperation includes joint military exercises, defence discussions, and arms sales, aiming to influence other countries and shift the power balance away from the US.

According to the Pew Research Centre, ideology is another force propelling Sino-Russian cooperation. In reaction to Washington's advocacy of democracy and human rights, the governments of Moscow and Beijing are seeking tighter collaboration out of a sense of vulnerability and threat. Both of them think that previous US actions abroad have weakened the idea of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and hence, they fight for this theory. Foreign action to solve domestic human rights abuses is seen by Russia and China as a violation of sovereignty, which is why they have criticised or opposed Western participation in countries like Afghanistan, Syria, and Libya⁵. Furthermore, energy-related factors have been crucial in promoting cooperation between China and Russia. To counteract Western sanctions on its oil and gas exports, Russia is looking for ways to diversify its energy purchases away from the Middle East, while China is trying to do the same. As a result, energy cooperation

has advanced, with a notable agreement being reached in 2014 between the Gazprom of Russia and the National Petroleum Corporation of China. This contract, known as the Power of Siberia pipeline, establishes a 30-year deal.

According to Meersheimer⁶, Russia needs to supply gas to China. The Importance of US Policy about Sino-Russian Amity However, previous US policies have had little effect on this cooperation, even if the danger to US interests is growing due to Russia and China's increasing relationship. Still, essential metrics like arms sales, energy-related commerce and investment, and combined efforts in global venues like the UN against Western endeavours have not been dampened by present policy. Just because Russia and China are strengthening their cooperation does not mean the US will sit on its hands and watch. Several disparities exist between the two countries that the United States can use to its advantage, such as Russia's demographic and economic problems and Russia's distance from the US-led international order, in contrast to China's continued dependence on it⁷.

Moreover, regional governments may want stronger cooperation with the US as a strategic counterbalance due to Russia's and China's desire for domination in their domains. Possible steps that Trump's administration could take to defuse tensions with Russia have Beijing's worries that Russia may shift its policy to coincide with America, even if it had little bearing on China's interests. For US policies to be successful, they need to be realistic and centre on long-term policy decisions that will require consistent work from different branches of government. The United States can maintain its global preeminence, reach an accommodation with Russia or China, or pursue a hybrid approach. Possible middle-ground approaches include strengthening American capabilities while addressing some of Russia's and China's concerns. Russia has been trying to express its interests in areas with large Russian-speaking populations, while Ukraine has been trying to preserve its territorial integrity and sovereignty, making for a complicated position in the confrontation between the two countries. By denouncing Russia's behaviour and sending military aid to strengthen Ukraine's defences, the Biden administration has demonstrated strong backing for Ukraine. President Biden stressed the significance of respecting international conventions and accords regarding Ukraine's independence and territorial integrity. The government has also worked closely with its European allies to show a unified front in response to Russian regional aggressiveness⁸. Along with the continuing escalating tensions between Russia and Ukraine, the geopolitical situation becomes even more

complicated with China's intervention. Regarding energy resources and economic alliances, China has vital strategic interests.

Despite its long-standing policy of non-interference in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, China has prioritised increasing its worldwide influence, particularly in Eastern Europe. The Biden administration will consider China's involvement and impact when addressing the crisis. A diplomatic approach may involve contacting China to persuade it to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and positively foster stability. On top of that, the government might be apprehensive about any alliance or cooperation between China and Russia, which could worsen regional tensions⁹. Strictly speaking, American policy choices may entail taking advantage of opportunities by aligning with or opposing China, Russia, or both. Most importantly, how Washington proceeds will likely determine if the US is impacted by Sino-Russian ties.

By extension, this paper posits that changes in the triangular transitional power relations between the US, China, and Russia are recalibrating the new security architecture. It argues that the realignments of multipolarity caused by China, Russia, and the ideological and logistical ever-present confrontation within the US are unsettling the current world order. The paper's focus is to discuss the phenomenon of this multipolarity and determine its effects on international and regional security settings while acknowledging how these engagements shape the structural relations and geopolitics of the world at large.

