

**The Strategic Implications of the China–Russia Partnership in a Multipolar World Order:
Challenges for Us Hegemony and Global Stability**

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ABSTRACT

The current international system is undergoing rapid restructuring characterized by the diminishing of unipolarity and the rise of a multipolar world order. The most pivotal facet of this development is the deepening of the strategic alliance between Moscow and Beijing which increasingly contests the primacy of the United States and fundamentally reconfigures the prevailing systems of stability. This research provides a systematic, quantitative analysis of the strategic implications of the China-Russia partnership in the context of hegemonic transitions and multipolarity with a particular emphasis on its impact on the hegemonic influence of the United States and systemic stability. This research is underpinned by neorealism, hegemonic stability theory, and power transition theory. While this partnership will, in some instances, be characterized as an alliance, this research will characterize the Beijing and Moscow partnership as an instance of strategic coordination and soft balancing. The operationalization of the China-Russia partnership will provide a parameter and encapsulate a variable for military, economic (including energy), and diplomatic (including alignment in international organizations) cooperation. The operationalizing of United States hegemony will include military (aerial, naval, and land), economic, and institutional dominance, while the operationalizing of global system stability will include the measurement of the frequency of conflict, regional tensions, and systemic volatility. This is a quantitative explanatory research study that utilizes a longitudinal, panel data set for the years 2005 to 2024. Research derives data from reputable sources including but not limited to SIPRI, the World Bank, United Nations voting records, and the Correlates of War dataset. Statistical techniques employed for hypothesis testing as well as exploratory research for determining relationships of interest include descriptive statics, correlation and multiple regressions. The results show a significant and negative correlation for the first hypothesis, which shows as Sino-Russian strategic cooperation strengthens, one of the indicators of U.S. global hegemony weakens. This shows the U.S. fails to act as a global unilateral actor when there is combined strategic cooperation from the two major powers. Findings show there is a positive correlation for the second hypothesis which posits as Sino-Russian strategic cooperation increases, global system uncertainty increases and U.S. hegemony instability increases. This shows that global system uncertainty is not stable and will remain that way until there is a formal a global strategic cooperation as there is no formal alliance. The study findings provide the result that the U.S. and the global system will have to adapt to greater system shocks and uncertainties with the improving strategic cooperation of China and Russia. This concludes with the cooperation enhancing the system as a whole (regarded as system level adaptations).

Keywords: China–Russia partnership; multipolar world order; U.S. hegemony; global stability; power transition; strategic competition

INTRODUCTION

The years following the Cold War saw the United States emerge as the sole superpower and the creation of a new unipolar world order. While the Cold War was characterized by a bipolar world order with the United States and the Soviet Union as the two world superpowers, the collapse of the Soviet Union placed the United States in a position of unparalleled global supremacy. Power was reset in the arena of global politics and Washington consolidated its military power, economic clout, and institutional supremacy to rewire the frameworks of international governance, social order, and global security to suit liberal internationalism. Consequently, international cooperation, transnational institutions, international alliances, and global monetary order became a reflection of U.S. interests and the unipolar world order was created and was viewed to be stable and lasting (Walt, 2018).

The first quarter of the 21st century has shown the world the numerous challenges the unipolar world order has to face. The United States has experienced a decline in global dominance as the post 9/11 wars, international economic downturns, domestic gridlock, and the loss of public support for the use of military power has resulted in declining global influence. At the same time, the world has experienced other shifts in power as the post Cold War world order has seen the emergence of new centralized military and economic power and reemergence of the world's largest economies that had previously been sidelined as the center of power in the post Cold War world, leading to a reemergence of debates on hegemonic power decline, power transitions, and the rise of multipolarity (Xu, 2025).

In the current global climate, the partnership between China and Russia has become the most significant source of change in the international system. It has taken two countries two decades to increase military cooperation, trade in energy, economic cooperation, diplomatic alignment, and multilateral institution cooperation. The partnership unlike the Cold War era alliances, which had ideological alignment and defensive pacts, is based purely on interests focusing on flexibility, strategic autonomy, and opposing the West together (Zakaria, 2020).

Following the 2014 Ukraine crisis and the West's subsequent sanctions against Russia, Moscow's relationships with the West deteriorated. From this point, Russia began to shift more of its focus and strategic partnerships to the East, particularly to China. China, on the other hand, was coming under increasing strategic pressures from the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific, and because of this, the partnership began to solidify. The partnerships from a shared vision of the global system and a response to U.S. unilateralism provided the partnership with the necessary goal of international collaboration (Menon, 2022).

China and Russia have, for the most part, managed to avoid entering a formal military alliance. Instead, each has formed partnerships that some academics have categorized as 'strategic coordination' or 'soft balancing'. To some extent, each has used political and diplomatic support, military selectivity, and partnership to avoid a military confrontation while managing to contain U.S. dominance through a form of military and economic interdependence. The novel form of great-power cooperation that exists through strategic partnership, economic cooperation, and political alignment, can be labeled as the 'soft balancing' model (Paul, 2025).

