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Defining and Explaining the Changes in the Sino-Russian Relationship Over the 75 Years Following the Formation of the PRC

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**Defining and Explaining the Changes in the Sino-Russian Relationship
Over the 75 Years Following the Formation of the PRC**



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UCLA Political Science Departmental Honors Thesis

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Scientific Literature Review.....	6
PART I DEFINING CLOSENESS.....	9
Measuring Closeness Through Mutually Shared Treaties.....	9
Measuring Closeness through shared membership in Multilateral, International Organizations.....	14
Measuring the Number of Meetings and Joint Statements Between Russia and China.....	19
Defining and measuring diplomatic closeness through the Sino-Russian participation in the United Nations.....	22
Historical Trends of Military Cooperation Between the Nations.....	25
Combined Measurement of Closeness.....	29
PART II COMPARISON.....	31
Economic Cooperation Between China and Russia.....	31
Bilateral trade analysis.....	31
Bilateral economic agreements.....	34
Closeness Analysis:.....	37
Leadership Cooperation and Compatibility.....	38
Education level.....	39
Military Background.....	41
Leader Age When Assuming Office.....	42
Closeness Analysis.....	50
The Effects of Global Power Balance Shifts on the Relationship Between Russia and China.....	52
Closeness Analysis.....	62
Ideological Similarities.....	62
Ideological doctrine comparison.....	62
Economy style comparison (free market versus state controlled).....	66
Democracy/Autocracy Comparison.....	70
Closeness Analysis:.....	77
The Implications of the Recent Sino-Russian Rapprochement on the Global Geopolitical Balance.....	78
Conclusion.....	81
Works Cited.....	84
Addendum.....	95

Abstract

In recent years, political scientists and US foreign policy makers have begun to notice a convergence between the Russian Federation and People's Republic of China. This rise in closeness has been alarming to members of US Congress, and has been addressed by both Presidents Trump and Biden (CRS 2023). As such, the relevance of understanding and contextualizing the relationship between Russia and the PRC is high. The goal of this thesis was to perform a data-driven investigation of several vital dimensions of the Sino-Russian relationship, over the period of 1949 to 2024, to answer the question of whether the relationship did actually become closer recently, and how it developed over the years. The thesis defined what closeness between these countries is and measured it throughout the 75 year period of the PRC's existence, in 5 year increments. The concept of closeness was broken down into several measurable characteristics, such as treaties between the two nations, joint military exercises, joint statements, and membership in joint multilateral organizations. Next, the thesis looked at four potential explanations in regard to this closeness – economic interdependence, similarities in leader's backgrounds, similarities in state ideologies, and shifts in global power balances to help account for the changes in closeness. Following the creation of measurements for the variables, the thesis compared them with the combined closeness variable to determine levels of correlation between the factors. The key takeaway is that the interdependence of the economy and the shifts in geopolitical power balances, followed by state ideology, are the most relevant explanations that correlate the closest with the main chart. Personal similarities between leaders account for little to no correlation with closeness. This thesis is intended to be of interest to the political scholars and foreign policy makers trying to understand what accounts for the closeness between the nations, and to help determine focus areas for future research on the topic.

Introduction

The relationship between Russia and China has become an increasingly important aspect of global international relations, and some political science scholars and media are discussing a possible new level of alignment of Sino-Russian politics, diplomacy, and economics that may affect the international geopolitical balance. To better understand and evaluate the present time Sino-Russian interaction, this thesis will, first, collect and present various data to establish how the relationship between China and Russia has changed over time. I will explore several important aspects of the Sino-Russian interactions over the 75 year period, since the formation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 up to the present year of 2024, to analyze the patterns of the relations from the historical perspective, and will focus a special attention on the patterns that have been emerging in the last two decades.

The history of the Sino-Russian relationships and its current phase has been the subject of many research projects. Some recent studies are claiming that these two countries are definitely getting closer together. An international relations scholar, Bonny Lin, Director of the China Power Project, at the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, affirms: “As U.S.-Chinese competition intensifies, China sees more value in deepening relations with Russia as a close strategic partner”(Lin 2022). Also, David Shullman, the Senior Director of the Global China Hub at CSIS agrees: “Russia and China deepening alignment since 2014, along with the complementarity of their needs and capabilities, has fueled growing ties across all dimensions of their partnership” (Hart 2023). Is it true that China and Russia have grown measurably closer to each other in the past 10 years? To answer this question, this thesis will focus on four dimensions of the relationship between Beijing and Moscow – economic

integration, political and diplomatic collaboration, military cooperation, and closeness of the leadership. Such areas of cooperation will be measured through the frequency and depth of relevant political events; the number and scope of joint military exercises and trajectory of the arms sales; diplomatic interactions, such as meetings between leaders, treaties signed, membership in common organizations, and shared agreements; and various factors determining closeness of leadership.

Once a good gauge for measuring each of the four areas of closeness is established, the thesis will go on to explore potential explanatory factors that can help interpret the reasoning behind the findings. The study will focus on four variables, specifically: shared economic interests, such as trade and common investments; the similarities of the backgrounds of the nation's leaders; similarities between the state's ideologies; and finally, the global power balance. After comparing these four variables, the thesis will attempt to put forth the best explanation or combination of explanations to illuminate the reasoning for the changes in the Sino-Russian relationship over the past 75 years. It will also serve as a way to explore which potential explanations do not hold weight after being scrutinized. The Addendum to this thesis will present charts and timelines used to measure the levels of closeness of the Sino-Russia relationship over the years.

The historic approach allows this research to go deeper into understanding the vital connections between different charts, presented in the thesis, while clearly demonstrating some similar patterns in economic and political, and ideological dimensions of the Sino-Russian interaction over the years. Also, investigating the data, representing a long period of over 75 years, will provide more accurate insights into the underlying processes and tendencies, and will give more reliable possible explanations for the changes in the closeness level between the

countries. Therefore, it is really important that all the findings, regarding the recent changes in the closeness levels, will be placed into the proper historical context. Also, the thesis will include detailed accurate historical descriptions of various ideas, events, and processes that happened in both countries, to provide a deeper explanation of the reasoning for assigning certain number values on the charts, used in this thesis.

Beyond collecting relevant data and interpreting it, attempting to provide some correlations and explanations for the changes in the level of closeness between Moscow and Beijing, the thesis will hopefully inspire further research on the topic by political scientists and historians, to better understand the underlying patterns of this evolving, and increasingly important, international relationship that plays a big role in the existing geopolitical balance.

Scientific Literature Review

In the past several years the relations between Russia and China have been discussed by both Russian and Western political science scholars, with a focus on new dynamics in Sino-Russian relations, and the possibility of increased rapprochement, with the two countries more often coordinating foreign policy, conducting military combat exercises, greatly increasing trade with each other, and forming closer diplomatic ties (Lin 2022).

Political scientist Graham Allison has recently popularized the term *Thucydides Trap* in reference to a tendency visible throughout history of a rising power to challenge the existing power in an attempt to change the status quo. The conflict generally results in war and bloodshed. Although Allison conducted his research on the growing power of China in comparison with the status quo power of the United States, it is interesting to pose the question of why Russia and China did not have such a moment as there was an overlap between the geopolitical rise of China and the gradual decline of Russia's powers. By the logic of the

Thucydides Trap, China and Russia should have gone through some sort of military conflict, or at the very least economic altercation (Allison 2015). Despite this, the relationship between these two states has not faltered much since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and has been on an upward trend since the turn of the century. Russia and China have grown closer to each other in many aspects, at least for the present time, demonstrating the friendship of the leaders, and strong growth tendencies in bilateral trade and military cooperation.

Russian scholars, like Sergey Karaganov, argue that, supposedly, a common Western practice of “imposing embargoes and economic sanctions on selected countries to punish them for undesired behavior had an unintended result of pushing Russia and China closer together”, giving them an incentive to find potential synergies, develop more trust in each other, and to find new ways of increasing the breadth and depth of their cooperation (Karaganov 2023).

Initially, the possibility of the Sino-Russian growing rapprochement was not taken seriously by most Western scholars, being called a “wary embrace” (Lo 2017). The stark and growing asymmetry in the economic power between China and Russia, and the history of distrust between the countries seemed to make a real strategic alliance virtually impossible (Jiang 2019). However, the political scholars from the China Power Project (Center for Strategic & International Studies), gathered mounting statistical data of greatly increased Chinese-Russian trade and military-technical cooperation, even in sensitive areas, like the latest Russian military technology transfers, and joint activities in the Russian Arctic, indicates a significant shift to deepening Sino-Russian strategic partnership, with increased mutual trust, regardless of some past historical grievances and split (Hart 2023). The question that is discussed in many recent Sino-Russian focused political science publications is how stable is this new Chinese-Russian rapprochement and how long will it last (Kraus 2020). Some international relations scholars, like

Patricia M. Kim, a Fellow at the Brookings Institution and the Center for East Asia Policy Studies, affirm that there are some serious limits to the self-proclaimed “No-Limit Cooperation”, and “China and Russia can’t be split, but they can be thwarted” (Kim 2023). For the time being, many experts agree that, in many ways, the Sino-Russian current relationship is still a temporary alliance of convenience - a temporary win-win situation, where Russia gets much-needed economic and diplomatic support from China, which helps Russia to withstand the political isolation and economic sanctions that were imposed because of the war in Ukraine; and China gets a lot of deep discounts and preferential status in big energy transactions, that helps China to accelerate its economic growth (Kotkin 2023).

Another common theme in the Sino-Russian discussion is that the two countries cooperation is often influenced by their united opposition to the US, and the West in general (“the collective West”), with a joint goal to shift the geopolitical power from the established Western countries to the emerging global actors in the South and in the East (Bolt 2014). While China is playing a major role in counterbalancing the West, due to China’s rapid economic expansion, it would not be possible without cheap and abundant Russian energy resources. Russia has been the largest supplier of crude oil for China since 2016, and the amounts of oil and gas trade have grown dramatically in the last couple of years. Cheap Russian energy resources literally fuel the growth of China’s industry and infrastructure (Apps 2021).

The experts are especially concerned that the war in Ukraine is possibly significantly speeding up the process of the Sino-Russian multilevel integration and mutually profitable support (Fong 2023). While Russia is focused on surviving the economic blockade, supporting soldiers on the battlefields, and reinventing national ideology, China does not interfere in Russia’s domestic policies and focuses on using the moment to obtain maximum benefits from

Russia's reliance on its support. It is not a perfect union but a very practical one for both sides (Kendall-Taylor 2022).

PART I DEFINING CLOSENESS

In order to understand what potentially led to closeness between Russia and China, it is necessary to first create a measurement and definition of such closeness. This study will explore shared treaties, joint statements, membership in collective organizations, and shared UN voting to determine the closeness factor. These measurements will later be compared with the four potential explanations to determine any correlation between these variables. Over the past century, Russia, formerly the Soviet Union, and China, have had a complicated political relationship, growing close during the late 1940s and 1950s, the period when the initial establishment of the People's Republic of China occurred, and distancing themselves due to ideological differences throughout the 1960s, resulting in the Sino-Soviet split in 1961-89.

Measuring Closeness Through Mutually Shared Treaties.

Since 1949, Russia and China have had three official treaties, two at the onset of the formation of the PRC, and the other treaty nearly 40 years later, in 1991, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Shortly after the end of World War 2, The Kuomintang Republic of China and the Soviet Union signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance. This treaty put forth a set of borders, solving several disputes regarding Mongolia, and outlining some economic trade in regards to building a shared Eastern Railway company ("Sino-Soviet Treaty" 1945). Following the formation of the PRC in 1949, The Soviet Union and PRC updated the previous treaty by signing the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, and Mutual Assistance. This treaty acted as one of mutual defense, but also encouraged economic interconnection with the Soviet Union sending many scientists and various technology specialists

to China in order to help develop the nation's nuclear program, and expand its scientific field. Following the death of Stalin in 1953, and the rise to power of Khrushchev, a wave of destalinization occurred throughout the Soviet Union as Stalin statues began to be torn down, places renamed, and Gulags shut down. Many of these changes would later lead to the Khrushchev Thaw (Tucker 1957). These liberalizations and shifts under Khrushchev throughout the 1950's resulted in growing dissatisfaction from the CCP. By 1960, issues in ideology boiled over resulting in the Sino-Soviet Split. During the next several decades, up until the 1980s, diplomatic relations between Russia and China were almost non-existent, with previous treaties being overruled. In 1969 a border dispute resulted in a military altercation between the USSR and PRC in a conflict at Zhenbao (Damansky) island. There were several hundred casualties from this battle. During the Sino-Russian split period, US Foreign policy shifted towards recognizing PRC as a legitimate nation. Richard Nixon visited mainland China in 1972, acting as an important signal of China's distancing itself from Russia and being receptive to relations with Western Powers at the time. It resulted in Henry Kissinger coming up with the concept of Triangular Diplomacy, affirming the rule that the US must not allow the USSR and China to be closer to each other than either one to the US (essentially a way for the US to manage relations between the two major contesting communist powers PRC and USSR). The first traces of diplomatic cooperation resumed with the opening of a Chinese consulate in Leningrad in 1986. Three years later, in 1989, Mikhail Gorbachev and Zhao Ziyang met in China, marking the first visit to China by a Soviet leader since 1989 (Garver 1989). This led to both sides re-establishing relations with one another.

With the fall of the Soviet Union and the formation of the Russian Federation in 1991, a new chapter in the history of the Sino-Russian relationship started. In 1991, Jiang Zemin visited

Moscow for the first time, resulting in several agreements settling some important border disputes between the two states. In 1996, President Boris Yeltsin visited China, when he and Jiang Zemin issued a joint statement guaranteeing a “Sino-Russian partnership of strategic coordination”.

In 2001, China and Russia signed the “*Treaty of Good Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation*”. This treaty would serve as the basis for much of the relations between these two nations throughout the 21st century so far. It was a significant step forward, solidifying a joint attempt to “enhance relations between the two countries to a completely new level” (“Ministry of Foreign Affairs” 2001). The Treaty promoted the establishment of a “just and fair new world order based on universally recognized principles and norms of international laws”(“Ministry of Foreign Affairs” 2001). Both countries affirmed that they share a goal of maintaining peace and stability in Asia and the world. The Russian side officially acknowledged in this document that it views Taiwan as an inalienable part of China and that it opposes Taiwan’s independence.

Another political milestone in 2001 happened when the two nations entered into *the Shanghai Cooperation Organization*, an organization created to promote strategic and economic cooperation between Eurasian nations. Since the creation of this organization, China and Russia’s relations have only continued to grow. In 2008, the countries resolved several long-standing border arguments. Between 2000 and 2010, annual trade between the two states has grown at a fascinating rate, rising from \$8 billion in 2000 to \$55 billion in 2010. On October 15, 2004, Hu Jintao and Vladimir Putin signed 13 separate agreements, some of which officially settled a majority of remaining border disputes between the two countries. In August of 2005, to solidify political accomplishments and demonstrate mutual trust, Russia and China held their first joint military exercise together, known as “Peace Mission 2005”.

In 2010, South Africa joined Russia, China, Brazil, and India in establishing an international non-military alliance, called BRICS, which provided a new platform for diplomatic and economic cooperation, with China and Russia playing the leading roles, advancing the Sino-Russian idea of collectively opposing the West.

In 2011, on the 10th anniversary of the *Treaty of Good Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation*, China and Russia officially agreed to “establish a comprehensive strategic partnership”. In addition to lauding the original treaty and affirming themselves to upholding it, Hu Jintao and Medvedev committed to several notable upgrades to their partnership. Most notably agreeing to increase bilateral trade volume to 100 billion dollars in 2015, and 200 billion dollars by 2020. The two leaders pledged to cooperate in R&D, expand mutual investment, and deepen connections in the energy field. In addition to economic cooperation, this statement showed support for both nations promoting Sino-Russia cooperation in their education, film, and media. The nations also agreed to “deepen exchanges and cooperation between the two militaries”, and have decided to move forward with increased cooperation in multilateral organizations such as the G20, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and BRICS (PRC 2011).

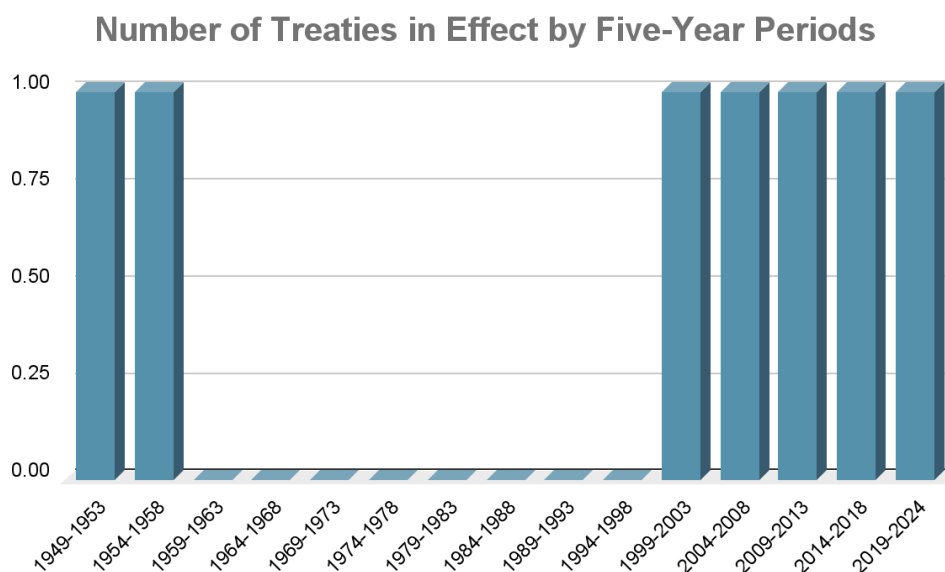
In 2019, Xi Jinping and Putin met once again to upgrade their relationship to a “Comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era”, with a major focus of enacting change in tipping the power balance in a US-centric world. This joint statement once again reaffirmed the two states' commitment to their original treaty in 2001, while also outlining further steps of cooperation. The main takeaway from this statement was a desire to “deepen military mutual trust, strengthen cooperation in the field of military technology, conduct joint military exercises, and promote the relationship between the two militaries to a new level.” (“Ministry of Foreign Affairs” 2019). New additions from the 2011 statement included an

explicit focus on joint counterterrorism cooperation, along with the desire to gain a greater control of cyberspace to protect themselves from cyberattacks.

In February of 2022, less than two weeks before Russia invaded Ukraine, Putin and Xi met at the Beijing Olympics releasing a joint statement once again signaling the increasing strength of their relationship claiming that “Friendship between the two states has no limits, there are no ‘forbidden’ areas of cooperation” (“Joint Statement” 2022). Xi also joined Putin in officially condemning further enlargements of NATO, and US involvement in the Indo-Pacific.

A Timeline of Sino-Russian Relationship Over the Past Century, presented in the Addendum, identifies many of the milestones on the road to increased political closeness and demonstrates the dynamics of the development of the relationship between China and Russia.

Figure 1



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China & Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

*In 1950 The Soviet Union and PRC signed the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance. This collective security treaty was supposed to last for thirty years but effectively ended with the Sino-Soviet Split in the late 1950s. No formal treaties between the two nations existed for the next fifty years until a new one was signed in 2001. The Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation was originally signed in 2001, set to last for twenty years. On the ten year anniversary of the treaty and on the twenty year anniversary of the treaty special meetings were held between the two countries to reaffirm their commitment to the treaty and signal a desire to continue working together. On June 28, 2021 Russia and China extended the treaty for another five years (Beijing Newsroom” 2024).

In summary, the two countries have been connected by treaties at two distinct periods, once during the first ten years of this study 1949-1958. During the forty years between 1959 and 2000 there were no treaties enforced between the two nations. In 2001 a treaty was signed between the two countries, which has remained in effect up to present date in 2024.

Measuring Closeness through shared membership in Multilateral, International Organizations.

The second component for measuring the closeness of the relationship between the Soviet Union/Russia and the PRC will be an exploration of shared membership in multilateral organizations between the two nations. Although attention will be drawn to the actions and goals of many of these organizations, the focus will be on quantifying the number of such memberships, throughout the decades of the study, in order to create a measurable graphic variable to explain closeness.