Southeast Asian Security and the Trilateral Dialogue

US, Russian, and Chinese trilateral dynamics have substantially caused big nations and their allies to reevaluate their strategies in light of the consequences for regional security. Political scientists believe that the complex opportunities and threats that the United States, Russia, and China pose to global and regional dynamics make it challenging to forecast the future of US-Russia-China relations, especially bilateral interactions among these three players. To change interdependent dynamics, countries should try to take advantage of opportunities and avoid threats so they may build new capacities that are good for growth¹⁰. Vietnam is quickly becoming a significant economic and business hub in Southeast Asia, strategically located in Asia-Pacific. So, the Asia-Pacific region, particularly Southeast Asia, is becoming more critical to global nations as they realign their objectives. Vietnamese and other ASEAN members should take

advantage of this opportunity to pick cooperative partners whose objectives are congruent with their own.

To achieve its social and economic growth goals while protecting its independence, sovereignty, and national interest, Vietnam has increased its engagements with significant countries, sought deeper international integration, and used outside assistance security. The US vigilantly watches China's actions in the East Sea, supports a rules-based system, and fights for the freedom of navigation and overflight. At the same time, other regional powers like Japan, India, and Russia may step up their support, financing, and capacity-building efforts for the parties concerned. At the same time, deciding who will own the islands and oceans is essential. As Shiffrinson¹¹ points out, China is further complicating regional security dynamics by militarizing artificial islands in the East Sea and engaging with and courting concerned countries, all to increase its security and military capabilities. The area also has to deal with the growing influence of populism, Europe's shaky government, disputes over Taiwan and Hong Kong, and American foreign policy conflict about commerce with China.

An Increase in Southeast Asian Military Expenditure In 2020, Zero Hedge
These complex and ongoing issues have far-reaching consequences for the area states, calling for swift strategic actions to safeguard national interests in changing US-Russia relations. Independent, self-reliant, multilateralist, diverse, and internationally integrated foreign policy presents significant opportunities for Vietnam due to its geostrategic positioning, rapidly developing nation, and active participation in ASEAN and the global community. Vietnam plans to use its national strength in cooperation with epochal forces to speed up industrialisation, modernisation, and homeland defence. Nevertheless, Vietnam must be on high alert to avoid power struggles and be ready for any power struggles between key players. Vietnam and other regional actors are caught amid the push-and-pull dynamics caused by the geopolitical interaction between the tripartite of China, Russia, and the US, directly affecting regional and global security, peace, and stability. Russia, China, and the US have long-standing ties, but choosing cooperating partners is difficult. Therefore, these countries must consider their national interests¹².

Investigating Middle Eastern Strategic Dynamics

Throughout history, the Middle East renowned for its strategic location and abundant resources has served as a battleground for the three superpowers

Russia, China, and the United States. In the nineteenth century, this area was the setting for the "Great Game," an imperial struggle between Russia and Britain over vital trade routes that passed via the Middle East. The importance of this competition increased after WWI, with more priority given to military transportation, over flight authorisations, and base access. This rivalry was already fierce before the region's oil was discovered, drawing in American firms backed by the US government. Following WWII, the United States and the Soviet Union were more competitive with one another due to the region's strategic importance in achieving military and commercial objectives. Both superpowers used their political, economic, and military might, along with a substantial military presence, to expand their respective spheres of influence in the Middle East during the Cold War while simultaneously limiting the access and impact of the other.

The importance of a country's involvement and influence in the Middle East in determining its status as a great power has been acknowledged for a long time. In the modern setting, signs imply that components of strategic competition, as articulated in the US The region is witnessing the emergence of the National Security Strategy (NSS) and the National Defence Strategy (NDS). Russian and Chinese diplomatic and commercial relations with Middle Eastern countries have become more assertive in recent years. Moscow has positioned itself as a possible security provider and alternate weaponry supplier in light of regional unhappiness with the intensity of American commitments. As part of its bold Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has placed a premium on business alliances; Beijing has a vested interest in the region's continuous access to oil. Therefore, it invests heavily in infrastructure and communication technologies to increase its political influence, particularly in the region's less prosperous states. Meanwhile, Russia has become an essential foreign player and gained considerable political influence, partly due to its involvement in Syria.

The US, China, and Russia compete for influence, but their paths converge in the Middle East, so it is more than that. Taking away the benefits enjoyed by other powers is also a key component. Thus, several pranks played out by Russia and China have undermined American policy goals in the area. China's substantial financial commitments to the sale of commercial technologies, including Huawei's 5G infrastructures, to countries that host US bases and the region's port infrastructure constitute intelligence and security concerns for US military personnel. Also, the US-led coalition's battle against ISIS in Syria has been complicated and undermined by Russia's interference in Syria, which has

bolstered President Bashar al-Assad's administration. These and other moves by Russia and China challenge American interests and aim to gain an advantage in the Middle East, heightening regional strategic rivalry.