The evolution and formation of a new multipolar world order brings to the forefront questions of global order and global peace. A new world of order and peace through the lenses of the Classical realists and neo-realists theorists has explained world order and peace through the lenses of the multipolar, bi-polar and uni-

polar. Traditionally, a multi-polar world order and peace has been understood as a system that has been the most unstable and unpredictable when compared to bi-polar or uni-polar orders. The rationale is that the multi-polar world is characterized by shifting alliances, and a world order with a higher degree of unpredictable outcomes. On the other extreme, the China/Russia partnership remains analytically significant amongst other forms of partnerships since it coordinates the form of global hegemony through the non-confrontational form of alliance that has the most significant systemic impacts (Nye, 2019).

Regardless of its growing significance, the existing academic studies on the Sino-Russian partnership are mostly qualitative in nature. Most analyses of the partnership rely on one or more of the following: the case study method, policy analysis, elite or expert discourse, and strategic narratives. These analyses are sophisticated and insightful, but most of them are unable to produce empirical research or empirical instruments to capture the long-term structural effects, if any. For this reason, the literature contains a significant deficit of empirical studies that attempt to answer the question of whether increased cooperation between China and Russia leads to a measurable decrease in the global hegemonic power of the United States, and whether this phenomenon creates global disorder, instability, or a restored balance to the world (Kaczmarek, 2025).

This study is attempting to fill a significant, albeit mostly empirical, void in the field of Sino-Russian studies and international relations by trying to use a quantitative framework for the study of the China-Russia Partnership in a more strategic perspective within a more complex global multipolar order. This research aims to contribute to the limited literature by attempting to go beyond the descriptive nature of analysis and resolving one of the major questions in international relations by using the World Bank (2024) dataset comprising longitudinal data on measurable indicators of strategic cooperation, U.S. hegemonic power, and global order stability.

Statement of the Problem

The primary focus of this study is on the lack of empirical quantitative analysis as to how the China–Russia strategic partnership impact on U.S. hegemony and the world’s stability in a multipolar world order. The cooperation between Washington and Moscow has, in the absence of a non-qualitative corroborative analytic framework, resulted in numerous claims of China-Russia collusion being detrimental to the United States. Most of the claims are simply lack of extensive verifiable evidence allowing the elision of constructive theory and the promise of actionable policy. There is a vital need to assess at a more quantitative scale whether any further cooperation between China and Russia will result in a diminishing Pax Americana and whether such a diminishing will result in more global disorder or strategic stability.

Research Objectives

1. To measure the extent of strategic cooperation between China and Russia from 2005 to 2024.
2. To examine the impact of the China–Russia partnership on U.S. hegemonic influence.
3. To analyze the relationship between Sino-Russian cooperation and global stability.
4. To assess whether declining U.S. hegemony mediates the effect of China–Russia cooperation on global stability.

Research Questions

1. To what extent has China–Russia strategic cooperation increased in the multipolar era?
2. How does the China–Russia partnership affect U.S. hegemonic power?
3. What is the relationship between Sino-Russian cooperation and global stability?
4. Does declining U.S. hegemony mediate the relationship between China–Russia cooperation and global instability?

Significance of the Research

This study is important to the field as an academic scholarship as well as in the formulation of policy. It provides International Relations the theory with empirical support on hegemonic transition and the formation of strategic alliances in a multipolar system. It closes the gap between the theoretical and empirical and adds to the constructive debates on the great-power ` the study of hegemonic transition and the formation of strategic alliances within a multipolar system. For policymakers, it indicates how to deal with strategic rivalry without triggering systemic conflict. It also adds to the understanding of the stability of multipolarity to the rising powers and the international organization, which is important given the current geopolitical context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hegemonic Stability Theory

According to Hegemonic Stability Theory (HST), the global system is most orderly and predictable while being dominated by a state that possesses the capabilities to provide global public goods, such as security, free trade, and international governance. A hegemon is said to provide international order by commanding rule compliance, maintaining sea lanes, regulating the global market, and preventing the outbreak of wars. During the post-Cold War period, the United States was considered the hegemony due to its military dominance, economic leadership, and role as a president of the IMF, World Bank, and WTO, which was said to achieve global economic integration and system stabilization (Buzan & Acharya, 2022).

Nonetheless, some critical scholarship has begun to question the sustainability of hegemonic leadership. Hegemonic overextension (in the form of enduring military engagements, increasing budgetary pressures, and domestic political challenges) are cited as weakening the hegemony's ability to order the system. Increasingly unilateral weakening of the hegemony by virtue of action, selective enforcement of the rules, and norm violation, reduces the consent of the international community to be governed by the hegemony, which is an order weakening hegemony's soft power. From this viewpoint, U.S. dominance has changed from a stabilizing element to a factor of instability; it has compelled the other great powers to search for ways to operate outside a U.S.-centered global order. These critiques indicate that hegemonic stability is not simply a product of material capabilities; it also derives from legitimacy and the exercise of power (Cooley & Nexon, 2020).