Throughout the first few decades of this study, 1949-1969, the two countries were in limited to no shared multilateral organizations. Prior to the Sino-Soviet split, the newly formed

PRC was seen as an illegitimate government in China by much of the international community. This resulted in the PRC being barred from being a member of the United Nations, the only prior organization which shared membership of Russia and China. Such a bar on PRC membership lasted until 1971 when the PRC was officially accepted into the UN in place of Taiwan. In addition to the challenges the PRC faced with legitimacy throughout its first few decades of existence limiting its participation in the global community, the Sino Soviet Split in 1960 further hampered the possibility of the two nations sharing joint membership in organizations. The closest the two nations got to being members of the same organization was the brief period of time that the PRC was granted observer status to the Warsaw Pact from its inception in 1955, to 1961 when China backed an Albanian uprising against Russia as part of the wider spread Sino-Soviet Split at the time. This action resulted in the expulsion of China from the organization and marked the closure of Sino-Russian joint membership in organizations for the 1950s and 1960s. By 1971, the PRC got officially voted into the UN replacing the Taiwanese government in its spot in the UN Security Council as well. The inclusion of the PRC in the UN led to the first batch of joint membership in multilateral organizations with Russia, specifically the UN, UNESCO, the World Health Organization, and the Universal Postal Union. In the 1980s, the two nations also joined the International Atomic Energy Agency, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. The fall of the Soviet Union led to a greater increase in membership in multilateral organizations as the newly formed Russian Federation began to try and integrate to the new global power balance without the Soviet Union. In 1992, Russia joined the International Monetary Fund, IMF in order to be able to tap into global funding. By the 2000s, the early framework of modern Russia began to be laid out. In 2001 Russia and the PRC became founding members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, SCO. This organization acts as a unifying

force between member states located throughout central and east Asia promoting deep economic and political ties and fostering cooperation. Later in the same decade, Russia and China formed the BRICS organization. This group featuring Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa meet annually at formal summits and cooperate on many mutually beneficial multilateral policies, recently they have emerged as one of the main geopolitical competitors to G7, a similar organization that the US is part of. In the recent decade, Russia and China have both entered into a multilateral agreement as a part of the Chinese sponsored Belt and Road Initiative. The BRI is an economic agreement created by the PRC with many, mostly developing, countries internationally, one such country is Russia. The list mentioned above is not all inclusive, rather reflecting the biggest and most relevant organizations possessing enough information in order to deduce membership dates and ideological goals.

The measurement for closeness for this section will only include the organizations out of the above list that meet a certain criteria, that of not being a global membership with virtually all nations a part of it. More specifically, this study will look at international organizations that have 50% or less of the world's countries as member states. This notion of exclusivity will allow to more accurately deduce the growing closeness between China and Russia, removing organizations such as the UN where virtually all countries are members no matter on alignment otherwise.

Table containing a breakdown of the joint organization memberships by decade between Russia and China using the exclusive, 50% or lower measurement described above.

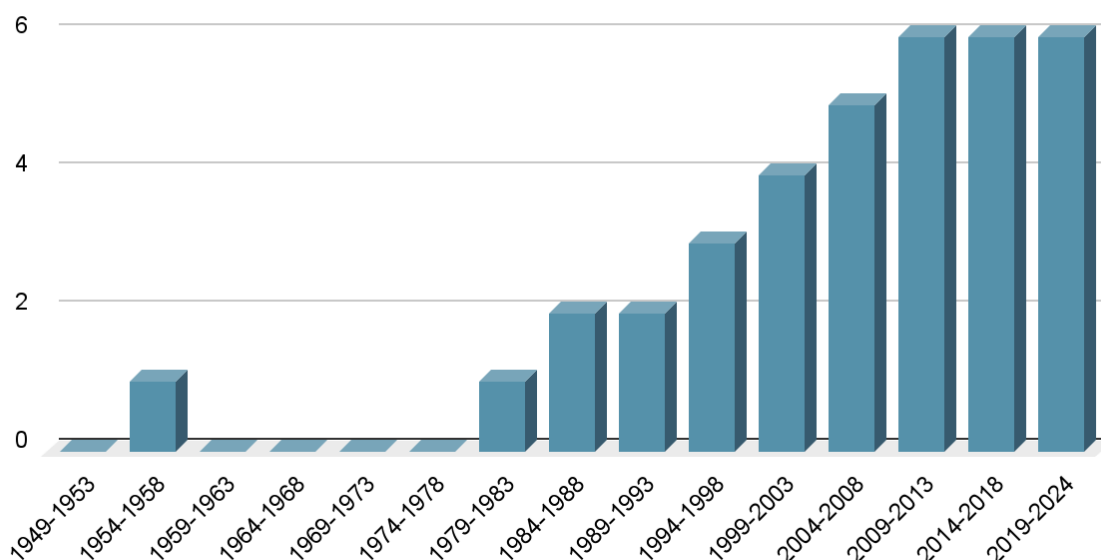
1949		Warsaw Pact					
To		(observer					
1959	1	status)					

1959 To 1969	0						
1969 To 1979	0						
1979-1989	2	International Atomic Energy Agency	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 1989				
1989-1999	3	International Atomic Energy Agency	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 1989	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. (1997)			
1999-2009	5	International Atomic Energy Agency	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 1989	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. (1997)	Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), 2001	BRICS, 2009	
2009-2019	6	International Atomic Energy Agency	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 1989	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. (1997)	Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), 2001	BRICS, 2009	Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), 2013
2019-Present	6	International Atomic Energy Agency	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 1989	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. (1997)	Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), 2001	BRICS, 2009	Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), 2013

*Source: Data collected from membership pages for each organization, see work cited in the addendum for specific citations. Data is also available in the linked spreadsheet, contact djud@ucla.edu to receive access to it.

Figure 2

Joint Membership in Exclusive Multilateral Organizations Between Russia and China



* A table and comprehensive chart containing all multilateral organizations that the two nations have been a part of is located in the addendum at the end of the thesis.

As visible in the graph above, prior to 1979 Russia and China were members of virtually no exclusive shared multilateral organizations. The only exception to this being the Warsaw Pact where China had a temporary observer status allowing it to sit in on meetings without being a part of the military alliance. Following 1980, joint membership in multilateral organizations by the two nations began to rapidly increase until plateauing in the 2010s.

An important aspect of the data set above is the caveat that the amount of existing international organizations has changed drastically over the 75 year course of this study. Many of

the multilateral organizations today were non-existent in the 1950s and 1960s. As such, it is difficult to measure changes in this variable as it is necessary to acknowledge the changing levels of joint membership as not only a factor of Russia and China getting closer, but also an increasingly globalized world with higher levels of joint membership in multilateral organizations in general. In order to address this discrepancy, the more exclusive chart showing joint memberships in organizations where less than fifty percent of the world's states are members will be used when calculating the closeness.

Measuring the Number of Meetings and Joint Statements Between Russia and China

Another important measurement of closeness between Russia and China will be the frequency of meetings between the two leaders when on good terms. To establish the frequency of meetings, both official joint statements, and newspaper archives on ProQuest, going back to 1949 were used. Each separate mention of a meeting between leaders in this manner will be recorded and added to a spreadsheet breaking the meetings down by decade and by leader. This data will later be factored in with the rest of the measurements of closeness to create one large table to compare potential explanations with.

The topics covered in Sino-Russian meetings have varied over time. Mao and Stalin met to discuss the recognition of Formosa (present day Taiwan), joint border issues, and other matters related to the Friendship Treaty of 1949. After that treaty was signed, the two met annually to commemorate the signing of their treaty and to reaffirm their commitment to one another. Up to Stalin's death in 1953, the meetings occurred regularly and were very positive with the goals of promoting unity between the states. These relations begin to drastically change following 1953,

in the next five year period with the only meetings found in the archives being one joint statement denouncing Yugoslavia in the aftermath of Yugoslavia's ideological split from the Soviet Union, the other being an assurance issued by Khrushchev to Mao that Chinese interests would not be hurt by Soviet foreign policy in the Middle East. By 1960, only three meetings occurred, most within the same month as the two countries officially ended their treaty and much of their diplomatic ties in 1960. The only other joint statement was issued as a letter, with both parties refusing to meet; this letter denounced actions by both the Soviet and PRC parties, further delineating reasons for the split. Following this diplomatic relations between the two communist states were completely ended until the late 1980s.

In 1988, representatives from the PRC and Soviet Union met at a neutral site to discuss the Cambodia War and hold talks about ending the conflict. In the following year Gorbachev officially visited Beijing, mending diplomatic issues with the PRC and officially recognizing the desire for future partnerships with China. In 1991, Chinese party chiefs along with Deng Xiaoping visited Moscow, later releasing a statement in a symbol of further betterment of relations. By the mid 1990s, Beijing established a hotline with Moscow, and began to hold semi-regular meetings between leaders with the newly beginning goals of containing the west. The increased cooperation between the states resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation in 2001. The following decade resulted in frequent meetings between leaders with regular commemorations and reaffirmations of their joint 2001 alliance.

With the rise to power of Xi Jinping in 2012 Sino-Russian joint meetings reached an all time high. As of 2023, the two leaders have met 42 times, with Xi meeting with Putin more than double the times of his meetings with other countries' leaders (Hart 2023). Many of these

meetings have occurred as sidebar conversations during BRICS and SCO summits in recent decades. The two leaders have also had repeated state visits, with Xi traveling to Russia twice since 2020 and Putin doing the same. This data clearly shows a significant uptick in meetings and statements released between the two nations in the past ten years, and are currently indicating that such meetings are not likely to slow down in the near future.

Figure 3



The graph above shows moderately high activity early on, accounting for the signing of the 1950 treaty between the Soviet Union and China. Shortly after, there is a sharp decrease leading to a drop all the way to zero during the Sino-Soviet Split. This drop is followed by a vigorous rebound in the 1980s and especially the 2000s accounting for a rekindling of diplomatic relations between the Russian Federation and China. The activity reached a peak in the late 2010s and especially in the five year span of 2014-2018.

Defining and measuring diplomatic closeness through the Sino-Russian participation in the United Nations

One of the ways to measure the closeness of two global actors on the world political arena is to compare the diplomatic goals and diplomatic actions of these actors through their participation in the UN. In brief, both Russia and China have been heavily focusing on opposing the West and maintaining their autonomy and sovereignty, which is clearly reflected in their diplomatic endeavors. The closeness of the Sino-Russian foreign policies and the unification of their diplomatic influence on world politics can be measured through their joint voting in the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council. The numbers on the convergence of the UN voting, provided in the graphic in the Addendum, demonstrate the increased coordination of these two countries in the last almost two decades (2006-2022), allowing them to achieve important political confluence on many key issues. The voting comparison table in the Addendum is based on the UN Voting Data Set (“UN Voting App”). It shows each particular country’s rank in similarity of voting to another country. China had number one, two or three rank in similarity with Russia for almost all years from 2006 to 2022, with a really high level of voting similarity - in 2008-2010 it was 96%, in 2011-2012 it was 98%, and in 2013-2016 it was 91%.

Both China and Russia really value the UN and share a similar view of their roles in the UN - they see themselves as internationally respected, valued, long-term members and the powerful global actors, the guardians of international affairs based on law and order. Both countries clearly use the UN to boost their international image, which is especially important for Russia during the last two years.

Therefore, China and Russia share the same agenda in their unwavering support of the UN, working in unison, they continuously promote giving more strength and power to the UN Security Council, and building up the respect to the UN role in international affairs in general. This joint agenda is in opposition to the USA position, which has been somewhat disenchanted with the UN, and expressed disappointment in many aspects of the organization, especially during the Trump administration. The USA has the most negative votes in the UN, closely followed by the UK and France, while China and Russia are keeping at the top of positive votes, which indicates a sharp contrast of political agenda of the Western countries in relation to both Russia and China.

Both Russia and China have been actively using their UN participation to advance their political and economic goals, for many years. Russia/USSR and China have been P5 members, with a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, since the UN Charter was accepted in 1945, with the critical power of veto on any “substantive” draft resolution. Of the supreme importance is the fact that Russia was able to keep the Soviet Union seat on the UN Security Council because it was recognized as a legal successor, after the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991.

In order to explain a high level of correlation of the Sino-Russian voting, it’s important to look at the many shared diplomatic interests. First of all, it is a focus on using the UN resolutions to promote and advance their respective countries’ political and economic agendas, and to defend their right to make independent decisions. At the same time, both countries proclaim that they are committed to protecting equality and sovereignty of *all* the UN members and defending their right to make independent decisions as well, while supporting national security of *all* members. Another common goal is to bolster all members’ right to make their economic and political decisions “*with stability prioritized over human rights*” (Ferdinand 2014). Also, both countries

advocate a more restricted use of Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, assuring the consent of the UN member against whom this Chapter is being used; and enforcing the presumption of innocence until the UN is able to determine, clearly and beyond any doubt, that a serious breach of the UN rules had been done (Ferdinand 2014).

Not much research has been done on the topic of the Sino-Russian UN voting convergence, but based on the work of the British political science scholar Dr. Peter Ferdinand, of University of Warwick, UK, China and Russia have a long history of supporting each other in the UN. Dr. Ferdinand points out that China became really active in the UN since 1974, and cast more positive votes than any other country, and Russia was the next country with the highest number of positive votes, demonstrating a very similar pattern of voting, with positive votes “about three quarters of the time”. Even during the Sino-Russian Split (1960s - 1980s) these two countries continued to vote jointly “at least 70% of the time” (Ferdinand 2014). There are very few instances when the Sino-Russian voting pattern was not converging, one of the examples would be resolutions regarding Iran. But it is clearly an exception from the overall converging pattern.

Comparison of voting record percentages in the UN General Assembly 1974-2008, based on the UN Voting Data, found in Dr. Peter Ferdinand’s articles

Vote Cast:	Yes	No	Abstain
China	88.1	2.8	9.1
Russia/USSR	75.1	8.9	16
UK	41.8	25.4	32.7
US	20.2	56.2	23.6

Although this data will not be factored into the combined closeness variable later in the thesis due to a lack of comprehensive data, it is still invaluable to include and understand as an indicator of closeness between the two nations. At the very least, the data provided in this table and one in the addendum, show the correlation between similar voting patterns between BRICS and differences that such countries have with traditional powers such as members of the G7.

Historical Trends of Military Cooperation Between the Nations

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the USSR and PRC in 1949, the two nations have had a history of joint military aid and arms sales, and since the beginning of the 21st century, China and Russia have also shared a multitude of joint multilateral and bilateral military exercises. The amount of arms trade was at an all-time high during the military alliance signed between the two nations in the 1950s before virtually disappearing during the Sino-Soviet Split, and skyrocketing once more following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Over the years China greatly benefited from buying technologically superior Russian arms, together. More recently arms trade between the nations has begun to decline as the power balance started to shift in favor of China, and Russia became entangled in a military invasion of Ukraine (this dynamic can be seen in Figure 3A in the addendum).

The nations of Russia and China have not had formal military alliances since *The Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance* was signed in 1950 by Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong. The main goals of the treaty were “strengthening peace and universal security” and “mutual respect for State sovereignty and territorial integrity” (“Ministry of Foreign Affairs” 1950). Also, this treaty had a military component of jointly preventing any possible aggression of Japan, and immediately entering the war, if one of the two signing parties was attacked. The treaty technically lasted until 1979, however, relations between the two

nations significantly degraded following the Sino-Soviet Split in 1961. Following the death of Stalin, Khrushchev gained control of the Soviet Union, he implemented less drastic measures and began to backtrack on some of the policies of his predecessors, combined with other ideological differences regarding Marxist-Leninist ideals, which resulted in both nations ending many of their diplomatic relations with each other in 1961. Since then, the two nations have not had any military defense treaties. Despite this, since the 1950s, both nations have been significant partners regarding arms sales and joint military exercises. In 1950 China endured heavy losses in the Korean War, and in 1951, Moscow agreed to provide Beijing with large amounts of military equipment and assistance, around 700 fighter jets, 150 light bombers, and several hundred tanks and armored land vehicles, which nearly doubled the Chinese military at the time. These donations totaled around 1.5-2 billion dollars worth of military equipment in today's money (Hart 2022). Massive amounts of advanced Soviet military equipment rapidly modernized the Chinese army, giving China an invaluable overall military boost. In 1954-57 the Soviet Union also directly helped China create its nuclear program, sending many highly experienced Russian scientists over to help with the research and development of these weapons. Soviet nuclear experts established an Eastern Atomic Energy Institute in China, where they trained Chinese specialists, and assisted with uranium mining and enrichment, and with missile technology development. Between 1990-2005, China purchased 83% of its weapons from Russia, according to the International Peace Research Institute.

There have however been areas of discontent in the Sino-Russian relationship, specifically in the realm of espionage and technology theft between the two nations. Throughout the past few decades, Russia has accused China of stealing technological blueprints and spying on defense industry productions on over 100 different occasions. This has led to a decrease in

weapons trade with China recently. Through a combination of technology theft and technological innovation, China has developed its own methods to create much of the military equipment previously purchased from Russia. There are still certain technological parts that China is reliant upon Russia for. As of 2022, China has yet to have significant success in making fighter jet engines, purchasing the vast majority of them from Russia, China has also purchased many Russian stealth fighter jets as these are also technologically superior to Chinese-made stealth jets. This relationship of arms sales between the two nations may further deteriorate in the upcoming years as China continues to improve its military industry. Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine has led to a large amount of arms that would previously be sold globally, to be used internally in the conflict, causing Russia's prominence in the global weapons industry market to fall to its lowest in decades. In 2021, Russia's arms exports made up only 11% of the global total, a number much lower than what it had been for decades following the fall of the Soviet Union. China is now poised to take up much of the global arms market shares that Russia once had, potentially reversing its roles with Russia and beginning to provide its high-tech military equipment to it.

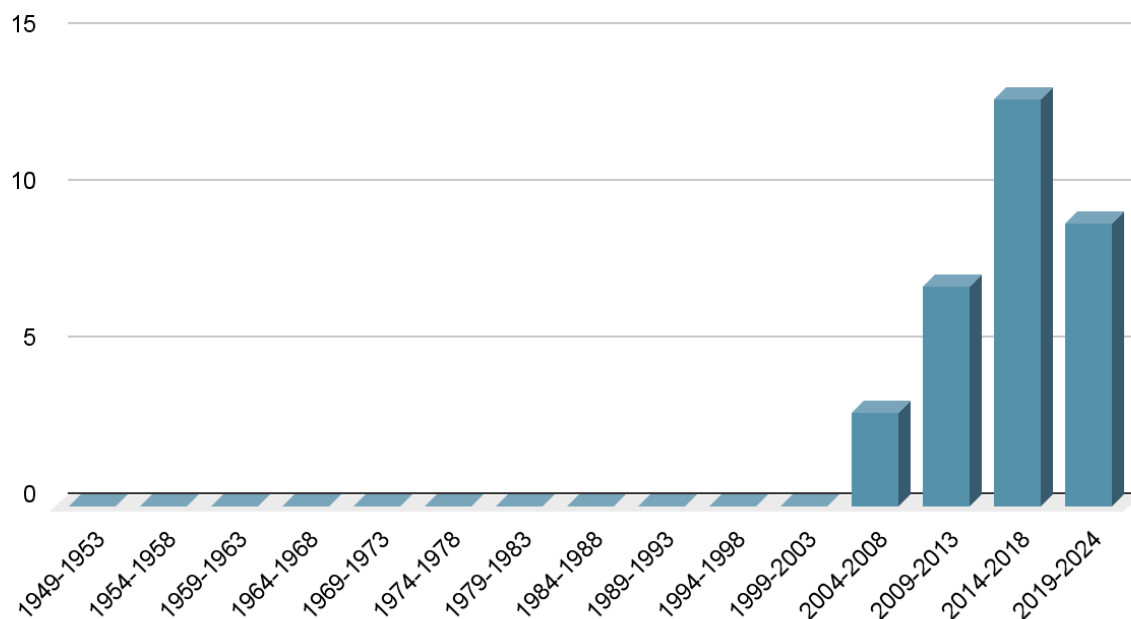
Since 2003, Russia and China have held joint exercises together starting out with several multilateral exercises with other Shanghai Cooperation Organization members before beginning to hold many bilateral training sessions with just Russia and China. These training sessions have been very beneficial for both countries, especially China. China has been able to use such joint training exercises to allow its troops to learn from the more experienced Russian military which has seen more military action in the several past decades than the Chinese army has. The People's Liberation Army has also been able to train in geographical locations and climates that it would not have been able to otherwise, granting invaluable experience conducting military operations in different environments.

More recently, joint military training between the two nations has been used to signal their dissatisfaction with the current order, specifically with the United States and its allies. In 2016, less than half a year after a ruling by the International Permanent Court of Arbitration invalidating much of China's historical territorial claims over the South China Sea, China, and Russia started Joint Sea 2016, a military exercise in the South China Sea with simulated island warfare. In a similar vein, in 2022, Russia and China launched a joint aerial exercise near Japan, over the East China Sea. This exercise directly coincided with the meeting of the US-backed Quadrilateral Strategic Dialogue, also known as QUAD in Tokyo. As such, joint military exercises between these two countries have become important diplomatic tools to signal intentions and displeasures to both allies and foes.

With the changing Sino-Russian power balance, with China increasing in power, joint diplomatic missions have not decreased but rather shifted in their direction and style. Many of the original joint exercises such as the "Peace Mission" exercises and "Joint Maritime" exercises were run by Russia, with China operating as the guest and supporting army. Recent exercises, such as the Zapad/Interaction 2021 military exercise have taken place in China under the leadership of the PRC. One of the organizers of the recent exercise, Li Shuyin described this exercise as a "change in roles" between the two countries. (Lo 2021, 73). This shift in dynamics will likely continue throughout the near future as China continues to rapidly expand its global influence while Russia's war in Ukraine presents many serious challenges and has stalled its growth. For now, it seems likely that joint exercises between the nations will continue for the foreseeable future.