Methodology and Data

This study employs a secondary qualitative research approach to evaluate the power dynamics and international security balance in connection to the regional and global rivalry between the United States, China, and Russia. It incorporates a plethora of current and pertinent works on the trilateral relationship. Subsequently, the following was articulated based on the compiled and examined vital data.

Russia has grown closer to Beijing as a result of Western sanctions. The takeover of Crimea by Russia is the root cause of these sanctions. Reducing regional economic volatility is the goal of China's backing of Russia. Russia and China's ties in the Eurasian region have grown stronger. Scholars have noted that this relationship is characterised by strong economic and political collaboration, especially on security issues. The close cooperation between the Russian Army and the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) is demonstrated by joint military exercises in both nations, regardless of location. The expansion of Russian influence in Asia is mainly attributable to the country's diplomatic and defence policies.

China's attempts to offset what it sees as Western and US dominance in the Asia-Pacific area are highlighted by its large imports of Russian military equipment and technology. Russia and China are actively working to prevent the establishment of rival coalitions in the Asia-Pacific region. They are incredibly hostile to the US and its Indo-Pacific policy in the area. Russia and China have long pushed for the Asia-Pacific region to establish a rules-based framework that is open and inclusive in maritime matters. The two countries are closely watching the US, Australia, and the UK's trilateral security collaboration (AUKUS) because they see it as a threat to their national interests. Russian and Chinese officials agree that AUKUS is an attempt to undermine US-led regional efforts to strengthen security dominance over their countries¹³. For reasons related to national security, China has been trading weapons with Russia since the time of the USSR.

The S-400 anti-aircraft missile system China acquired from Russia is a prime example of the sophisticated weapons developed through this partnership. Similarly, selling fighter jets to China has strengthened the already strong ties between the two countries. Their worldwide cordial connection highlights their shared strategic objectives and stances on international matters. Moreover, weddings between Russian and Chinese nationals that occur beyond borders in the diaspora help cement Sino-Russian ties⁴. The Russian government's sale of medium range helicopters to the Chinese government is evidence of the close military collaboration between the two countries. Research and development (R&D) wise, the two nations work together to create weapon systems, with joint venture programmes transferring knowledge to China. China's unrestricted acceptance of military supplies from Russia is a second indication of the breadth of their cooperation. Russia and China are working together on defence manufacturing; for example, Russia bought navy diesel engines from a Chinese company instead of a German defence corporation. To meet their respective military requirements, China's newly formed joint defence industry manufactures fighter planes and anti-aircraft equipment.

Since China stands to gain from the status quo and sees it as serving its foreign interests, it focuses on changing rather than overthrowing the current international system. China's multi-faceted expansion across different sectors was aided by its 2000 entrance to the World Trade Organisation. It is clear from China's stance towards regional concerns, such as those from the US and India, that the country prioritises peaceful economic development over military confrontations. Under President Xi Jinping's leadership, China is speeding up projects like the Maritime Silk Road and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to increase economic connections worldwide⁵.

China and Russia in Opposition to US Dominance

The US faces two separate threats to its national security: China and Russia. A well-armed rogue state, Russia aspires to undermine the global system it will never be able to control. On the other hand, China is a rival that wants to control the world order it perceives.

While Russia and China seek to shake things up, the former has used aggressive tactics like annexation and insurgency backing to expand its influence. At the same time, the latter has relied more on positive measures like commerce, investment, and development aid to expand its sphere of influence. Russia may be

managed through conventional means in the military realm, but the threat posed by China's growing military dominance in East Asia is far more formidable. The geoeconomic sphere, however, is anticipated to be the deciding factor in the balance of global influence between China and the US. China is a strong contender globally due to its vast population, fast economic growth, and high per capita GDP. On the other hand, Russia has less promising economic prospects than China, making any substantial increase in its military might seem implausible in the distant future.

Levada Centre and Pew Research

According to the statistics, Russia's economy ranks twelfth in the world, while China ranks second, demonstrating that China is the more influential economic power. The disparity between Russia and China regarding military might is growing due to China's higher military spending. Economic sanctions and other non-military deterrents are effective against Russia, even if the country's military threats to US national security are more pressing.

On the other hand, China poses a military threat to neighbouring countries while simultaneously dominating global markets; the government does not care about its allies' political leanings, making it a more appealing economic partner. While Russia's military might be closer to home, China's geoeconomic clout is far more significant, and the latter poses a more substantial threat to American preeminence in the world.