Figure 4

Joint Military Exercise since 1991

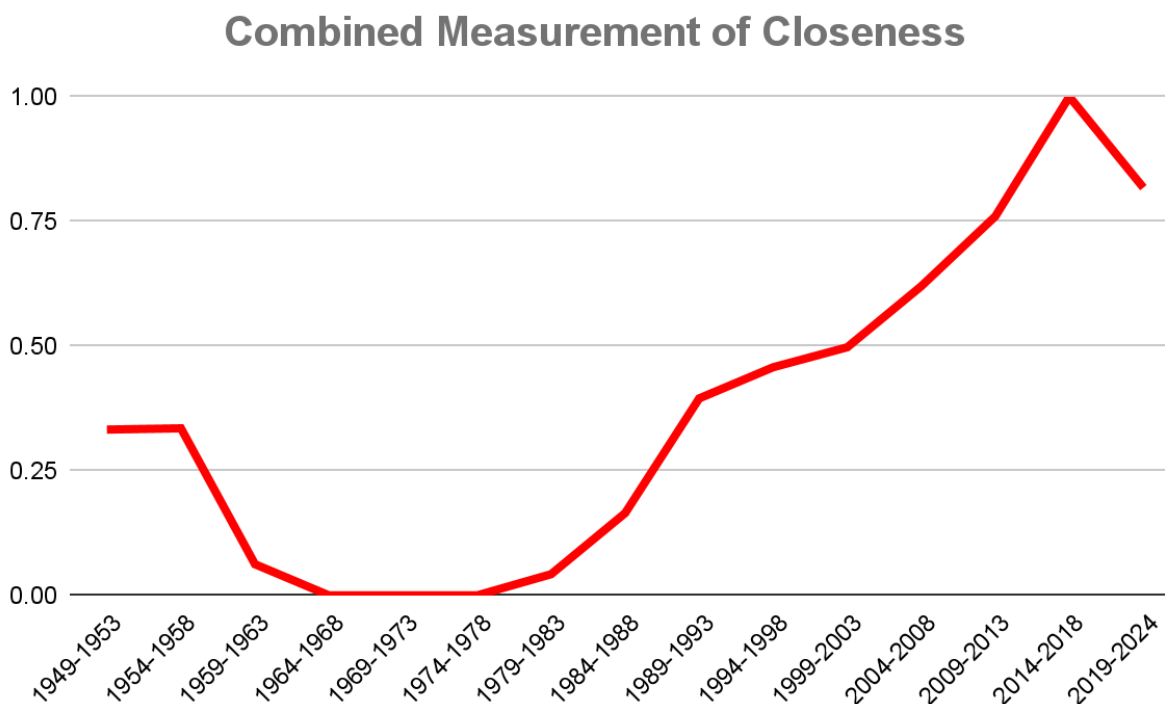


Joint military exercises did not occur throughout the era of the Soviet Union and PRC's initial alliance, following the Sino-Soviet split this number remained at zero, until rapidly rising in the early 2000s.

Combined Measurement of Closeness.

For a combined measurement of closeness between Russia and China, an average was taken of each of the four indicators, converted to a 0-1 scale. Zero represents very distant relations, while one denotes intense cooperation. Figure 5 presents the values of the combined measure, plotted for five year intervals, from 1949-2024.

Figure 5.



*For more information regarding how this graph was calculated view the linked spreadsheet, or consult the addendum.

The combined closeness measurement shows a moderate score of closeness at the onset of the study, 1949-1958. Shortly after that, the measurement plummeted to zero during the Sino-Soviet Split before beginning to rapidly pick up with the normalization of relations between the countries in the late 1980s. Since then relations have only continued to rise, reaching their peak in 2014-2018. In recent years it seems as though there has been a slight drop in closeness once more. This final time period is more difficult to determine accuracy for as it includes the entirety of 2024 in its measurement when at the time of writing this thesis it is only March of the year, this means that there is room in the remainder of 2024 for the measurement to change.

PART II COMPARISON

This section presents the data on change in four hypothetical causal variables and examines the correlation between change in these and changes in closeness of relations between the countries. Since causation can run in both directions and because other confounding variables can exist which could influence both sets of data, one cannot infer from a high correlation any particular causal link. Rather high correlation values show that there is correlation between the variables, making them potentially more likely to be a part of the explanation regarding closeness levels between Russia and China in the past 75 years.

Economic Cooperation Between China and Russia

Bilateral trade analysis

The important quantitative variable is specific data on the level of bilateral trade between China and Russia, over the years, presented in three charts in the Addendum - Annual Total Trade Between Russia and China in USD, Yearly Import from Russia to China in USD, and Import from China to Russia in USD. The most prominent trend in all three charts is the increase in trade since 1990, which is very significant, because it may be demonstrating the increased closeness of the two countries. The additional graph below is showing the same economic trade between China and Russia, over the years, but in GDP percentages for the GDP of Russia, clearly indicating, once again, a sizable increase in the last several years. It exposes the fact that not only the total volume of the bilateral trade between China and Russia have been increasing, but also this trade has been comprising a growing percentage of the GDP of Russia, making it increasingly more essential part of the Russian economy, since the beginning of the 1990s, and especially in the last 10 years.

Looking at the numbers on the above-mentioned charts, it is reasonable to argue that the dynamics of trade between Russia and China is closely connected to the political relations between these countries. There was a very small trade volume of Sino-Russian bilateral trade until the beginning of 1990s. A possible explanation for it is the fact that, from 1949 till the end of the 1950s, China was a junior partner in the relationship, and was receiving massive free help from the Soviet Union, instead of a bilateral trade; and, from the end of 1950s to the beginning of the 1990s, China and the Soviet Union were in the state of ideological and political split, becoming rivals, to some extent, which discouraged the bilateral trade.

Presently, China's GDP is about eight times bigger than Russia's – it was 17.52 trillion dollars for China and 2.24 trillion dollars for Russia in 2022. In the same 2022, China was ranked number one in total exports (\$3.73 trillions), while Russia was ranked number twelve (\$486 billions) (“China/Russia Observatory”). The asymmetry in economic strength continues to grow, with Russia increasingly dependent on China in its export and import.

In order to appreciate the magnitude of the current changes in the Sino-Russian economic relations, it is important to look more deeply at how these relations had started. The Soviet Union recognized the newly created Chinese People's Republic on the next day after it was created - October 2, 1949. Shortly thereafter, on February 15, 1950, the 30 year *The Sino-Soviet Friendship Alliance Mutual Assistance Treaty* was signed, and all through the 1950s, the Soviet Union was providing substantial economic aid to China. The Treaty specified a loan of USD \$300 million from the Soviet Union to China. Through the 1950s, the Soviet Union initiated and completed more than 160 industrial projects in China to jump start its industry, sending tens of thousands of highly educated specialists and all the necessary materials. All this massive economic help cannot be qualified as the Sino-Russian trade because it was not a trade but rather

an one-sided economic aid of one communist country to another. China's economy desperately needed help after the devastation caused by the Chinese Civil War (1927-1949). The Soviet Union transferred, free of charge, lots of technology know-how, which created the base for rapid industrialization in China. The First Chinese 5-Year Plan in 1953-1957 was created and implemented as a copy of the Soviet 5 year plans. As a result of the substantial Soviet economic assistance, a mostly agrarian country started turning into an industrial power, as presented in the "Brief History of Sino-Soviet Union/Russia Political Relations from 1949 to 2019" report, published in November 2020 by the Russian International Affairs Council, a non-profit academic and diplomatic think tank (Jiang 2019).

In addition to the period of 1949 to 1959, with almost non existent Sino-Russian trade, resulting from the reasons explained above, there was no sizable trade between Russia and China during the Sino-Russian Split (1959-1989). In 1958, Khrushchev stopped the previous free transfer of Soviet advanced technologies to China, and called all Soviet specialists back home. As the numerous materials from the Wilson Center Digital Archive illustrate, Russia and China went through "almost 15 years of bitter acrimony" (Kraus 2020), that negatively affected the possibilities for the bilateral trade.

Economic research, performed by the World Integrated Trade Solution division of the World Bank, demonstrates that, while the Sino-Russian trade started happening all through the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the numbers were not very strong ("Russian Federation Trade"). Amounting to \$5 to \$6 billion per year in the 1990s period, and it slowly and gradually increased to \$60 billion in 2015-2016, and then there was a jump in 2017 when the bilateral trade got to 80 billion dollars, which represented a 30 percent increase in comparison with the previous year ("China-Russia Bilateral Trade" 2017).

Interestingly, the data presented in the graphs in the Addendum, indicates that in the last few years, possibly coinciding with the beginning of the war in Ukraine, the bilateral trade between China and Russia has been skyrocketing. Just in the first half of 2023, trade reached \$93.8 billion, which is a 40.7 percent increase over the previous year, according to the data from China's General Administration of Customs (Wang 2023). It was expected that by the end of 2023, the trade would reach an astounding \$200 billion, but in reality, it was even bigger, reaching the \$240 billion mark, based on the data by China's General Administration of Customs, which marks 26.3% growth over the previous year. At the same time, the bilateral trade between China and the USA has been markedly reduced since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, in the first half of 2023 it was 12.3 percent less than in the same period a year ago (Wang 2023).

Huge attention has been given by both, Russia and China, to promoting the use of local currencies and reducing reliance on the dollar in bilateral trade. This process intensified with the sanctions imposed on Russia because of the war in Ukraine – just in three months, from the end of February to May 2022, the yuan-ruble trade volume increased 1,067% (Robertson 2022). Vladimir Putin in his official Statement in March 2023 said that by the end of 2022, the share of ruble and yuan in mutual commercial transactions reached 65 percent, and continues to grow (Putin 2023).

Bilateral economic agreements

Another hallmark of the increased Sino-Russian economic cooperation in the last 10-20 years is the signing of new bilateral economic agreements and the emergence of new economy-based international organizations, like the Sino-Russian *Strategic Cooperation Agreement of 2006*. This agreement was followed by significant Chinese investments in Russian

energy production and energy infrastructure, and the increased impact of the Russian Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean oil pipeline. Major areas of the economy that caused an increase in the bilateral trade numbers on the graphs are China purchasing Russia's energy products, like crude petroleum, gas, and coal, and Russia purchasing Chinese consumer goods and electronics, and cars. Russia is rapidly "becoming China's fastest growing trade partner in the world", with China's exports to Russia "reaching 42.96 billion dollars, in the first six months of 2023, which is a 75.6 percent increase compared to 2022" (Wang 2023). China's imports from Russia have increased as well, showing a growth of 49 percent over the previous year, according to the China Customs data (Cheng 2023).

The International Energy Agency's Oil Market report, from August 2023, states that world oil demand has been extremely high, mostly due to a sharp increase in the activity of the Chinese petrochemical industry, "with more than 70 percent growth in 2023", while Russia providing all the necessary oil for the expansion, with above 80 percent of Russian shipments of crude oil going to China and India ("Oil Market Report" 2023). There has also been a big increase in the gas trade. Russia sold to China 50% more natural gas in the first half of 2023 in comparison with the previous year, it was supplied through the Power of Siberia main pipeline. There were several important agreements signed in the last two years between Russia and China. In January 2023, the countries signed an Intergovernmental Agreement to expand the natural gas pipeline, by building the Power of Siberia 2, a proposed new gas line that would go across Mongolia, which would expand the Far Eastern gas route in general. Another bilateral agreement was signed in March 2023 to increase agricultural trade, which already grew by 41 percent in 2022, over 2021, with Russia mostly exporting meat and grain to China (Putin 2023).

During the March 2023 President of China's visit to Moscow, a lot of other new economic agreements were signed, including the ones to expand international transport and logistics corridors to facilitate substantial increases in trade volumes between the countries. During this visit, Russian Rosatom and the China Atomic Energy Authority signed the *Long-term Cooperation Programme*, which outlines the last phases of the building of nuclear power plants in China by Russian specialists, and new joint projects in the nuclear power field.

Recently, there have been new agreements promoting tourism and cultural and scientific exchange between the two countries, in addition to the new commitment to implement the agreement in the area of sports - *2022-2023 Cross Years of Russian-Chinese Cooperation in Fitness and Sports*. Under this agreement, 600 sports events have already taken place. The countries agreed to organize *the First Games of the International Multi-Sport Tournament* in Russia in the Spring of 2024, followed by the Second Games in China.

Figure 6

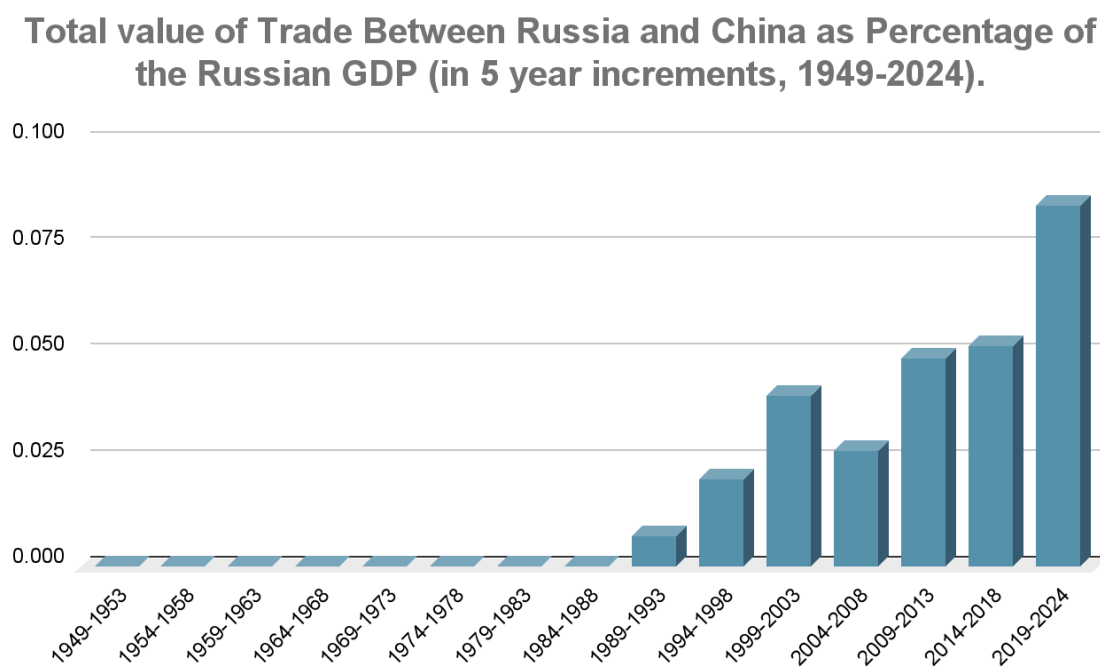
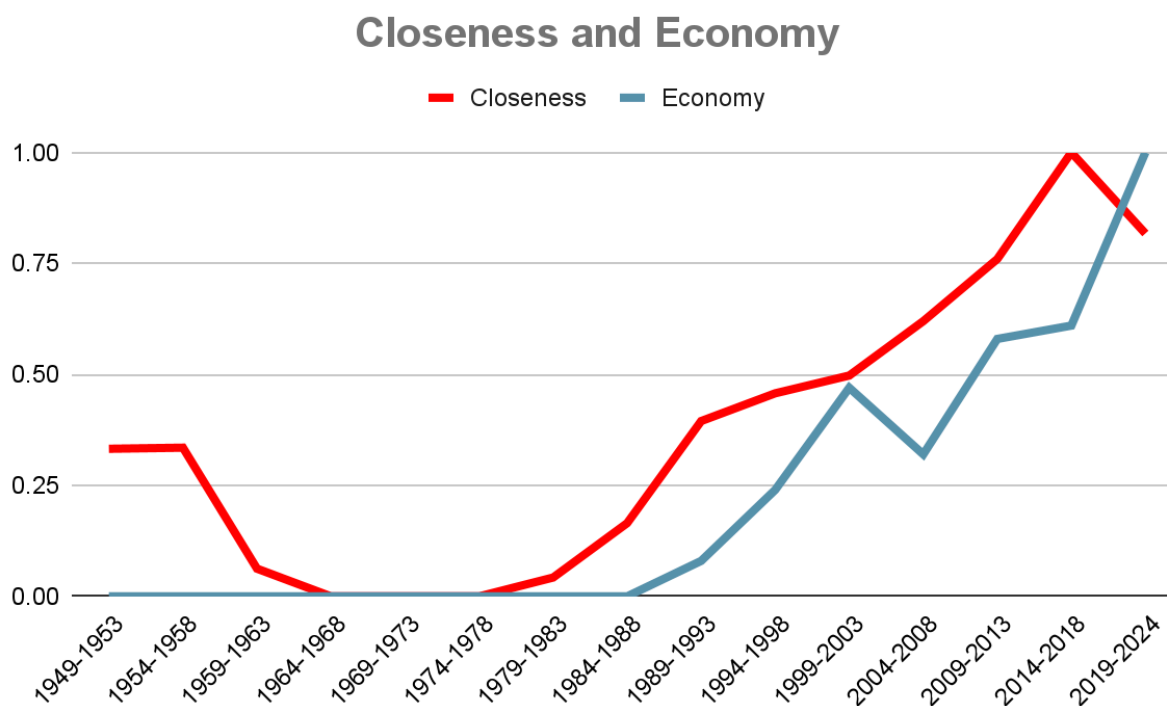


Figure 7



Closeness Analysis:

The correlation coefficient for Closeness and Economy is 0.8636967564. This relatively high correlation value shows that the closeness and economy graphs show a high degree of correlation with each other, however, there are several limitations to this comparison as economy data is only readily available starting with the formation of the Russian Federation in 1990. The data is also exclusively being calculated using Russian GDP percentages as opposed to Chinese GDP percentages. The study was however able to mitigate the usage of US Dollars , USD, as a measurement allowing the graph to account for inflation and thereby making it more accurate. Despite these shortcomings, the data does have a very clear correlation with closeness. While

economic trade is low in the Soviet era, closeness between the two nations is low as well. As the Soviet Union begins to fall and the Russian Federation rises, economic trade in regards to Russian GDP begins to quickly rise as well. It is important to note that this initial rise is likely due to a drastic fall in GDP during the transition from the Soviet Union to the Russian Federation. Thus, with a decreased GDP, lower amounts of trade would correspond to higher GDP values than before, under the Soviet Union. This rise is mirrored in the general closeness measurement as well. One notable dip in the economic measurement occurs during the 2004-2008 period, this is not reflected in the overall closeness measurement. This dip is easily explained by the 2008 global financial crisis that occurred resulting in a large dip in trade and a hard economic hit for most countries in the world, including Russia and China. Outside of this one outlier period, the rise of economic measurement correlates quite closely with that of general closeness potentially indicating a relationship between the two. Following this analysis it seems likely that there is some sort of correlation between the two nations, however the data is currently insufficient to determine if economic trade between the countries caused closeness between the two nations or if closeness between the two countries has resulted in an increase in trade. Most likely the real answer is a combination of the two with higher levels of trade leading to more closeness between the two nations, and increased closeness resulting in increased levels of trade. To determine what the specific relationship between these two factors is further research should be conducted focussing on the results of such trade on the countries and on specific events or policies that have led to more trade.

Leadership Cooperation and Compatibility

The explanatory variable of leadership closeness and compatibility will be measured in three parts, specifically through similarities in education levels, military backgrounds, and age

when assuming office. These three factors will be normalized and averaged to create a measurement of leadership compatibility throughout the years of this study. This measurement will be compared to the closeness graphic at the end of the section with some additional analysis.

China and the Soviet Union, later the Russian Federation, have had different degrees of cooperation between leaders. Relations were good between Stalin and Mao, for the years the two were in power, before going awry with the rise of Khrushchev and his different personality. This change in Soviet leadership directly coincided with the Sino-Soviet Split and ended up significantly affecting Sino-Soviet relations for the upcoming decades. Following that, the emergence of two new leaders, Vladimir Putin, and Xi Jinping, has heralded a new era of increased cooperation between the two nations. As such, exploring the leadership styles and personalities of Stalin, Mao, Khrushchev, Putin, and Xi it will become evident how leaders are interconnected with the relations their nations have with one another.

Education level

There will be several measurements used to measure the closeness between backgrounds of leaders. One of these will be the shared background of these leaders regarding levels of education. Below is a table depicting the education levels of the leaders studied in this thesis.

	Level of education received.			
Name of Leader	Primary Education	Secondary Education/Trade School	Bachelor's or Equivalent	Doctorate or Equivalent
Joseph Stalin	Orthodox Gori Church School	Russian Orthodox Church Seminary	X	X
Mao Zedong	Shaoshan	Higher Primary	X*	X

	Primary School	School		
Nikita Kruschev	Limited Primary School	Stalin Industrial Academy	X	X
Deng Xiaoping	Chongqing Primary School	French Middle School	Moscow Sun Yat-sen University	X
Leonid Brezhnev	X	Technical Education in Land Management and Metallurgy.	Kamenskoye Metallurgical Technicum	X
Mikhail Gorbachev	Small Village Primary School	Molotovskoye High School	Moscow State University (Law)	X
Boris Yeltsin	Berezniki Railway School Number 95	Pushkin High School	Ural Polytechnic Institute	X
Jiang Zemin	Jingde County Primary School	Jingde County Primary School	National Central University (Electrical Engineering)	X
Hu Jintao	Primary School	Local Technical School	Tsinghua University (Hydraulic Engineering)	X
Vladimir Putin	Primary School 193	Saint Petersburg High School 281	Saint Petersburg State University (Law)	Leningrad Mining University (Economics)**
Xi Jinping	Beijing Bayi School	Beijing Bayi School	Tsinghua University (Chemical Engineering)	X

* Mao Zedong Enrolled in a police academy, law school, and economic school, but ended up dropping out of all of them to study on his own.

** According to some recent sources significant parts of Putin's PhD thesis were considered to be plagiarized.

Military Background

In addition to shared educational background, another important factor that will be considered in regards to closeness will be whether certain leaders have shared military backgrounds or not. This study will assume that there is a sort of camaraderie or at the very least shared experience by being ex-military and will test to see if it affects the closeness between leaders as well.

Leader Name	Military Background
Joseph Stalin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mao Zedong	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nikita Krushev	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Deng Xiaoping	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Leonid Brezhnev	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Mikhail Gorbachev	<input type="checkbox"/>
Boris Yeltsin	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jiang Zemin	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hu Jintao	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Vladimir Putin	<input type="checkbox"/>
Xi Jinping	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Putin served as a member of the KGB for 16 years receiving military training, but he never officially served in the Soviet Red Army.

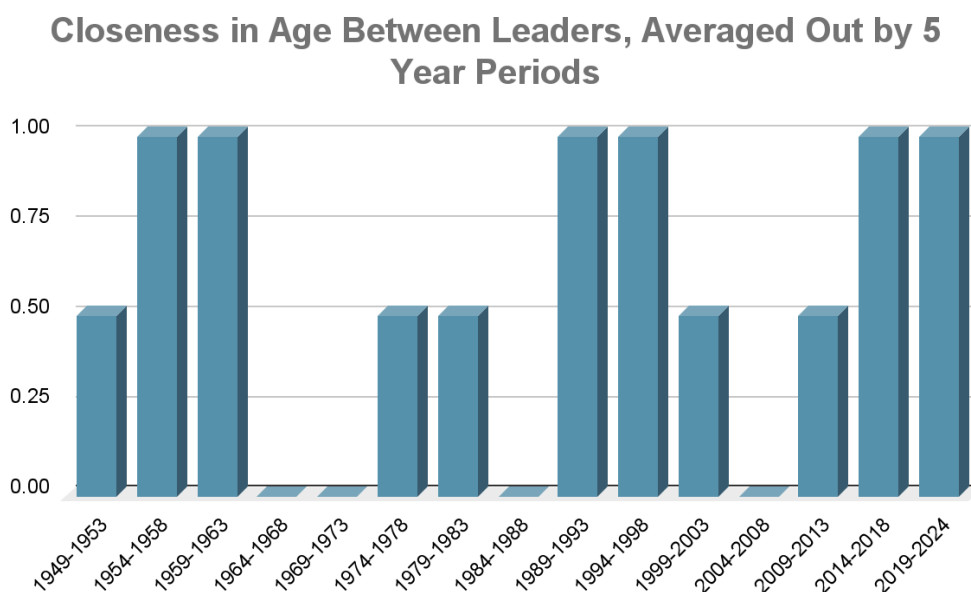
Leader Age When Assuming Office

The final factor being measured for compatibility and closeness between leaders will be their age when assuming office. This factor can play an important role in closeness as generational cohorts can often feel closer to one another having lived through shared global events or witnessing other important changes that could significantly affect their outlook on policy and being in command of their nations. For this measurement, the study will look at the age of each individual when they assume office and compare it with that of the leader for the other country. If both leader's ages at that time are within a five year period then they will be considered to be "close" on the age scale, if over that age gap, then the leaders will not be considered close for this section of the project.

Leader Name, Term Dates	Age When Assumed Office
Joseph Stalin (1922-1952)	44
Mao Zedong (1943-1976)	50
Nikita Khrushchev (1953-1964)	59
Deng Xiaoping (1982-1987)	78
Leonid Brezhnev (1964-1982)	54
Mikhail Gorbachev (1985-1991)	54
Boris Yeltsin (1991-1999)	59
Jiang Zemin (1989-2002)	63
Hu Jintao (2002-2012)	60
Vladimir Putin (2000-2008; 2012-Present)	48

Xi Jinping (2012-Present)	59
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Figure 8



*A measurement of 1 indicates that both leaders are within five years apart in age when in power.

Decimal measurements indicate times when multiple leaders were in power during the five year period and some were within the age range while others were not.

Although historical data on the relations between the CCP and USSR in the period of 1935-1950 is limited, much of what is available has shown the necessity of the relationship between the two nations, coupled with a seemingly mutual admiration between the two leaders. A leader in Cold War era China studies, professor Michael Sheng, describes the relationship between the two as “much more harmonious than we have ever imagined”, further arguing that Mao and Stalin were “revolutionary comrades rather than adversaries, despite their own ‘personality cults’” (Sheng 1992, 181). Stalin and Mao had a strong working relationship, forced out of both public pressures to align themselves with one another due to shared communist

ideologies, and their need to counterbalance the rapid growth of the US immediately following World War 2. This mutual closeness reached an important point during the Korean War in 1950 when the two leaders backed North Korea in a proxy war with the US. That same year Mao and Stalin signed the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance acting as the only military alliance to have been signed between the two nations to this day. This treaty officially normalized relations between the two countries, and improved their relationship politically, militarily, and economically as well. With the assistance of Soviet economists, China was able to implement a planned economy, setting its priorities towards industry rather than consumer goods, a strategic move that would help its military presence grow in the years to come. Relations between the two nations started to quickly change following Stalin's death in 1953. The next Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, had very different relations with China, and this leadership shift was partially responsible for the Sino-Soviet Split.

Sino-Soviet relations began to deteriorate around 1956, after Khrushchev-led measures to de-Stalinize the Soviet Union began. As part of his campaign of de-Stalinization, Khrushchev criticized much of Stalinism, specifically much of the unneeded violence and fear, he also changed the direction of the Soviet Communist Party from one of confrontation with the West to one of attempted peaceful coexistence (Luthi 2008, 168). This contradicted directly with the ideological stance that Mao had taken, one that emulated much of Stalinism in its style. Khrushchev's handling of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 especially concerned Mao, as it required armed forces to put down the insurrection, weakening the legitimacy of Communism on a global stage (Luthi 2008, 169). This event ended up being one of the first major fractures in the Eastern Communist Bloc. Mao originally attempted to replicate Khrushchev's political liberalization with the Hundred Flowers Campaign, a program that encouraged Chinese citizens

to bring forth their complaints and criticisms to the CCP. This program, however, was quickly discontinued as several serious criticisms of Mao were voiced through it (Luthi 2008, 172). As such, Mao returned to a hardliner stance on Marxist-Leninist doctrines and remained at odds with Khrushchev. Mao viewed Khrushchev in an increasingly negative light due to their ideological differences regarding the implementation of Communism.

Mao saw himself as a “descendant in a long Marxist-Leninist lineage” (Luthi 2008, 177), following in the footsteps of Stalin. With these feelings in mind, Chinese leaders began to associate Khrushchev as a revisionist and with anti-party sentiment within China. Popular sentiment throughout China began to see Khrushchev as someone not really loyal to the Communist ideology and therefore a threat to Communism in China. Mao was quoted several times speaking negatively about Khrushchev’s personality, believing him to be a member of the upper class and not truly a member of the Communist Party. By 1960 both leaders began to attack each other directly, Khrushchev denounced Mao as a “nationalist, an adventurist, and a revisionist” in the 1960 Romanian Communist Party Congress. In response, Peng Zhen, one of the main leaders of the CCP called out Khrushchev as “patriarchal, arbitrary, and tyrannical” (Axelrod 2009, 213). Shortly after these comments the Sino-Soviet Split occurred and communications and cooperation between the two nations ended until 1989.

Since 1989, Sino-Russian relations have greatly improved, with the two nations entering into a new agreement 11 years later, in 2001, as the two nations signed the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation. This treaty established peaceful relations between the two nations along with economic, and diplomatic cooperation; it also mentions military cooperation, but not a military defense alliance. Following the Yeltsin era, Putin gained control in 1999 and has remained the leader of Russia since then. A little over a decade later, Xi

Jinping was appointed president of the CCP, since then he too has remained continuously in power. To better understand these two leaders, it is important to delve into their upbringings and personalities and see how these have affected their decision-making over the past two decades.

Vladimir Putin was born in Leningrad in 1952 to two working-class parents, his father was a conscript in the Soviet army during World War 2, who got gravely injured during the war. After the war, the father worked as a guard at his local industrial plant, and later as a mechanic, and his mother worked in a factory. Putin studied law at Saint Petersburg University where he met his mentor, Professor Anatoly Sobchak, and ended up joining the KGB. While a part of the KGB, Putin spent time in East Germany working closely with the Stasi, Germany's secret police. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, Putin returned to Saint Petersburg and continued working with the KGB; when Sobchak was elected as mayor of Saint Petersburg, Putin joined him as the head of the Committee for External Relations of the mayor's office (Hoffman 2000). Putin remained unpopular in this position with calls for his resignation occurring several times; and when Sobchak lost his re-election campaign, Putin moved to Moscow and began to pursue his political career there instead. He quickly started working on the Presidential staff of Boris Yeltsin and rose the ranks from there to become Yeltsin's favorite for his successor. In 1999 Putin was appointed as the prime minister, with very few Russians knowing who he was. Since then, Putin served as president until 2008, when he briefly gave the presidency to Dmitry Medvedev, following those four years, he has remained the president of Russia despite strong evidence of vote rigging in 2012 (Graham 2023). Despite increasingly authoritarian policies and rigged elections, Putin's approval rating within Russia has stayed relatively high, as of June 2023, the Levada Center has identified an 81% approval rating of Putin among Russian citizens.

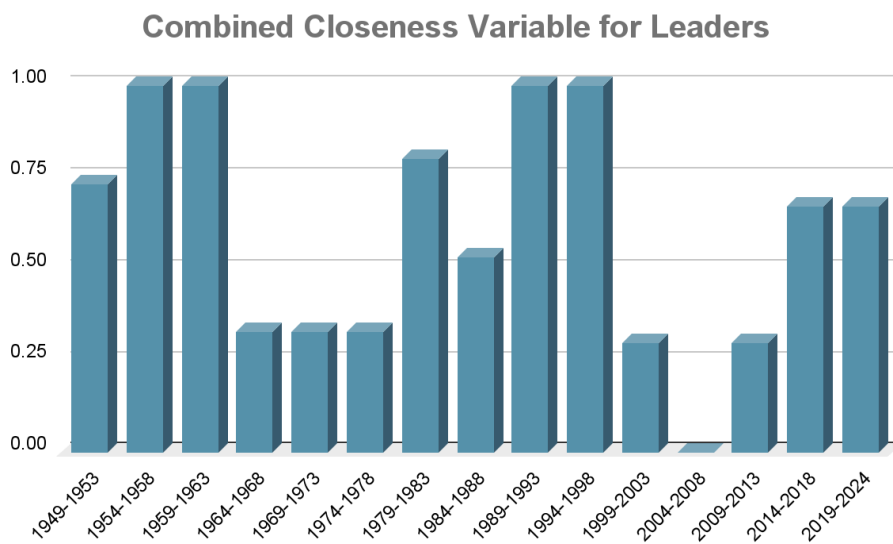
Xi Jinping was born in 1953 in Beijing, he was the son of Xi Zhongxun, a political official in the PRC. At the age of 10, Xi's father was purged from his position and sent to work in a factory before eventually being sent to prison. Following the Cultural Revolution, Xi's home was ransacked by militant students and he and his family were forced to publicly denounce his father who was imprisoned once more for crimes against the Party (Buckley 2015). Xi was later sent to work in the rural Liangjiahe village as part of the Down to the Countryside Movement, after deserting his forced job in the countryside, Xi was caught and sent to a work camp where he spent several years (Buckley 2015). Following his stint in the work camps, Xi attended Tsinghua University and studied law, while at school he began to demonstrate an interest in Marxist-Leninist thought and politics. In 1982, Xi was granted his first political position, that of deputy party secretary of the Zhejiang region (Ho 2012). Xi quickly began rising in the CCP political ranks, being elected as a member of the 16th CCP Central Committee in 2002. In 2009 he was elected as vice president of China, and by 2013 he had become elected president of China. Xi has served as president since 2013; in 2018, the CCP Congress approved an amendment establishing Xi as the "Core of the party" removing the presidential term limit that had previously existed (Davidson 2022). Following this amendment, Xi has cemented himself at the seat of power in China, amassing levels of power unseen since Mao.

Both Putin and Xi have many similarities in their backgrounds, both grew up with hard childhoods, both attended law school before entering the political field, and both quickly rose up through their respective political ranks. The two leaders have had similar authoritarian rises as well with both removing constitutional limits or amending vote counts to remain in power. Despite these significant authoritarian oversteps, Xi and Putin have remained vastly popular within their two nations. Many of these shared similarities have likely helped these two leaders

work with each other as much as they have done recently. In October of 2023, Xi was quoted calling Putin a “dear friend” during their most recent discussions of creating a “no-limits” partnership (Slodkowski 2023).

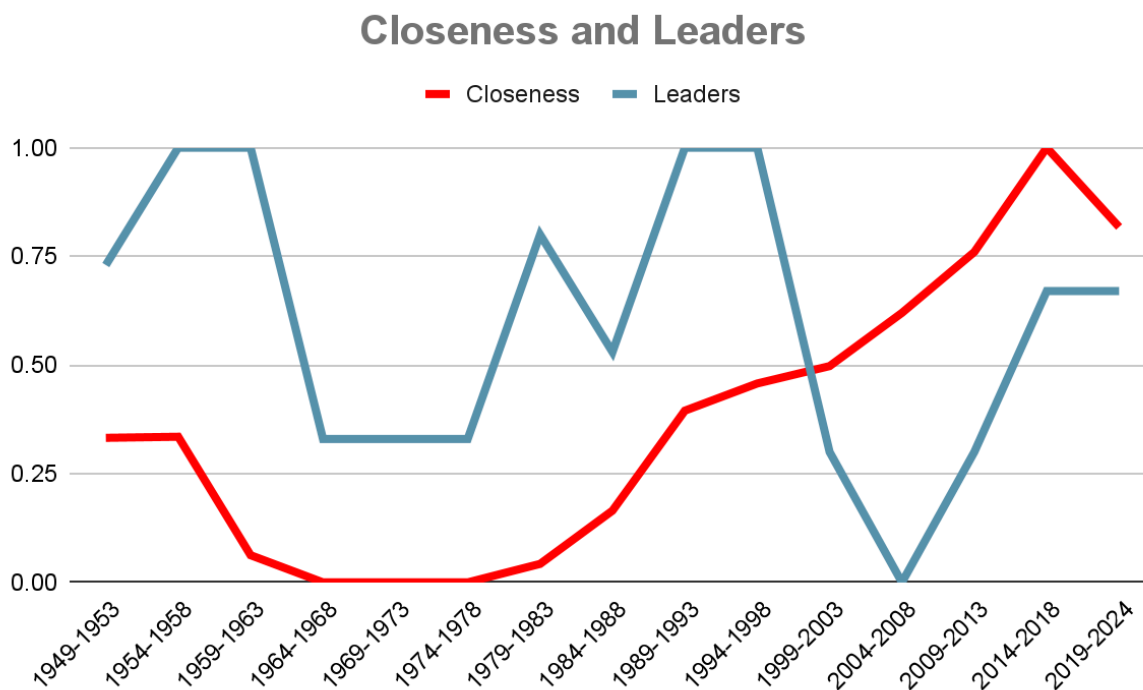
It is plausible that the good compatibility of the personalities of the two present-day leaders has been playing an integral role in the increased level of cooperation between the two countries. There are many photos and videos in various media, depicting Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, seemingly getting along and supporting each other. They both publicly express respect and approval of each other and their respective leadership styles (Slodkowski 2023) . In June 2018, Chinese leader Xi Jinping awarded the Russian president his first Friendship Medal, and Vladimir Putin personally visited China 16 times, 8 of them were during the leadership of Xi, while the Chinese leader visited Moscow 8 times as well, which is more than any other world capital. Overall, the two leaders met more than 40 times already, counting virtual meetings and meetings during international events (Magee 2022). This close personal relationship contributes to the level of trust between the two countries and encourages the members of the two governments to have frequent personal interactions too. The two leaders share the same goal of promoting a multipolar world instead of the unipolar one. Their joint main task is “to force the West to retreat and take a more modest place in the international system” (Karaganov 2023).

Figure 9



The combined closeness variable for leaders was created by taking the three factors explored in this section: military background, education, and leader age and comparing the leaders of Russia and China with these measurements in five year increments. Each time a value would coincide between leaders it would be assigned a score of one, whenever there was a discrepancy between them a score of zero would be assigned to the time period. To account for leadership changes in the middle of the delineated 5 year time periods, calculations would be broken down by year for time periods with changes of leaders. If these leaders had different values for variables an average of the five year period would be taken to see how many of the years would be a one or a zero. This calculation was later averaged out to create the combined leadership closeness value for that five year span. This combined leadership compatibility variable was later added to the combined closeness graph created in part I of the thesis, the comparison and analysis of these two graphs is below.

Figure 10



Closeness Analysis

Following an initial analysis of the two graphs, there does not seem to be any correlation between the measurement of closeness and the explanatory variable of leadership compatibility. This visual analysis is supported by the correlation coefficient for Closeness and Leaders: -0.0527729692 . This number is very close to zero, indicating a very low level of correlation between the two data sets, despite this, a visual analysis can still bring up several important points. At times when closeness is on the rise in the period of 1989-2008 closeness between leaders drastically drops hitting a value of zero in 2008. Despite the differences in the initial glance at the measurements, there are some interesting correlations and similarities that can be extrapolated from this analysis. It is interesting to note that the leaders of both nations at the beginning of this study were at the maximum closeness rating when beginning all the diplomatic

ties and signing the initial military treaty between countries. As mentioned earlier both Mao and Stalin had been noted with claiming significant levels of respect and admiration for each other's leadership abilities potentially making it more likely for the two leaders to work out actions to increase the ties between their respective countries. Following this high level of closeness the value quickly drops with the ascendance of Khrushchev and later Brezhnev, both of these leaders had significantly less in common with Mao and also were in power during the Sino-Soviet Split and in the aftermath directly after that. Following that is when the discrepancies begin, leadership closeness remains throughout the 1970's and 1980's despite relations between the countries remaining fraught until 1989. Following the transition from Soviet Union to Russian Federation there is a strange change as well with closeness begin to continuously rise while leadership background similarities plummet. The two factors did not begin to match up again until Xi's rise to power in 2012. Curiously Xi and Putin are only one year apart in age, have a similar lack of military training, however the only difference from the leadership background measurement is education levels with Putin having a post bachelor's degree, while Xi only having a Bachelors. This study gave the two leaders a zero on this measurement despite them both having a higher education level. However if higher education was not broken down to Bachelors and Masters levels, then the two leaders would be at the maximum rating of leadership background closeness of one.

Despite all of these factors and similarities, there is not enough evidence from the study to support a conclusion that leadership backgrounds play an important or significant role in closeness between the countries. Although some slight correlation could be seen in the graph, it is not enough to be conclusive in any way.

The Effects of Global Power Balance Shifts on the Relationship Between Russia and China

Both, Russia and China, have been big actors, really important in international world dynamics during the 75 year period that is considered in this thesis. In order to better understand the respective places and roles of China and Russia on the geopolitical arena, currently and in the past, and to determine how close they have been in terms of their geopolitical interaction with the other actors, it is necessary to examine the basic structure of global power distribution. Many International Relations scholars of the Realist school often argue that the behavior of states can be explained by the structure of the international systems that they are in, more specifically the global distribution of power between states (Layne 1993). These international power distributions are unipolar, bipolar, and multipolar systems. Some current theories show that as a unipolar power, such as the United States, rises to power, as it did following the dissolution of the bipolar world with the fall of the Soviet Union, other state actors try to return the global power balance towards one of multipolarity or bipolarity (Snyder 1991). As this shift occurs, these smaller rival powers may become closer aligned with the shared goals of weakening the unipolar power and causing a global power shift. This section of the thesis will explain the theory behind such global power shifts more, and will attempt to determine if this could be a potential explanation for the closeness between Russia and China.

There is a big group of political science scholars that have done substantial research, exploring the global balance of power in terms of unipolarity, bipolarity, and multipolarity ((Krauthammer 1993); and the role of alliances in supporting a particular world order, coupled with the processes of forming and maintaining alliances, and analyzing structural balance within them (Walt 2009). For instance, some predictions relate to periods in which the rise of a smaller

power within a unipolar system threatens to turn into a bipolar one; this power transition often leads to hegemonic wars between the unipolar power and rising challengers, like the US as the unipolar and China, in alliance with Russia, as a rising challenger.