Sino-Russia Alliance: The Dragonbear

China and Russia's alliance has become more assertive in recent years due to their shared goal of countering what they see as the US-led West's dominance in international affairs. The global economic system was upended in February 2022 when Russia invaded Ukraine, highlighting the complex power disparities and competing interests between Beijing and Moscow despite the seeming convergence of interests. According to analysts, this relationship is like the story of Goldilocks. Neither country wants Russia to be too assertive and confront China, but neither wants Russia to be too weak and leave China ideologically isolated from the West.

While China has kept its ally status and has avoided publicly criticising Russia, it has taken advantage of its unique connection with Moscow to further its interests in the conflict. China has cleverly taken advantage of Russia's

dependence on strong trading partners and friends for vital commodity exports, such as metals and oil, to further its goals. Many in the political sphere believe China is incentivised to keep Russia from losing ground in the war. Such results could weaken China's position in the international arena and give Western democracies more power, which could cause political unrest in Russia, a strategically important territory for China.

Sino-Russian Economic Relations Following the Russian-Ukrainian Invasion

As reported by Statista, the necessity of China's balance was emphasised by Etienne Soula, a research analyst with the US-based German Marshall Fund's Alliance for Securing Democracy. China wants Russia to be weak enough that it cannot be a threat, but it also wants Russia to be strong enough to challenge their common enemies, the Western democracies headed by the US. In addition, according to Winkler, China's strategic thinking includes the possible fallout from Russia's collapse, especially on the dangers of nuclear proliferation. In contrast to European countries, China is keen to avoid the impression that Western democracies have overcome a powerful authoritarian force. This could doubt China's claim to being the world's leading governing power. China's story of the West's doomed fall and its rise would be undermined if the West were even somewhat to overcome Russia. This could undermine China's geopolitical goals by casting doubt on the narrative it presents regarding the course of global governance in the future.

Efforts to Reduce Reliance on the Dollar

A convergence of interests between Russia and China has intensified efforts to reduce reliance on the dollar. This convergence has been accelerated by the imposition of sanctions on Russia in response to its incursion into Ukraine and Washington's increasingly aggressive role towards China. To reduce their reliance on the dollar, the central banks of both nations have begun to reallocate a lower percentage of their reserve funds to assets denominated in other currencies. In addition, yuan settlement has replaced dollars as the primary method of transaction between them, indicating a shift in strategy away from the dollar-dominated global financial system. As Putin has pointed out, there are current initiatives to persuade other countries to follow suit. The Biden administration has rallied a broad coalition of support for Ukraine in the economic battle against Russia. This coalition includes almost all major advanced economies. This coordinated global effort has hindered Russian efforts to seek safety in other

stable currencies like the euro, pound sterling, or Canadian dollar since allied nations are also strengthening these currencies in reaction to Russian aggression.

Indo-Pacific Conundrum

From a military perspective, the growing alliance between Russia and China indirectly threatens American strategic objectives in Europe and Asia. The alarming prospect of facing threats on two fronts is more accurate because Moscow and Beijing's military capabilities and goals are converging, which is frightening for American leaders. According to Ambrosio et al.¹⁶, this new situation could cause a significant change in the international geopolitical situation and could affect the long-standing US strategy doctrine. The success of the US strategic reorientation towards the Asia-Pacific area, widely known as the 'pivot to Asia,' could be undermined by the rising tensions and possible wars in Eastern Europe, propelled by the combined military efforts of Russia and China.

The US faces a dilemma in adequately addressing security concerns in both Eastern Europe and Russia simultaneously due to the destabilising influence of Moscow and Beijing. In considering the strategic problems brought about by changing military dynamics, General Ben Hodges has pointed out the limits of America's ability to deal with Pacific and European threats. According to Lo¹⁷, Hodges draws attention to the fact that the United States is confronted with the dual challenge of addressing security concerns in Europe and effectively responding to the perceived threat from China. China and Russia have considerable military might, bolstered by their long-lasting power and the vast territory they control across Eurasia and beyond. The demographic, economic, and geopolitical shifts in Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union have helped it forge stronger relationships with countries like India and China, among others, and have stoked the fires of Russian rebirth. Part of this common goal is for the two nations to work together to increase their military might in critical areas, especially the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions.