There are scholars who focus on studying the reliability of multipolar and bipolar alliances, with a group of political scientists who consider multipolar alliances, especially unbalanced multipolar alliances, as being the least reliable ones (Waltz 1993). Their reasoning is that when there are many alliances between different actors, it becomes much easier to have conflicting loyalties or other issues such as collective action problems that make it that much more difficult to enforce alliances (Kausikan 2020). On the other hand, bipolar alliances have their issues with alliance reliability as well. Many weaker states ally with a more powerful nation as they bandwagon to appeal to the more powerful or senior alliance members, conceding resources to the senior alliance member and potentially garnering resentment towards the alliance (Snyder 1991). However, with all the possible problems within the multipolar and bipolar alliances, and multipolar and bipolar world orders, the majority of political scientists agree that the unipolar world balance is the least stable global order, with inherent instability, because it is very prone to overreach – becoming the so-called world's police, interfering into affairs of other countries and dictating to them what direction they should take, starting wars on other countries' territories, and imposing drastic economic sanctions, punishing other world actors for violating the hegemon's imposed rules (Stuenkel). All these overreaching actions of a unipolar, performed without checks and balances, make the unipolar system prone to being predictably challenged by new rising actors, who tend to strengthen their power by establishing global alliances (Ikenberry 2003).

Perhaps the most well-known writings on global power balances and alliances would be that of John Mearsheimer. His writings are a great representation of the consensus that has been reached in the realist school of IR political scientists. Being a prominent realist scholar, Mearsheimer explored the role of alliances in a variety of multipolar and bipolar power structures, with a special focus on times of war. He wrote that there is a constant state of anarchy throughout the world, and the constant anarchy with no overseeing order partially explains the causes of war. This realist perspective on international relations goes on to further elaborate upon the causes of war as being that of security competition and concerns between different state actors. In order to ensure one state's security, it will go to war, if necessary. Mearsheimer wrote during the Cold War, and as such, he described three major distributions of power within the world: bipolarity, balanced multipolarity, and unbalanced multipolarity. *Bipolar* systems are run by two outlying, powerful states that have roughly equal power, for example, the USSR and USA during the Cold War. *Unbalanced multipolar* systems are run by three or more powers where one might become a hegemon. *A balanced multipolar* system is three or more countries with no significant power difference between states. Mearsheimer puts forth that bipolar systems are the most peaceful, unbalanced multipolar systems are most violent, with balanced multipolar in between. With a bipolar system, war is unlikely, because two large powers do not want to fight each other, maybe small wars, but that's it. Unbalanced multipolar systems often have wars, because the hegemon state wants to gain more power and will attack other states causing war to do so.

Mearsheimer's theories left off in the Cold War, prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the transition to a *unipolar* world, with the United States as a global hegemonic power. Further debate on multipolar and bipolar systems highlighted the reliability of the global

alliances and how often nations would actually honor their agreements of collective security and help their allies as opposed to negating agreements.

Another major contribution to the debate on the role of the alliances is the *Unipolar Moment* by Krauthammer. He argues that following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the world entered into a *unipolar* power balance, for the first time in centuries. By being the sole superpower, the US could assert virtually uncontested military, economic, and political power over the world. Written in 1993, the article calls for “benevolent global hegemony” (Krauthammer 1993). The article also warns that although a strong unipolar nation, the US must be cautious in its use of power to strategically advance its ideals and interests and remain benevolent to other nations to prevent an opposition bloc or pole forming and returning the world to a bipolar system.

To sum it up, there is no consensus in the political science research community, studying the formation, structure, and hierarchy of the alliances and global world orders, and there is a lack of in-depth studies of the transition periods. What most researchers agree upon is that international alliances are deeply interwoven into the existing world order - unipolarity, bipolarity, or multipolarity, and play a critical role in supporting and enforcing an existing international balance of all forces that are involved in global affairs. Many recent scholars, such as Stephen Walt, Christopher Layne, and Kenneth Waltz, have addressed the geopolitical global unipolar balance that the world had faced since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, arguing that this ushered in a period of cultural, political, and economic hegemony. These scholars argue that a unipolar world, such as the one experienced now, is not only a stable global power balance, but the most powerful and stable one in recent history. In spite of this, there seem to be some inconsistencies and inaccuracies with these recent analyses by scholars. With deeper research, it

appears that unipolar power structures are not nearly as stable as previous scholars have suggested, and in fact can be considered to be a step in the transition from a multipolar order to another multipolar or bipolar one. As such, in certain situations, multipolar power balances result in greater stability and last longer than the transitory unipolar moments seen in recent history.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, many political science scholars have argued that a *unipolar world* is a new reality, one that will persist for the foreseeable future, be it in the form of US hegemony, or even possibly, at some later date, a Chinese hegemony. And therefore, the global political community was supposed to shift its focus towards the study of unipolar world order, without anticipation of any significant global shifts (Rauch 2018). Scholars of the International Society approach, like Mark E. Pietrzyk, praised the unipolar world as a system of “high degree of peace and cooperation”, and affirmed that “the type of great power conflicts which led to major wars in the past are gone” (Pietrzyk 1990). Although some, like Krauthammer, argued that this global power system can be fragile if unipolar hegemony is abused, most scholars agreed upon the strength of the unipolar world power system as a whole (Krauthammer 1993). Today’s political reality shatters this common belief. It is an understatement to say that the present-day geopolitical picture is changing rapidly, and the whole world is experiencing a highly turbulent time. The world power balance is being challenged and is thrown into uncertainty. To better understand the future global political power configurations it is critical to move from studying just *unipolar*, or *bipolar*, or *multipolar* power structures, and to urgently focus research on the specifics of *the transitory periods* between world power balances. By gaining a greater understanding of these transitory, oftentimes tumultuous, periods it becomes possible to better anticipate possible shifts from the existing unipolar to multipolar or bipolar world order.

The research on global power transitions and their structures, and sequences of the stages of a transition has just begun, with much more scientific exploration to be done on the topic. Surprisingly, the current widely accepted theory on international relations and global power balances pay little to no attention to the transition periods, effectively dismissing them as random chaotic moments in history that lead to the new global power balances emerging out of them. As such, it becomes a necessity to undertake a comprehensive study of the dynamics of true transition periods versus simple transitory periods, to determine what triggers the real structured transition and how the progress occurs, and what social and political processes have to happen to result in new power dynamics. By doing this research, it may become possible to predict when the new emerging hegemonic actors or the new powerful alliances are rising, and the great power/superpower, that has been presiding in the unipolar world, is starting to lose its grip on the leadership, and the unipolar world order is getting ready to slip into the transitory period.

With the rise of the US as a superpower after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it becomes visible how a unipolar “moment” fits into the timeline of the transition from one multipolar or bipolar world to another. Using a realist perspective, the first and final step of this global power cycle is the cataclysmic breaking point when a nation, or set of nations, goes to war, with the goals of usurping a once powerful state and replacing it as a new leader in geopolitical world order, while gaining greater power or recognition. Out of the destruction of war or other political strife a certain nation or faction emerges victorious, filling a power vacuum left behind by previous global powers. By taking advantage of this vacuum and temporary lack of coherent opposition one state is able to extend its reach, militarily, and make political and economic alliances with weaker nations. As the state continues to grow in power, it becomes a regional and the global hegemon, entering its own unipolar moment; at this point the state is more powerful

than any other individual player in the world and is able to effectively enforce much of its will unchallenged. However, as the nation continues to exert its power, opposition begins to grow as other states begin to form coalitions, or alliances, initially economic or ethnic in nature, prior to evolving into military or political agreements, as a way to counteract the force of the global hegemon. Through gradual damage to the hegemon's economy and political authority, coupled with internal strife and conflict, the hegemon begins to lose its power and weaken, leading to an opportunity for the cycle to repeat itself as the rising powers strike against the previous hegemon. (see Figure A).

For the purpose of this study a global power balance transition cycle will be used to predict the behavior of Russia and China in relations to one another and towards hedging the US with the goals of shifting the global power balance. By this model, China and Russia will partner with each other and get closer whenever it is necessary to counterbalance against the other major powers, in this case the US. Splits between the two countries will coincide with shifts in global power balances as the countries will no longer be balancing against a different power together.

As a case study this explanation will focus on the concept of triangular diplomacy occurring throughout the Sino-Soviet Split era with the US. Triangular Diplomacy was a foreign policy, security strategy and diplomatic tactic popularized by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger throughout the Nixon Administration. The realist school of thought was used by both Kissinger and Nixon during this period to determine their approach toward the Soviet Union and China. As the US recognized the effects of the Sino-Soviet Split, a new strategy towards both of these powers emerged, one inspired by balance-of-power theory. Balance of power theory states that actors may secure their own survival by ensuring that no other state gains enough power to dominate all the other ones. As such, the US began to work with both China and Russia during

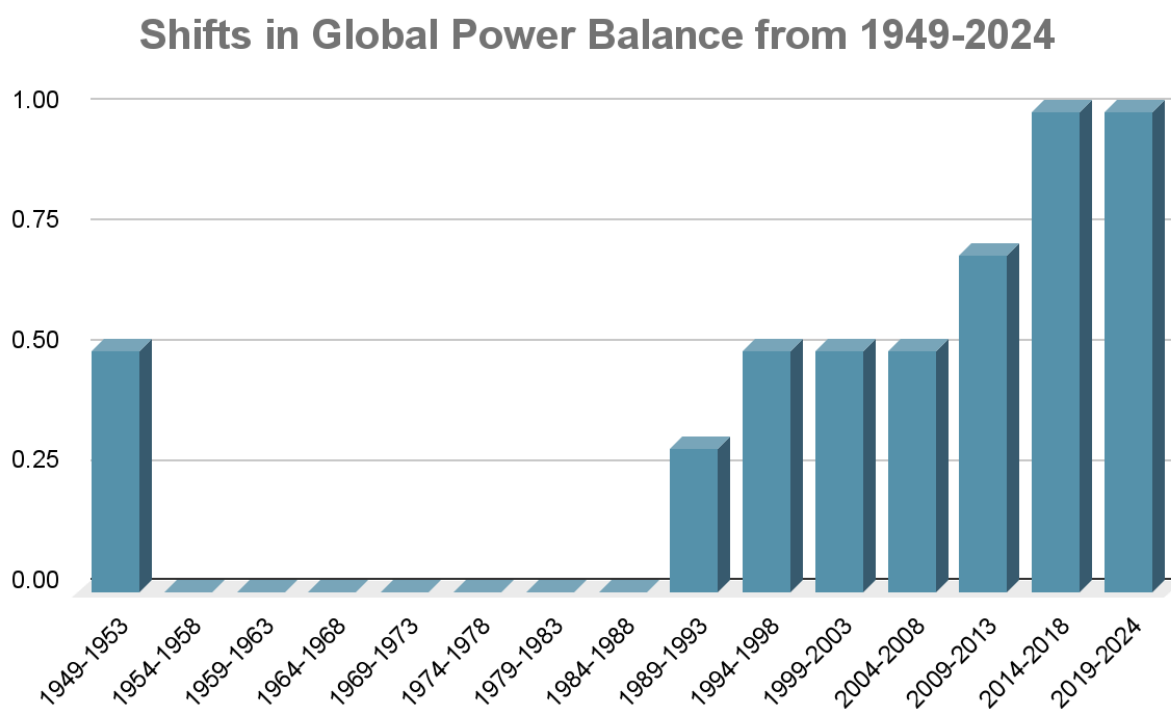
this period, pitting the two against each other, while trying to prevent each from gaining a significant amount of power to drastically change the global power balance. Relations with one country began being used as leverage to gain from the other country. Kissinger was quoted saying: "For the next 15 years we have to lean towards the Chinese against the Russians. We have to play this balance of power game totally unemotionally. Right now, we need the Chinese to correct the Russians, and to discipline the Russians". This strategy ended up being incredibly successful for the US as they were able to normalize relations with China, having Nixon be the first president to officially visit the nations, while also negotiating the Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement with Russia entering into a period of detenté.

The chart demonstrates shifts in geopolitical global power balance throughout the past 75 years, it shows times of stable bipolarity or multipolarity marked as a value of zero, periods of stable unipolarity as a value of 0.5, and unstable bipolarity or unstable unipolarity as a value of 1. The reasoning for this being that, according to previously stated scholars, stable bipolar and multipolar worlds are generally the more calm worlds, with more predictable stable structure, specifically during the period of the Cold War between the US and Soviet Union, for a while there was a clear and stable geopolitical balance. Such stability would not provide any explicit incentives for Russia and China to get closer. In fact, this period coincided with the Sino-Russian Split, when the two countries went apart from each other. Therefore, this period has a value of zero.

Periods of stable unipolarity will be measured as 0.5, as although still considered to be stable, whenever there has been a single unipolar power moment throughout history, opposition has always begun to form against it. As such, the times when the US acts as the sole uncontested power, specifically directly after the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, values

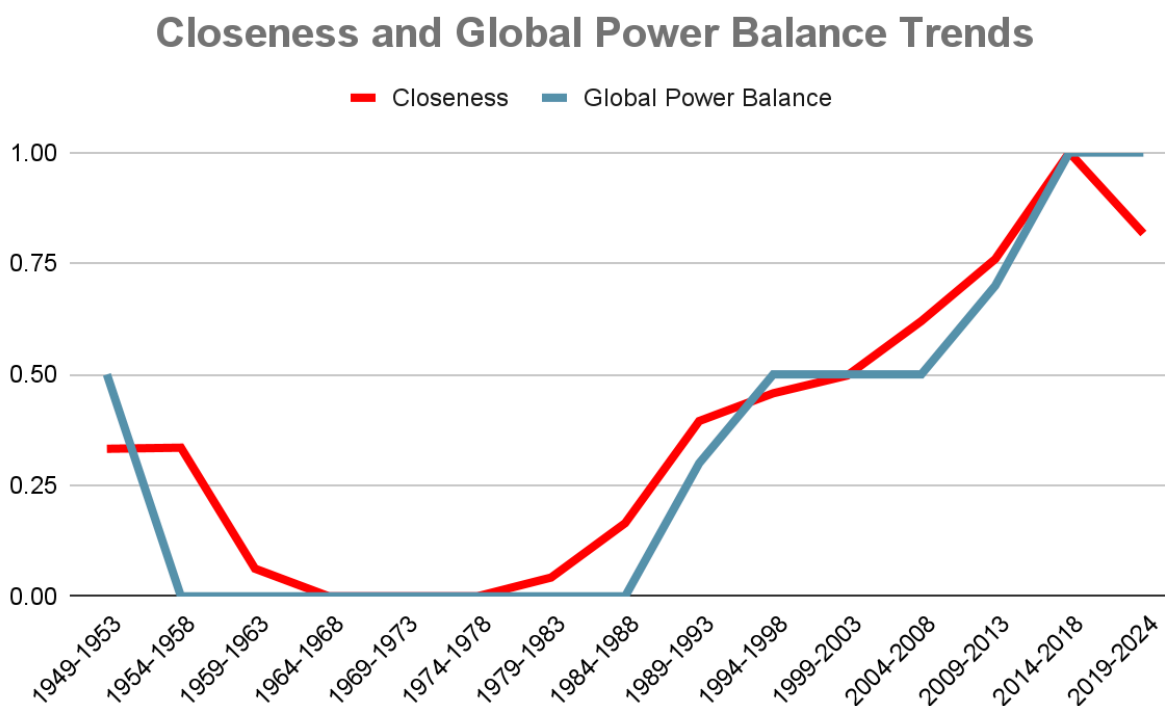
of 0.5 are given to reflect the increased incentive level of Russia and China to align themselves with one another against the overpowering unipolar. The time period of 1949-1953 is considered stable unipolar as well as it is the time period when the US still had a significant nuclear edge over the Soviet Union which was just beginning to develop its nuclear program at that time. The recent decade, specifically following the rise to power of Xi Jinping, has shown China as rapidly rising in military and economic power, threatening the US hegemony as the sole global unipower. At such a point when there are some signs of instability of a unipolar power, there is the highest level of incentive for other great global powers, especially rising global powers, to join forces and counterbalance against the unipolar power, with the hopes of shifting the global balance towards bi or multipolarity. Therefore, the time following Xi's election and his implementation of more aggressive strategies will be marked as a one on the scale below.

Figure 11



* A value of *one* indicates a period when Russia and China are the closest to each other, as “strategic allies”, joining their political efforts to counterbalance the US, which still has unipolar power hegemony. Values of *zero* indicate time periods of bipolarity, specifically in this case bipolarity between the Soviet Union and the US throughout the Cold War, when Russia and China drifted apart. The first time period is considered unipolar as well as it is the time period when the US still had a significant nuclear edge over the Soviet Union which was just beginning to develop its nuclear program at that time. The time period of 1989-1993 was calculated by averaging out the score of zero for the years prior to the fall of the Soviet Union and the value of 0.5 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Similarly, the time period of 2009-2013 was calculated by averaging out the score of .5 years for the pre-Xi Jinping years, and a score of one for the years Xi Jinping was in office.

Figure 12



Closeness Analysis

The combined closeness and global power balance trend graph show striking resemblances to one another. This resemblance is supported by a correlation coefficient of 0.9427093907 between Global Power Trends and Closeness. This high value strongly indicates that there is similar correlation between these two variables. Both start out at a value less than .5 before dropping to zero during the Sino-Soviet Split. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union both values began to rapidly rise, hitting their peak in the period of 2014-2018. Despite the high amounts of similarities between the two measurements, it is still important to recognize correlation between them as opposed to causation. As with most of the measurements created throughout this thesis, these two are also subjective as they only reflect the information found for the purpose of the study as opposed to all information available on these topics. The decisions of what factors would count for closeness and what time periods and scores would be assigned for each global power balance style was also purely subjective. Notwithstanding these potential drawbacks the data collected clearly shows that these two variables have strong correlations. At times when political scientists would predict there to be more competition against the unipolar power, China and Russia got much closer. Times when there was no such pressure to counteract a major power, China and Russia had more distant relations including a temporary complete diplomatic split. Moving forward as scholars predict that China will rival or even overtake the US it will be interesting to see if this measurement of closeness changes as, according to the graph above, once a stable bipolar relationship occurs incentives for closeness between other great powers drops.

Ideological Similarities

Ideological doctrine comparison

Ideology is a system of beliefs, a set of values and ideas, that a country embraces and uses to determine its economic and political structure. Naturally, it is extremely hard to quantify the beliefs and ideas. This chapter will use a lot of descriptive qualitative analysis of various degrees of ideological closeness between China and Russia, using non-numerical data, looking at

the patterns in ideology of both countries, over the specified time period. Also, it will attempt to create a quantitative measurement of ideological similarity, looking at the results of applying a particular ideology in economy (free market versus state-run economic structure) and in politics, examining various degree of democracy versus autocracy (by focusing on one aspect of democracy – single party or multiparty political systems). Several factors will be measured and considered to create the final graph, specifically the attempts to shift from state-run economies to market economies, and political changes in the attempts to change a single party rule. These numerical factors will be combined with a separately created measurement of the changes in the way each country implemented the basic Marxism-Leninism ideology in their governing ideology doctrine. This last chart is much harder to quantify. Nevertheless, it is important because it clearly shows the Sino-Soviet Split, which was based specifically on ideological differences. All three charts will be integrated together to create the combined ideology variable which will be measured against the closeness variable.

During the first period, 1949 to 1959, each chart demonstrates the highest degree of similarity, which has many explanations. From its inception in 1949, the PRC was heavily influenced by the Soviet Union's ways to run the country. Both the Soviet Union and the PRC were socialist states inspired by the ideology of Marxism and Leninism, which means they had a similar egalitarian social structure, with a centralized strictly planned economy. Both countries had a one-party political system, with the Communist party being the center of all decision making, mandatory for all the people living in their countries. Peasants in both countries were forced into abandoning their private farms and uniting into collective farms, without any private ownership of anything, giving up their cattle and their agricultural tools. In both countries, many peasants resisted collectivization and socialist ideology. To keep up with collective farming,

people were grouped into communes, where each one was an equal member, and nobody owned anything, because all the tools and animals belonged to the commune. Both governments, in the PRC and in the Soviet Union, controlled every economic process in their countries, forcefully taking all the capital gained during agricultural production and investing it in rapid industrialization.

Ideological enthusiasm and overzealous communist attitudes were valued higher than professional knowledge or expertise, and as a result, many experienced specialists who did not support the official ideology were killed, arrested, or removed from their positions. Both countries did not tolerate any political dissidents, and many intellectuals who did not fully embrace the Marxism-Leninism doctrine were executed or imprisoned.

Overall, Marxism-Leninism was an official ideological doctrine of the only ruling parties in both countries – the Communist Parties, with the ultimate goal of creating a communist – classless egalitarian society, in the future. However, practical interpretations of the Marxism-Leninism doctrine became different in the Soviet Union and PRC, which brought about the Sino-Russian Split that lasted from the late 1950s to 1989. The beginning of the split was precipitated by de-Stalinization in the Soviet Union, and the turn to the ideology of peaceful coexistence of the Soviet bloc with the West, which was unacceptable, at that time, for the PRC. Mao Zedong continued to believe in the inevitable confrontation with all the capitalist countries. He proclaimed that the doctrine of peaceful coexistence is dangerous political revisionism, that it undermines the orthodox Marxism ideology, and therefore, must be denounced and avoided. During the years of the split China and the Soviet Union were fighting for the leadership role for other emerging Communist countries, exposing clashes in the Communist world.

Ideological differences were the main reason for the 30-year Sino-Russian Split, from 1959 to 1989. After the last meetings of the Chinese and Soviet leaders in 1959, when Khrushchev visited China in the middle of growing ideological disagreements, there were 30 years without any high-level interactions, until in 1989 Michail Gorbachev went to China for an official visit to reestablish neighborly relationships. Therefore, the period of 1959 to 1989, is depicted as a downgrade in the closeness measurement on the chart. China and the Soviet Union departed from each other, differing in the ways the orthodox Marxism-Leninism was implemented in the revised official ideological doctrines of each country. Maoism ideology, which was developed in China by Mao Zedong as an offspring of the main Marxism-Leninism doctrine, brought about significant ideological changes, connected with the consideration of Chinese cultural differences. As a result, it became a “socialism with Chinese characteristics”. For example, one of the changes in Maoism was a more optimistic look at the role of peasants in revolutionary process: China was a predominantly peasant country, and Maoism gave the peasants a more active role in the communist transformations of the society, while in the original Marxism-Leninism doctrine all the emphasis on the proletariat, the working class in the cities, that was considered to be the locomotive of the revolution.

In 1972, president Nixon used the Sino-Russian ideological disagreements to forge closer relationships of the US with China, using the principles of triangular diplomacy, developed by Henry Kissinger. China saw the benefits of a better relationship with the US, even though the US was a proponent of a totally different ideology, based on individualism versus collectivism, and on market driven economy versus state-controlled planned economy. However, China decided to put these ideological differences aside in favor of new economic opportunities of being included

into international trade, and given access to important technological resources, developing its own “Chinese road to socialism”.

Economy style comparison (free market versus state controlled)

In 1978, Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, together with the reformists group in his party, started substantial ideological, social, economic, and political reforms, known as the *Boluan Fanzheng* period. His goal was to correct mistakes and eliminate some harm caused by the Cultural Revolution and restore in China a state of normalcy. Free market economic principles were introduced and well accepted by the population, which led to a subsequent period of fast economic growth. Political science scholar Alok Ray affirmed that Chinese economic performance since 1978 was a real miracle: “China managed to transition to a market economy with minimum social and political cost of adjustment and broad-based support for the reforms” (Ray 2002).

At the same time, the Soviet Union also has been searching for a new way to revive its stagnant economy. In the middle of the 1980s, Mikhail Gorbachev initiated a series of reforms in the Communist Party and in the economic sector that became known as *Perestroika* (literal meaning “restructuring”). These reforms attempted to fundamentally change the established status quo and were met with substantial resistance. They were aimed at introducing the elements of a free market economy, lessening state control over the businesses. The policy reforms were accompanied by reforms in the media, called *Glasnost* (“transparency”), again, lessening government control and eliminating censorship, encouraging free reporting, allowing criticism of the established systems. The *Similarity Between State Economical Styles* chart reflects these serious attempts to restructure the centrally controlled economy into a free market economy as a new period for Russia, starting from 1985.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, in the end of 1991, the Russian Federation went through even more drastic changes, turning away from socialism, rapidly departing from the Marxism-Leninism ideology, embracing the open markets and a capitalistic approach, more similar to Western powers. The rapid pace and the broad scope of the changes in all the vital spheres of life – ideology, economy, politics, and culture – shook up the people of Russia, making the 1990s a truly wild decade that saw two failed political coups and a wide-spread economic crisis. The application of the free economic model in Russia started with the chaotically implemented mass privatization of the previously state-owned natural resources, which created, instantly, a new class of super wealthy entrepreneurs, who bought huge buildings, parks, resorts, natural resources, and other valuable properties, for unbelievably low prices, often based on their familiarity with top government officials and bribes. At the same time, the majority of Russian people were in a deep shock, spending hours in lines for basic food and supplies. The GDP went sharply down, and the mortality went sharply up, while a huge country was trying to figure out how to reinvent itself. The way how economic reforms, leading to a free market model went in Russia, was a stark contrast with the much easier transformation to a market economy, undertaken since 1978 in China. Unlike benefiting from the strong economic growth in the period following the start of the reforms in China, Russia was plunged into a lengthy economic crisis, “with declining production, high inflation, rising unemployment, sharply worsening income distribution, acute foreign exchange and debt-servicing problems”(Ray 2002).

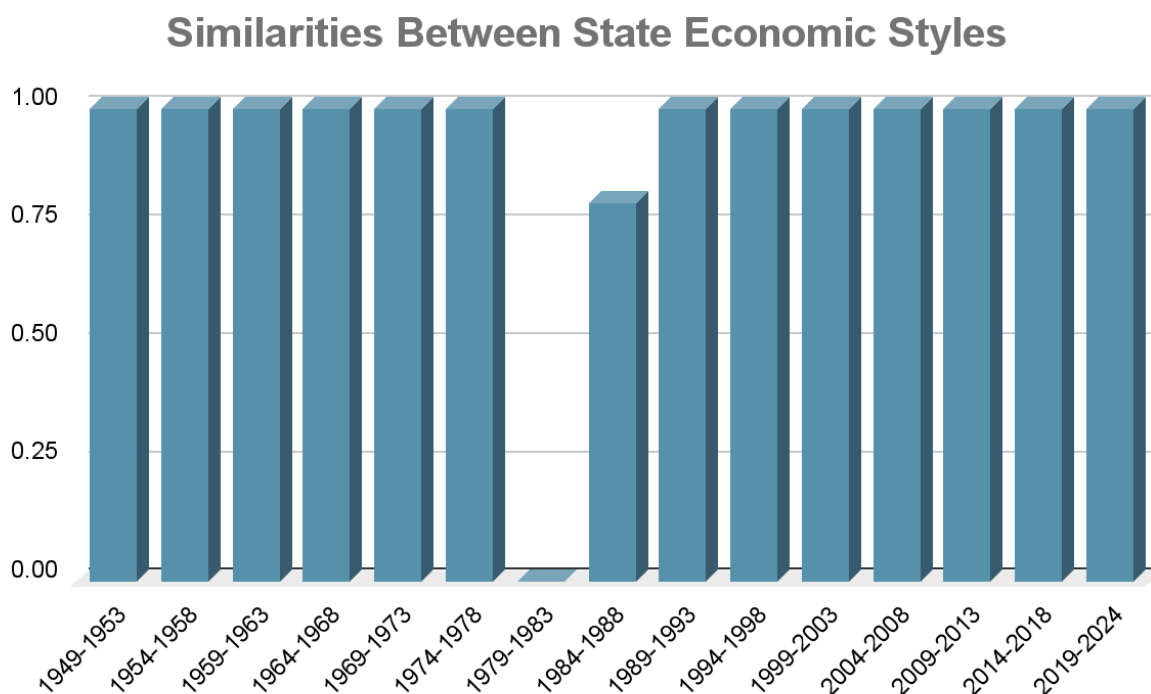
There are many different opinions in the scholarly research regarding the level of success that Russia has been achieving in the process of transformation from the state-run to a free market economy, over the time since *Perestroika* started in 1985. What is clear is the

demarcation between the two main periods: from 1949 to 1985 the Soviet Union was largely a state planned and controlled command economy; and starting in the middle of 1980s, it began to shift towards a more mixed and eventually free market-oriented economy. By 1992, this shift was virtually completed, with many think tanks ranking Russia as a market oriented economy. China followed a similar trend, being a state planned command economy, from its inception in 1949 until 1978, when a wave of economic reforms led by Deng Xiaoping resulted in the state turning towards a market oriented economy. The Chinese Communist Party Congress in 1992 introduced the term “*socialist market economy*”, which is supposed to be a type of market economy, with some private property and other features of the free market, while state-owned or controlled key sectors, and a larger part of land and resources being in public ownership. Since then, China has remained a variation of a market economy.

China Pathfinder Project, undertaken by the GeoEconomics Center of the Atlantic Council with Rhodium Group, collected and analyzed lots of pertinent data on China’s adherence to the accepted open-market standards and its strides in economic liberalization, investigating and compiling data-driven scorecards on the Chinese financial systems, market competition, trade and direct investment openness, and other parameters; comparing the situation in China in 2010 and 2020. They came to the conclusion that “China seemingly changed the course”, from implementing more and more free market practices before 2010, and reversing later, partly because “an increasingly powerful Xi Jinping reasserted the role of the state in the economy” – Xi “tried to implement some liberalizing reforms”, but with “desire for more control”, and “reforms have failed to deliver”(Lipsky 2021). Most scorecards gave China an average of 2.5 out of 10 (10 is the most open-market economy), comparing China’s current economic practices to the practices employed by 10 largest open-market economies. Even though the scores went down

from 2010, China is still considered its own style of market economy, similar to Russia being considered its own style of market economy as well.

Figure 13



*This graph was made using data from the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

** Values of one were given whenever both Russia and China had the same type of economy: command centralized economy or a variation of a free market economy; values of zero were given whenever the two nations had different economic styles, like it was in the period of 1978 to 1985, when China had already started its economic reforms, leading to opening up to a free market economic model, while Russia has started this process only in the middle of the 1980s. The 1984-1988 section was calculated as being lower due to one year, 1984, being valued as a zero, before the rest of the years (1985-1988) went back up to a score of one, thus an average value is granted for that time period.

The graph above shows that both Russia and China have had virtually the same style of state economic styles over the past 75 years. The major differences in the graph showing the time periods when China had shifted over to a market economy prior to Russia doing so. It is important to note that this graph simply measures free market economies versus command economies, it does not go into some of the more specific details in economic differences between the two nations, such as the ideas of socialist market economies versus free or mixed market economies. For the purpose of this measurement, all free market economy styles are combined as are all styles of command economies. Naturally, there have been many fluctuations and degrees in the free market economic model implementation in China and Russia, over the years, and this chart represents only a gross comparison of closeness of the economy style, leaving all the details to further research.

Democracy/Autocracy Comparison

The chart reflects a high level of similarity in the political system of both countries, that for the whole duration of the 75 years have been recognized as *autocracies*, with a very brief exception in the beginning of the 1990s, when Russia was trying to transform into a democratic state, but was not successful, and therefore, was recognized as a *hybrid regime*, while China was still an autocracy. Since the election of Boris Yeltsin in March 1990, Russia changed from a single party political system to a multiparty one, while China has continued to be a single party country through all the 75 years.

After the dissolution of the USSR, in 1991, the Russian Federation established the office of the President, and in 1993, adopted a new Constitution, which proclaimed the country to be a federative state that functions as a democratic republic, without any mandatory ideology, allowing multiple political parties and protecting freedom of religion. However, The Economist

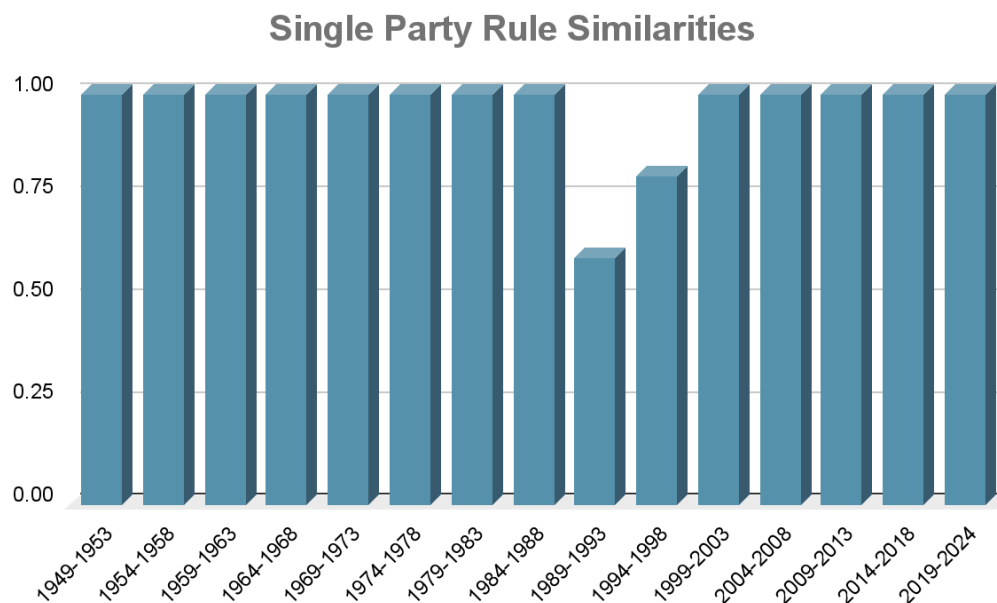
Intelligence Unit has rated Russia as an “*authoritarian*” regime in their Democracy Index (“Democracy Index” 2022). Before 2011, they rated Russia as a “hybrid regime” only for a couple of years in the early 1990s. China is also rated as an “authoritarian” state. Democracy Index defines an authoritarian regime as “nations where political pluralism is non-existent or severely limited” (“Democracy Index” 2022).

Naturally, in the authoritarian state a lot depends on the top leader, who exercises strict control over the political movements and the media. In the recent Sino-Russian situation, each respective country leader brought with him his own ideology. There are lots of similarities between their ideologies and there are some big differences. While both leaders repeatedly affirm that they are focused on revitalization of their countries and making them more independent from the Western geopolitical dominance, Xi Jinping is putting more emphasis on economic prosperity, profitable trade with the Western countries, and avoiding military conflict. He was elected to become the General Secretary of Communist party in 2012, and became the president in 2013, concentrating all the political power in his hands. Xi has been promoting *The China Dream* and “*national rejuvenation*”, ever since the highly publicized exhibition “*The Road to National Rejuvenation*” in 2012. His ideology is now called *Xi Jinping Thought*. It argues that China continues on the road of so-called “scientific socialism” based on the Marxism ideology, with all the necessary modifications to fit Chinese specifics, but without changing the core. Since 2012, Xi has been getting stronger as an authoritarian leader, gathering more and more power. Xi had focused, since 2012, on motivating Chinese people to rapidly increase the GDP and work hard towards the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist party, which happened in 2021, showcasing for the world all the grand achievements of the “First Century”.

Vladimir Putin has been influencing Russia's ideology since 2000. Putin, just as Xi, believes in rejuvenation of his country, and increasing its independence from the Western geopolitical influence. His main goal has been to recover Russia's economic and political strength, which was lost after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. He believes in strong authoritarian power and looks upon famous Russian tzars, like Peter the Great and Catherine the Great as his leadership role models. The whole idea of restoration of the grand Russian Empire is a big part of Putin's ideology, and unlike Xi, for the moment, Putin believes in doing whatever it takes to pursue his goals, including being involved in a military conflict.

The following chart will focus on one of the fundamental aspects of democracy – the multiparty political system. China has had a single ruling party, the Communist party, for the whole period of 75 years. Putin's party, *United Russia*, is not the only party in the country, but clearly a dominant one, and a ruling one; it has more than 70% of the seats in the *State Duma*, which is the Lower House of the State Assembly in Russia ("State Duma" 2022). The party supports a mixed economy, and the principles of strong nationalism, Russian imperialism, and traditional Orthodox values, enforcing traditional moral and cultural norms. In 2009, Putin's party declared as its official ideology the so-called "Russian conservatism".

Figure 14



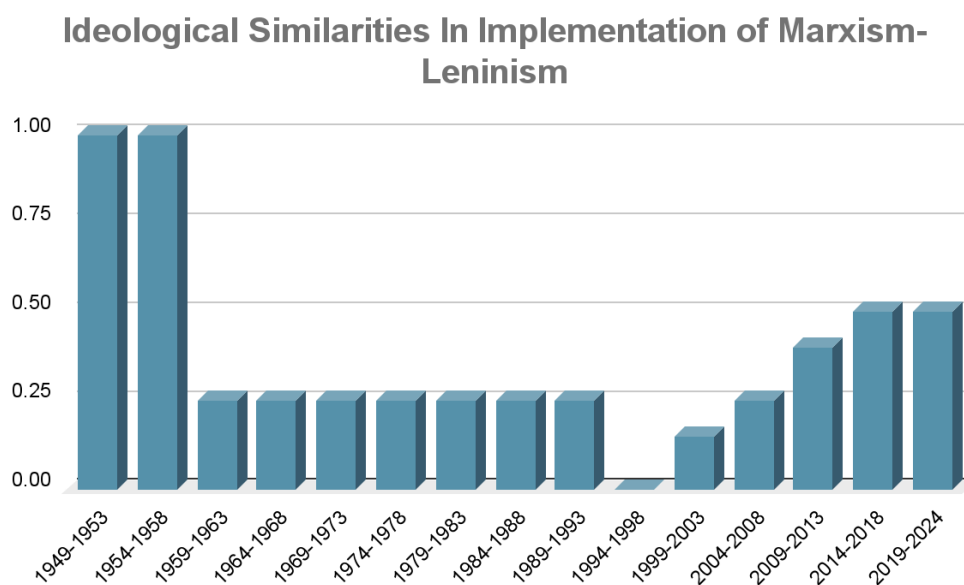
*Source: Freedom House (Freedom House 2024).

Values of one were given whenever both Russia and China had the same type of political freedoms, authoritarian vs democratic, values of zero were given whenever the two nations had somewhat different political freedom levels. The 1989– 1998 section was calculated as being lower due to a four year period when Freedom House ranked Russia as a *hybrid democracy*. According to the think tank, this hybrid period lasted from 1992 to 1994, thus an average value is granted for those time periods.

To sum it up, the graph above shows very similar levels of political freedoms between the Soviet Union/Russia and the PRC throughout the past 75 years. There was a small dip during the transition to the Russian Federation, in the early 1990s, but very quickly authoritarian practices resumed in Russia, bringing the political freedoms closeness level in the chart up, once more. As with the previous graph, this measurement is very broad, comparing autocracies (taken as a very generalized definition of political system) and authoritarianism with democracies (also taken as a

very general definition) as forms of government. Also, only one aspect of democracy, having a multiparty system, is analyzed, due to the limited scope of this investigation. Importantly, there are notable differences between Russian authoritarianism, currently labeled by the V-Dem Institute as *electoral autocracy* (with multiparty elections, but still insufficient levels of freedoms), and Chinese authoritarianism, currently labeled a *closed autocracy* (no multiparty elections, and no freedom of expression), which are not reflected in the graph above (“Democracy Report” 2023). However, both countries clearly demonstrate a high level of similarity, with many features of a classical authoritarian state, like lack of free and fair elections, and overall electoral system flaws, co-option in the government, state-controlled media, and lack of citizen participation in political decision making, to name a few.

Figure 15



For this ideology measurement a value of one is assigned for time when the ideological similarities between the two nations are at their highest, in this case when both countries adhere to a Stalin-endorsed Marxism-Leninism ideology. Following the Sino Soviet Split that started in

the end of 1950s, a value of 0.25 is assigned to show the greatly reduced ideological similarities between the two countries. This period acts as an era of divergence as Chinese ideology continues with Maoism, based on original Marxism-Leninism doctrine, with addition of the concepts of “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics,” while Soviet ideology turned towards De-Stalinization and reevaluation of relationships with the Western bloc. Although both countries were still fundamentally socialist and had similarities, like centrally planned economies, state controlled media, persecution of any political dissent, and only one political party system, specifically the Communist party, significant ideological differences and rivalry were beginning to form. The values dropped to zero directly following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, as all similar socialist state ideology stopped in Russia and a shift towards Western capitalism occurred. During this brief period of time the Economist Intelligence Unit rated Russia as a “hybrid state”, instead of an “authoritarian regime”, because during this time Russia was trying to establish itself as a democracy and went through big changes labeled as *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*. (The Democracy Index of Russia returned to an “authoritarian regime” starting in 2011.)

The Sino-Russian ideology begins to realign itself again following the signature of the 2001 Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation, with Article 12 of the treaty having both nations pledging to maintain “global strategic balance” and conducting operations in areas of mutual benefit such as economy, trade and science. As such, this time period marks a gradual increase in shared ideology once more, but on a new basis (not a shared Marxism-Leninism doctrine as in the past). This is shown as a value of .15 on the graph in the years 1999-2003. This rise continues in the 2000s as increasing joint statements are put out by both nations in support of one another and with shared ideological goals of maintaining control

and balance in their shared Eurasian area, reflected on a graph with a rating of .25. Shared ideological closeness increased in 2009 with the formation of BRICS, and further increased with the rise of Xi Jinping to power. During their joint statement in 2021 both Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin acknowledged their need for state closeness as a counterbalance to increasingly deteriorating relations with the West. Due to these increased similarities in ideology, a value of .5 is given to ideological closeness following the reaffirmation of the Treaty of Good Neighborliness and Friendship in 2011.