The Ukrainian Question

Compared to the relatively stable economies of China and the US, Russia's economy has seen significant difficulties due to the crisis between Russia and Ukraine. Despite the economic uncertainty, India is one of several countries that have chosen to purchase gas and oil from Russia, showing that Russia still has allies. Indirect support from China has also helped Russia weather geopolitical storms. Interactions between China and the US in the Russia-Ukraine conflict

illustrate the intricate web of power dynamics on a global scale¹⁸. The geopolitical situation is already complicated due to the US military aid to Ukraine, and it is made even more complicated by China's indirect backing for Russia. The Russian government, headed by President Putin, is determined to restore Russia's prominence in global affairs and restore the country's image as a great power.

Nevertheless, given the current state of international affairs, Russia might have difficulties reclaiming its former prominence worldwide. At the same time, China's path seems to be different from Russia's; President Xi Jinping has painted a picture of China as an influential player on the international stage, ready to become a global superpower¹⁹. This claim highlights the changing dynamics of global power politics, where China is seen as a solid rival to the United States' conventional supremacy, and it shows China's aggressive goal of geopolitical hegemony.

Results and Discussion

The so-called 'China-Russia partnership' is based primarily on their geopolitical and security interests and their intention to challenge the dominant position of the US in the international system. Both countries regard such policies as menacing to their crucial interests, especially those from the US, including military bases and the democratisation program. Furthermore, both countries stand ideologically united against Western imperialism/interference and for 'non-interference in domestic affairs', which enhances the bonus part of this alliance. Economically, their partnership is enhanced by energy relations and military integration, which make them an aggressive force against U. S domination in strategic areas. The nuanced and intricate international interactions of the US, China, and Russia showcase their multidimensional geopolitical competition. Cooperation and rivalry can highlight this, significantly affecting regional dynamics and global security. With growing areas of agreement on national interests, this geopolitical interaction is also evolving away from a zero-sum game. China utilises its economic might to subtly shift international norms and establish itself as a significant player on the world stage, adopting a more nuanced strategy. When it comes to conflicts like the one in Ukraine, Russia favours a more aggressive approach, resorting to military operations and territorial grabs.

A further complicating factor is the widening economic gap between the two countries; Russia and China are both experiencing rapid economic growth. While Russia's financial stability is rocked by the war in Ukraine, forcing it to seek

new allies and diversify its trading links, China emerges as a long-term severe rival to US leadership. Russia and China are looking into alternative payment systems and reserve currencies to separate themselves from the US-dominated financial system. They are trying to widen their alternatives and reduce the influence of the US with this strategic move. A convergence and complexity in the trilateral relationship are both set in motion by the conflict in Ukraine. China continues to support Russia in its alliance, but it uses this relationship strategically. It hopes to undermine its Western competitors and stop them from dominating the region by backing Russia. On the other hand, the war has shown where the alliance is vulnerable; for example, Russia's dependence on China's economy could limit its ability to act independently.

The US, China, and Russia's trilateral relationship exemplifies the world in flux, with its changing power dynamics, adaptable alliances, and revised economic strategies. To navigate the intricate geopolitical terrain of the 21st century, it is crucial to comprehend the effects and implications of this intricate cooperation. Finding practical answers, reducing risks, and advancing a more secure international order for everyone requires active participation in the ongoing conversation.

Conclusion

Regarding modern geopolitics, the world of trust or lack thereof poses arguably the most significant difficulty. An essential part of international relations, trust, depends on how hostile states perceive and engage with one another. Tense relations among the US, China, and Russia are only one example of how a widening trust gap defines the present environment. International institutions may help address this shortfall, but they are not very good at what they do, which makes it harder to encourage real collaboration. Overcoming this challenge is becoming increasingly demanding as the United States' relationship with its great power opponents grows increasingly strained. Loss of confidence makes it less likely that people will work together in the future and worsens any existing obstacles to collaboration.

An enormous geopolitical problem for the US is how to interact with two such powerful enemies simultaneously. Using cooperation as a weapon to damage the relationship between Russia and China is one option. However, when we look closely enough, we cannot find any "wedge" problems that are good candidates for this kind of strategic manoeuvring. Additionally, those favouring working together

argue that it could start a positive feedback loop that improves mutual trust and harmony if they are successful. With significant cases of cooperation having modest spillover effects, tangible evidence of such positive second-order effects is uncommon, yet this theory still holds promise. Furthermore, there are costs and benefits to working together, and they could affect regional dynamics and alliances. With all these moving parts, it is no small feat for American decision-makers to weigh the pros and cons of working with rival big powers.

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