Figure 16

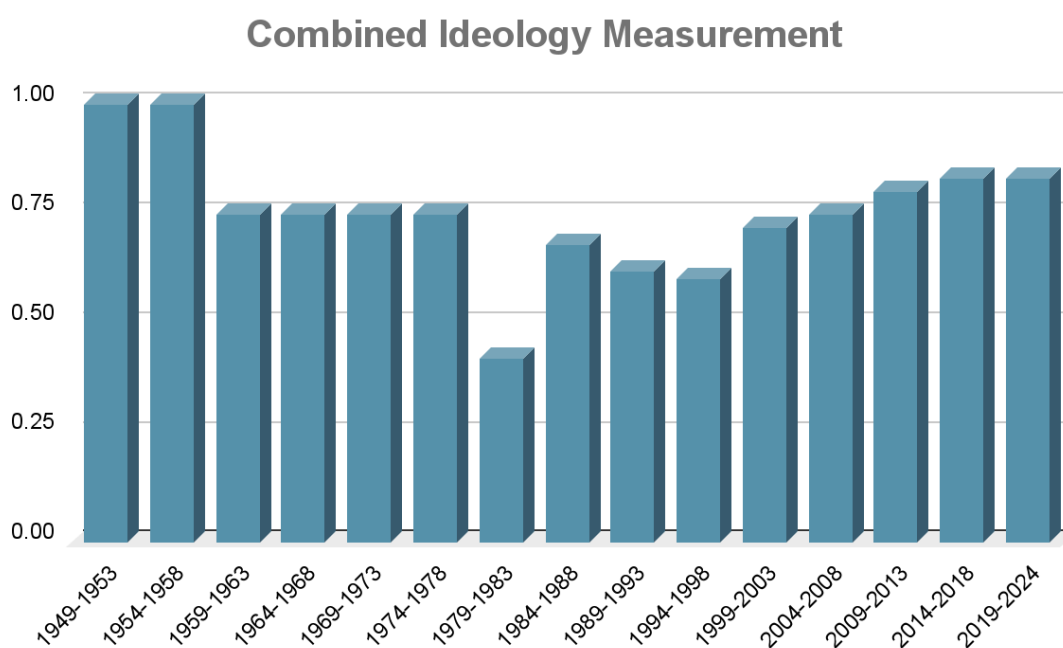
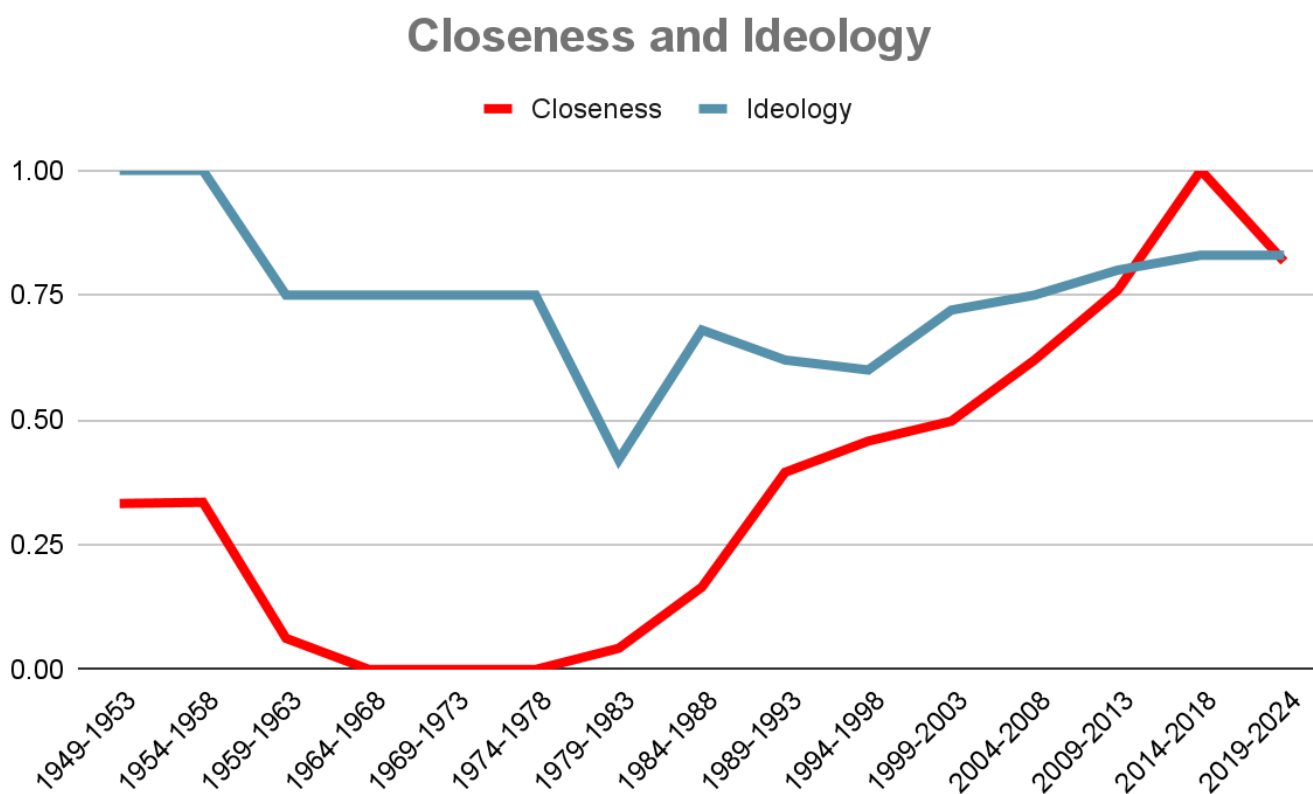


Figure 17



Closeness Analysis:

The correlation coefficient for Closeness and Ideology is 0.2862668782, this value shows that there is some degree of correlation between the variables, albeit smaller than some of the previous data sets. Examining the graph above it is evident that the combined closeness graph and ideological similarities between the two countries appear to have some correlations, starting off higher before dropping down and beginning to rise once more, following the fall of the Soviet Union. There are several potential explanations to the dissonance between graphs, specifically the political and economic turmoil that happened as a result of dissolution of the Soviet Union, and struggles to establish a new identity in the Russian Federation in the early 1990s. Although

diplomatic relationships were established with China, starting with Gorbachev's visit to China in 1989, the Russian Federation state doctrines and ideology was not fully developed in the 1990s, with lots of fundamental changes and restructuring happening inside the country. As new anti-Western rhetoric began to emerge from both Russia and China at the turn of the 21st century, ideological similarities between the two states began to rise again, mimicking the rise of combined closeness. Despite this, ideological similarities have not been able to reach the same level that they had prior to the Sino-Soviet Split and the death of Stalin. The new ideological closeness is now based not on adherence to the same Marxist-Leninist doctrine but rather on the joint counterbalance to the Western geopolitical dominance. With each new treaty in the 21st century, affirming friendship and cooperation, the two countries moved closer as strategic partners, stressing their similarities over the existing differences. As with the other potential explanations, it is important to note the somewhat subjective assignment of values to ideology as described above. More importantly it is integral to acknowledge that the correlation here is in no way implying causation. Similarities in ideology between the two states can either be influencing their closeness, or being influenced by it; in all likelihood it's a combination of the two. Notwithstanding these factors, the data available above shows that there is significant correlation between the two variables, meaning that they are related in some way or another.

The Implications of the Recent Sino-Russian Rapprochement on the Global Geopolitical Balance

In order to better understand the implications of the recent increased level of Sino-Russian closeness for the US and the global geopolitical balance, it is important to place it all in the historical context. The US relationships with both, China and Russia, has been a rocky one, with many substantial challenges in the past, and lots of counterbalancing in the present.

During the Sino-Russian Split, when China and Russia moved away from each other, as was demonstrated on the Ideology chart in this thesis, it became a ripe time for the possibility of establishing a better relationship between the US and each of these countries, separately. 1972 marked a promising beginning of the improved cooperation between the US and China. The window of increased closeness was abruptly shut in 1989, with the Tiananmen Square protests, leading to a massacre that made China an unacceptably aggressive and authoritarian actor in the eyes of all democracies of the world. All loans to China were suspended by the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, and US investments were stopped as well. Future investment commitments were canceled, and China started moving away from the US on Kissinger's geopolitical triangular configuration. Coincidentally, the Soviet Union leader, Gorbachev, made his first visit to China in 1989, as well, expressing Russia's support for China and restarting the more friendly Sino-Russian interaction after the 30 years of the split.

At the beginning of the 2000s, as Vladimir Putin first came to power, Russia tried to integrate itself into European politics and get closer to the US. However, it changed in February 2007, with Putin's speech at the Munich Security Conference. Putin condemned NATO's eastward expansion and affirmed a new course of Russian foreign politics as an opposition to the so-called "the monopolistic dominance of the US" in global affairs. The Russian president reminded the audience of a promise to not expand NATO in Eastern Europe, given by Manfred Wormer, a German politician, who served as Secretary General of NATO from 1982 to 1994, and was a key player during German reunification (Unification Treaty in October 1990). Putin quoted Wormer as saying "We will not place NATO army outside of German territory, which gives the Soviet Union a firm security guarantee" (Kremlin). Russia was very alarmed when in 1999 Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic became new NATO members, followed by seven

other Central and Eastern European countries in 2004. Therefore, in 2007 Vladimir Putin expressed Russia's protest against such rapid changes, saying in Munich that NATO expansion "represents a serious provocation that reduces the level of mutual trust" (Kremlin). This Munich speech became a clear demarcation in Russian foreign policies toward the West and moved Russia away from the US in Kissinger's geopolitical triangular configuration, while Russia was continuing to improve many dimensions of its relationship with China.

Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and following economic sanctions gave another impulse in Russia's moving away from the West, while forming closer bonds with China, which was helping Russia to stabilize its crumbling economy.

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, according to the data in the Chinese media, China has consistently claimed that it is keeping a neutral political position and insisted that it does not provide military support to Russia. In the same time, the data, analyzed in this thesis, demonstrates that China has been a major trade partner, with sharply increasing bilateral trade volumes, backing Russia financially, technologically, and diplomatically, and consequently, actively helping Russia to avoid the damage to the economy, that was supposed to happen due to the imposed massive sanctions; while Russia, being in the active phase of war with Ukraine and the so-called "Collective West", "drains the West's military-political resources. And China is using this chance to build up its strength for a decisive battle" (Karaganov 2023).

Therefore, the US and the US allies in the world are presently looking at the increased danger of dealing with two big opponents on the geopolitical arena, seemingly teamed together. So it is important for the US to understand and take into consideration the developments that explain increased closeness in Sino-Russian relationship and monitor the changes very closely.

Conclusion

This thesis analyzed the political and economic data, published in the West, Russia, and China, to decide how temporal and tactical the present Sino-Russian Union is, and to look at the factors of its stability and possible challenges. To better and more objectively evaluate the recent changes in the Sino-Russian relationships, all the pertinent data was collected and correlated, in the 5 year increments, over a long period of time, from 1949 to 2024, which represents all the 75-years of existence of the People's Republic of China.

After defining closeness for the purpose of this thesis, the investigation looked at the four dimensions of bilateral interaction: joint treaties, membership in multilateral organizations, joint statements of the leaders, and joint military exercises, arm sales, and military technology transfers. The analysis of the resulting charts, depicting the changes in the above-mentioned four dimensions, confirmed the hypothesis that the Sino-Russian closeness levels did actually increase in the last few decades, and especially, more recently.

The second part of the thesis focused on the most plausible explanations for the confirmed, in the first part, increase in the Sino-Russian level of closeness. Four possible explanations were carefully examined: economic interdependence (bilateral trade and economic agreements), leader cooperation and compatibility, the effects of global power shifts (global geopolitical balance), and ideological similarities. Throughout the thesis, it became evident that global geopolitical power balance, as reflected in the charts, has the highest correlation with overall level of closeness between the two nations, as seen by the correlation coefficient of 0.9427093907. Close behind, came economic interdependence, with both nations showing signs of correlation between general closeness and their economies, with a correlation variable of 0.8636967564. Both of these variables seem to have high correlation and importance to the

measurement of closeness. All the findings are presented in the charts and tables, throughout the text of the thesis, and in the end, in the Addendum.

Although correlation doesn't equate causation, there are still many important takeaways that can occur from these indicators of high correlation, specifically the acknowledgement that they have an influence on closeness. Knowing that economic interdependence and global power balance correlate can inspire future research on the topic to determine the extent to which these topics cause closeness between the nations.

In conclusion, it seems that the data collected for this thesis may have some serious implications not only for China and Russia, but for the understanding of the more broad current international developments and anticipating the possible future geopolitical shifts in the global power balance as well. Overall, the investigation confirmed the argument that there is a sizable recent trend that Russia and China are moving closer to each other, and, in some respect, away from the US, which may represent a concern for US national security, and therefore, deserves special focused attention from the policy makers and political scholars, researching Sino-Russian relations. The broad-reaching Sino-Russian joint projects aim at the creation of alternative global organizations and alternative international systems, especially in the areas of finance, trade, and technology. Also, both countries are active in promoting new global alliances, like BRICS, that are purposefully designed to establish a new global economic and geopolitical world order.

However, while many experts agree that “the Beijing-Moscow axis is more aligned than at any point in the past sixty years”(Magee 2022), with measurable increases in overall bilateral trade, military-technological exchange, arms sales, and joint military exercises, there are serious reasons to still view the China-Russia partnership “as tactical and transient - a “marriage of

convenience” - while it has developed into a substantial anti-Western quasi-alliance or entente” (Magee 2022).

The findings of the thesis suggest that it is important to monitor, over time, the main factors that are responsible for the recent increase in Sino-Russian closeness levels. Any major change in geopolitical global balance, economic interdependence, or possible change in domestic stability of any of the two countries, including but not limited to the change of leadership, may create a sizable roadblock in the path of Sino-Russian strategic cooperation; especially with the rapidly increasing asymmetry in the relationship, with the overpowering economic might of China posing the highest threat to the Sino-Russian long-term strategic unity.

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Addendum

Timeline: History of the Sino-Russian Military Cooperation

(Source: CSIS ChinaPower Project)

1992 - Military-Technical Cooperation Agreement (established a legal framework for the Sino-Russian military cooperation)

1994 - Russia started to sell Kilo-class submarines to China

1996 - Russia started to sell Sovremenny-class destroyers

1998 - China started licensed production of Russian Su-27 fighter airplanes

1998 - Agreement of Intellectual Property in Military-Technical Cooperation to prevent illegal copying of military technologies

2008 - Updated Agreement of Intellectual Property in Military-Technical Cooperation

2008 - Peaceful resolution of border dispute

2008 - Establishment of direct phone contact of defense ministers of China and Russia

2011 - Creation of Sino-Russian joint venture to service Russian helicopters in China

2011-2012 - Four separate contracts to sell Russian aircraft engines to China

2012 - First Joint Naval Exercises “Joint Sea”

2013 - First joint Air force exercises

2013 - Agreement to sell Russian Lada-class diesel-electric submarines to China

2015 - Beginning of regular meetings “Sino-Russian Northeast Asian Security Dialog”

2016 - Agreement to start a joint development of chipsets for navigation satellites

2017 - Development of General Plan for Military Cooperation for 2017 - 2020

2017 - First joint anti-ballistic missile defense exercises

2018 - First Chinese participation in Russian *Vostok* military exercise

2019 - First Chinese participation in Russian *Center* exercise

2020 - First Chinese participation in Russian *Kavkaz* exercise

2021 - First Sino-Russian joint military exercise in China “Interaction -2021”

2021 - First joint Sino-Russian naval military patrol around Japan

Timeline containing all multilateral organizations with shared membership between Russia and China.

1949-1959	1	Warsaw Pact									
1959-1969	0										
1969-1979	4	UN	UNESCO	Universal Postal Union							
1979-1989	6	UN	UNESCO	Universal Postal Union	International Atomic Energy Agency	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 1989					
1989-1999	8	UN	UNESCO	Universal Postal Union	International Atomic Energy Agency	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 1989	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. (1997)	IMF			
1999-2009	10	UN	UNESCO	Universal Postal Union	International Atomic Energy Agency	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 1989	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. (1997)	IMF	Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), 2001	BRICS, 2009	
2009-2019	11	UN	UNESCO	Universal Postal Union	International Atomic Energy Agency	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 1989	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. (1997)	IMF	Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), 2001	BRICS, 2009	Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), 2013

2019-Present	11	UN	UNESCO	Universal Postal Union	International Atomic Energy Agency	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, 1989	Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. (1997)	IMF	Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), 2001	BRICS, 2009	Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), 2013
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Figure 1A.

Joint Membership in Multilateral Organizations Between Russia and China

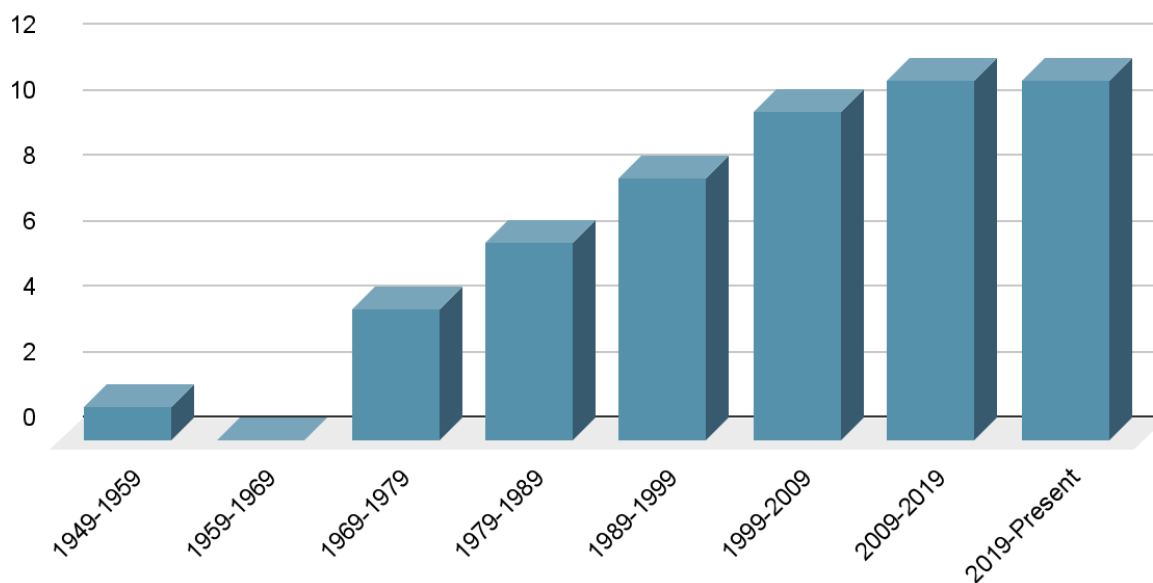
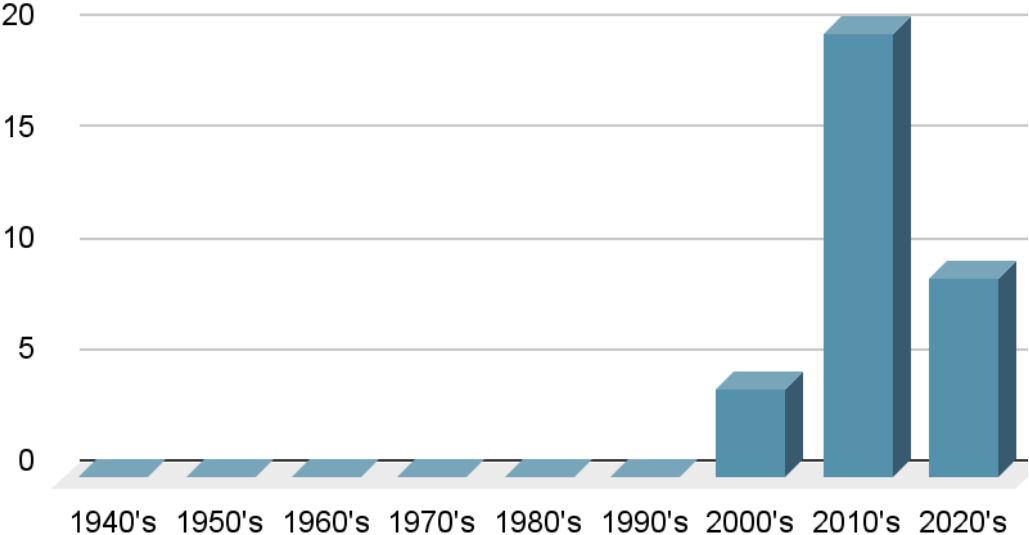


Figure 2A.

Joint Military Exercises by Decade



Correlation of voting in the UN between Russia and China, UK and France (2006-2022).

Degree of similar voting with Russia.	China	China's Rank in similarity with Russia	UK	France
2006-2008	0.82	China #3	-0.6	-0.6
2008-2010	0.96	China #2 (after Cuba)	-0.5	-0.5
2010-2012	0.98	China #1	-0.3	-0.4
2012-2014	0.91	China #1	-0.7	-0.6
2014-2016	0.91	China #1	- 0.8	-0.8
2016-2018	0.5	China #6	-0.3	-0.7
2018-2020	0.6	China #3	-0.3	-0.8
2020-2022	0.8	China #3	-0.5	-0.6

Source: (UN Voting Data set).

Use of Veto Power in the Security Council of the United Nations

A Timeline of Sino-Russian Relations over the past Century

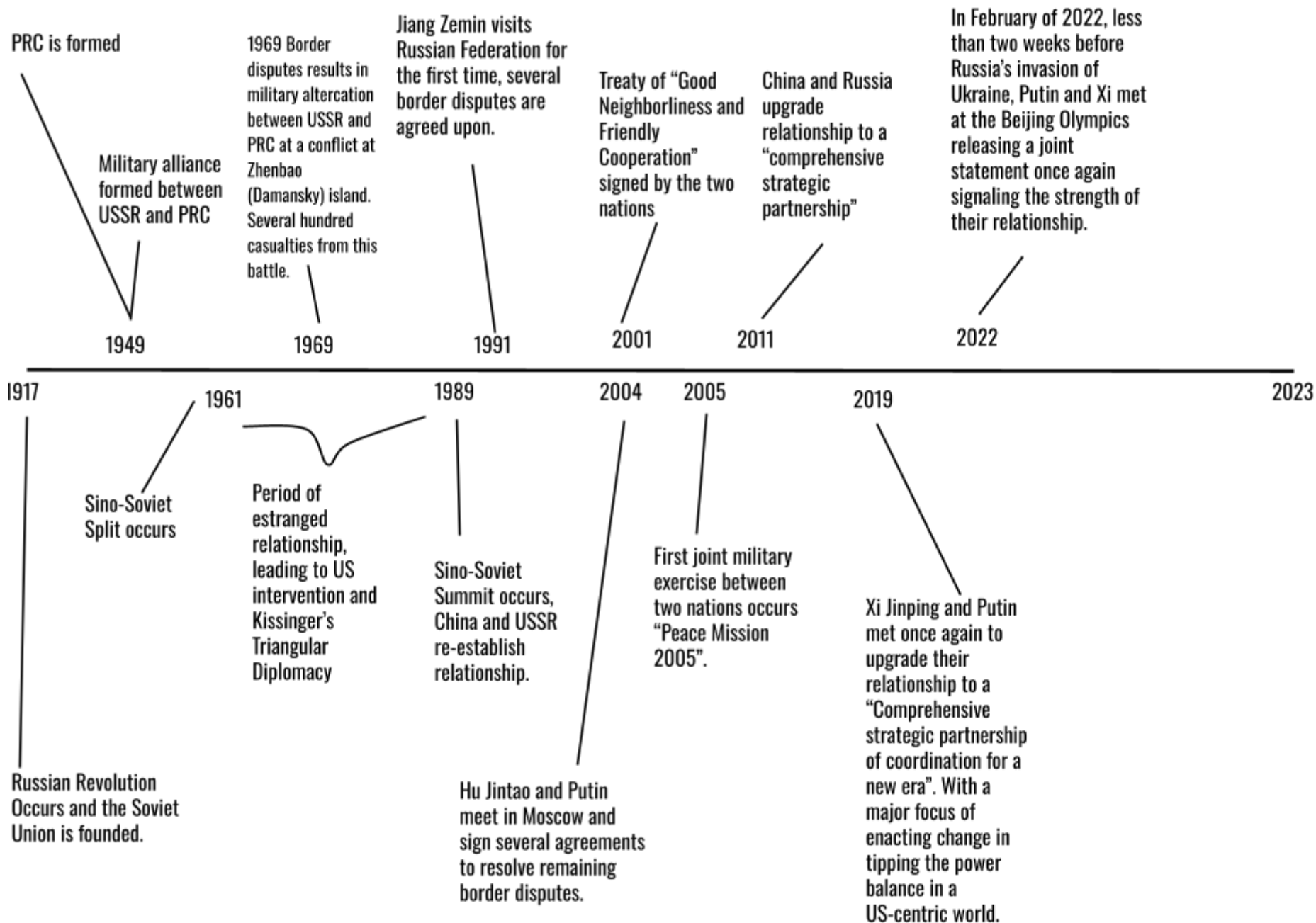
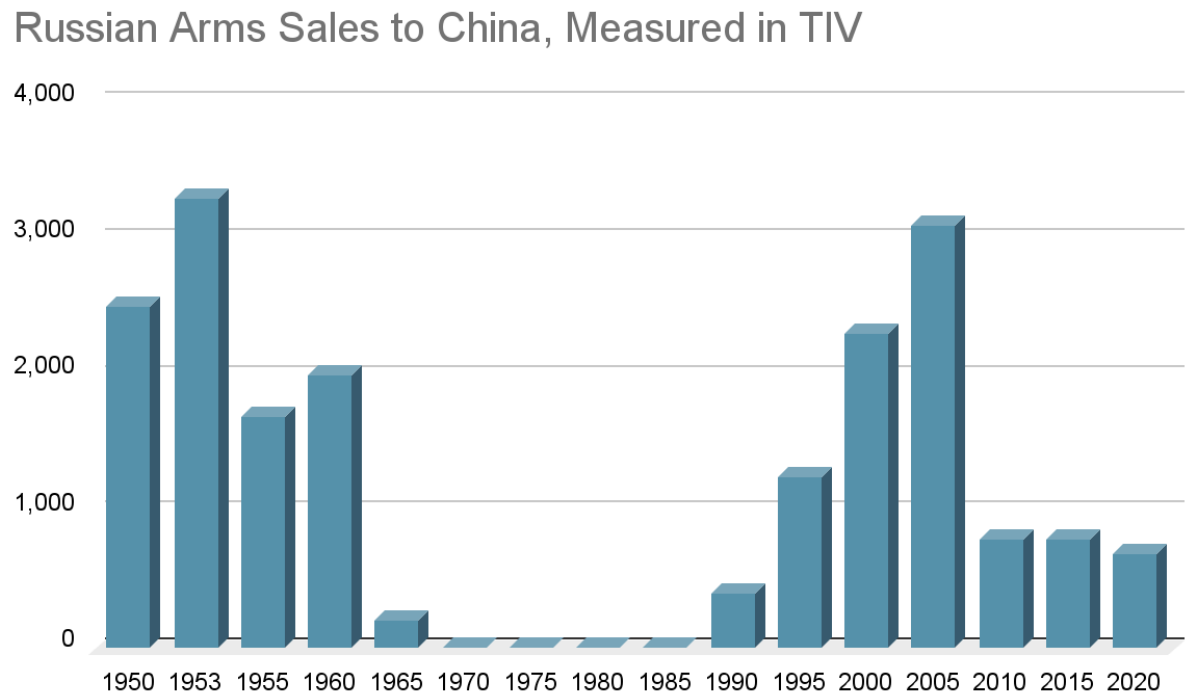


Figure 3A.

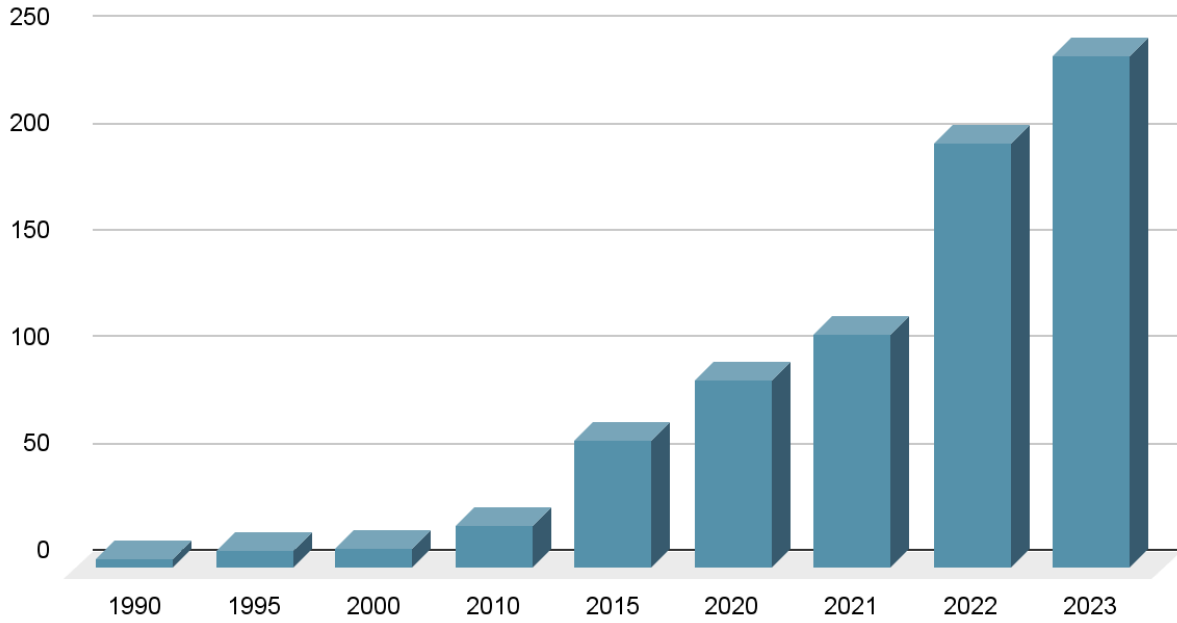


Units- TIV-Trend Indicator Values. This is a pricing system developed by SIPRI.

Source: China Power Project, and SIPRI. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, an independent organization.

Figure 4A.

Annual Trade Between Russia and China in USD Billions



Source: General Administration of Customs, China, World Bank, World Intergrated Trade Solution.

Figure 5A

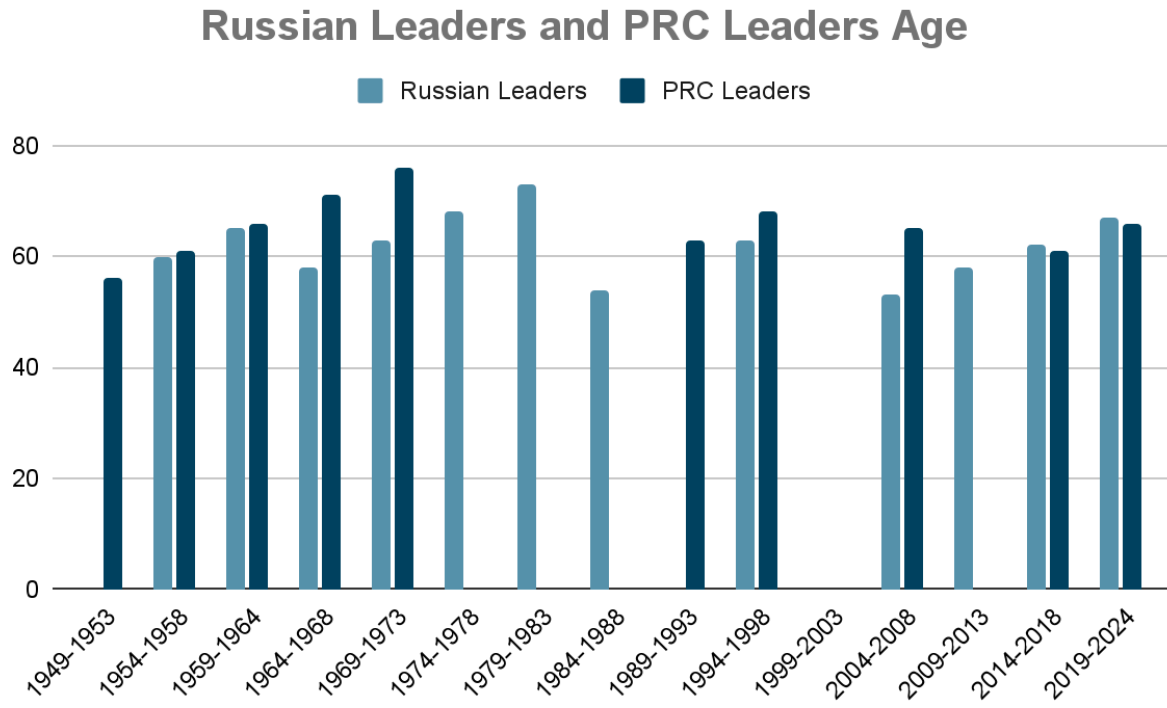
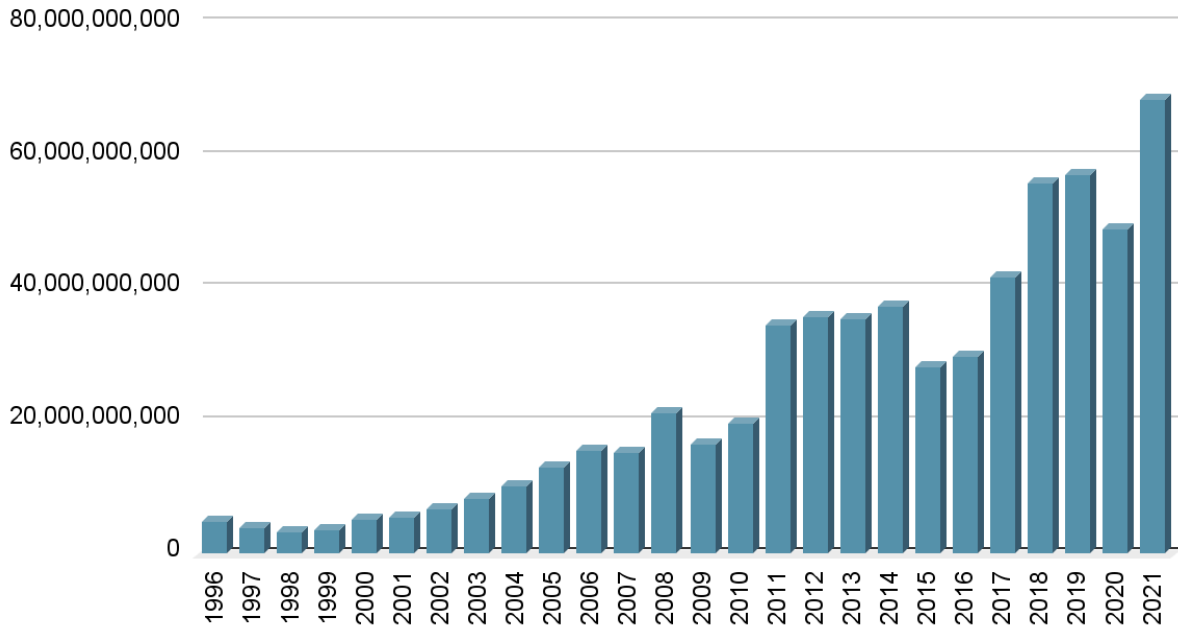


Figure 6A

Yearly Import from Russia to China in USD



source: United Nations COMTRADE Database

Figure 7A

Import from China to Russia in USD

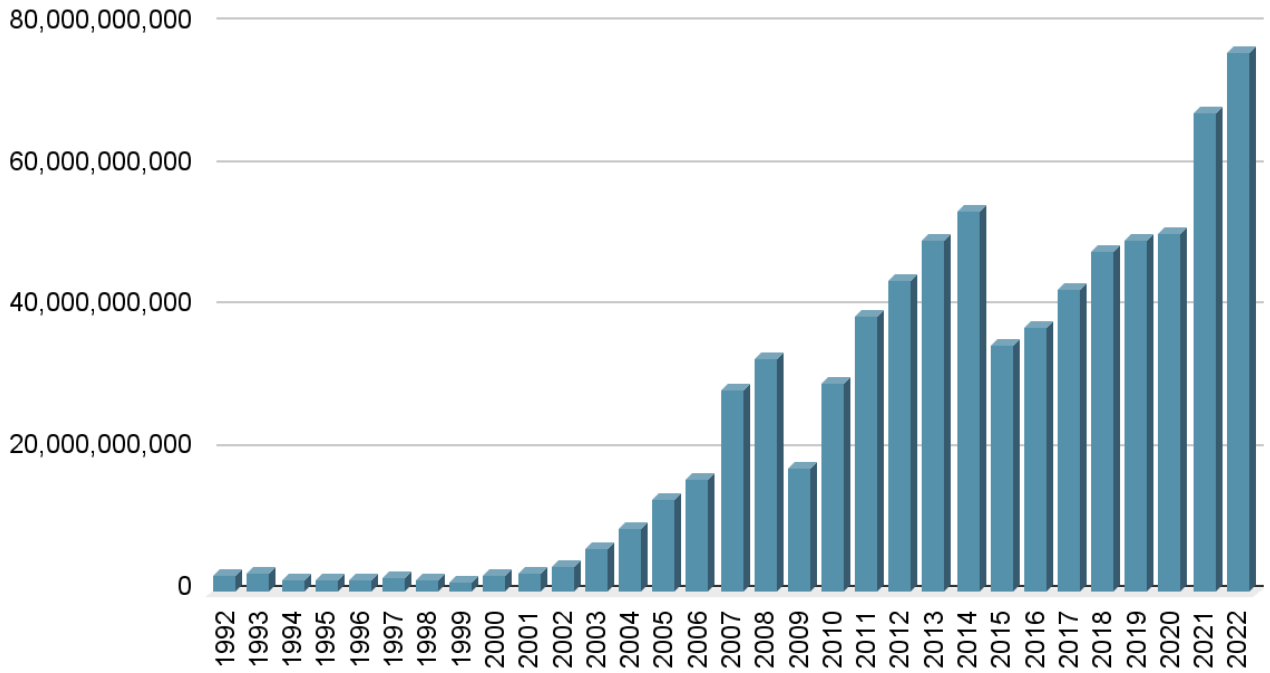


Figure 8A.

The Global Power Transition Cycle

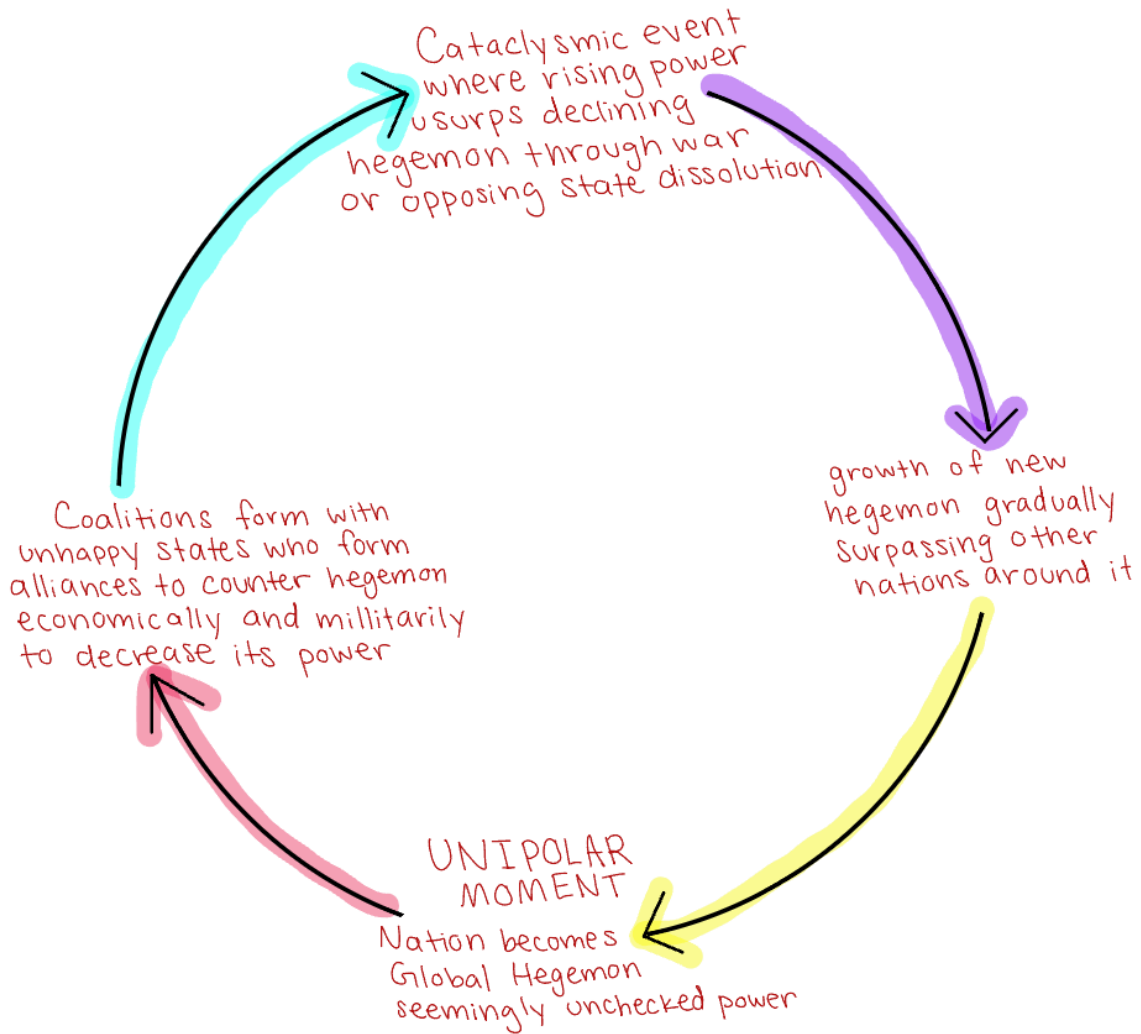


Figure 9A