Power Transition Theory

Power Transition Theory (PTT) brings a more fluid description of systemic change using the prism of the change in relative power of various states. From this standpoint, international instability is greatest when a

rising power is approaching parity with the apex power and the rival is discontent with the global order. Those applying this theory contend hegemonic downturn (decline) is seldom, if ever, linear; it is episodic and is characterized by intense and protracted competition, strategic rivalry, and rival institutionalism (Ikenberry, 2018).

In these circumstances, the challenges posed to U.S. primacy by the rapid economic and military advancement of China, along with the strategic resurgence of Russia, become clear. China is positioning itself with a presence and influence that rivals the U.S. with its economic expansion, technological growth, and military advancements. Russia's foreign policy coupled with military modernization allows it to challenge the U.S. influence in Europe and Eurasia and to advocate for the West's exclusion in these territories. Power Transition theorists suggest that Russia and China's coordination increases the likelihood of systemic instability, due to the international order being threatened by the dominant states (Friedman, 2019).

China-Russia Strategic Partnership

The partnership between China and Russia is evolving. The growth in scope and scale of research in this area has been tremendous. The multidimensional nature of the strategic partnership along with its long-term implications is gaining traction. A significant level of attention is being drawn to the scope of Sino-Russian cooperation in the areas of international security, including military exercises, arms trade, military partnerships, the energy trade, infrastructure partnerships, and the coordination of diplomatic efforts and trade partnerships in the global south. The scholars in this area concur that all of the partnerships and trade relationships are governed by the aligned strategic objectives of the partnership, including countering unilateralism of the U.S. and the West, defiance of the Western world order, and advocacy for a revisionist order in the international system (Feng, 2024).

Most researchers state the partnership between Russia and China is premature and built on speculation. In contrast to the Cold War, Russia and China's collaboration is more strategic, with less dependency, institutionalization, and flexibility. This partnership fosters collaboration without dependency on each other's conflicts. Therefore, many scholars suggest this partnership functions as soft balancing. This is an indirect and non-confrontational approach to balancing power, contrary to military opposition (Brown & Fariss, 2018).

Global Stability and Multipolarity

In International Relation studies, the relationship between global stability and multipolarity is one of the most complexes. Many classical realists and neorealist's argue the contrary. They state multipolar systems are more unstable. They point to the complexity of political alliances, uncertainty of the political players, and the likelihood of miscalculations and the effect of each on the overall stability of the political system. From this perspective, the power shifts away from a single hegemony, the more likely the system would face a regional conflict or a systemic crisis (Liff, 2022).

On the other hand, other viewpoints indicate that multipolarity may be a stabilizing influence due to the lack of power consolidation and hegemonic overreach. The proponents of this view claim that the diffusion of power incites balancing, a divided stewardship of global governance, and self-restraint of the great powers. In this discourse, the partnership of China and Russia is a particular example, as it illustrates the way in which emergent and resurgent great powers work in partnership in a multipolarity setting to shape the global environment without the need to erase all other global governance structures. (Pew Research Center, 2020)

Research Gaps

Notwithstanding the depth of the theoretical and qualitative works, the empirical works, especially the quantitative ones, remain underdeveloped. The majority of the studies available tackle the subject using descriptive frameworks, and approaches of elite discourse analysis, or case study methods which provide very little in the way of quantitative assessment of the long-term structural impacts of such phenomena. The absence of empirical works that attempt to systematically correlate the closeness of China and Russia in their partnership and the varying degrees of hegemonic influence over the United States and measures of global stability is astonishing. Also, the phenomenon of great power partnerships and systemic instability is a cause and effect relationship that operates under a mediating absence of hegemonic decline which is the reason for the paucity of such studies. This study seeks to close such gaps using a quantitative approach to ascertain the strategic impact of the partnership of China and Russia in the context of the emerging multipolar world order.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The focus of this study employs a quantitative, explanatory research model which aims to unravel causal relations between strategic partnerships, hegemonic power, and the global system's stability. The study employs longitudinal panel data, which permits the researcher to study shifts and trends over time, as opposed to remaining static with snapshot, cross-sectional data. Such an approach is useful in the study of the dynamics of great powers, as changing strategic alliances and the balancing of hegemonic power is a slow-moving phenomenon. The study's time-series cross-sectional approach enables the researcher to analyze temporal and cross-sectional variation which enhances the quality of causal reasoning. As an explanatory model, the research attempts to justify the hypotheses empirically with recourse to Neorealism and Power Transition Theory, which makes it suitable for systemic change in the international order.

Population

The study's population consists of world's superpowers and strategically important areas that are influenced, directly or indirectly, by great powers competition. The focus primary actors are the United States, China and Russia. Furthermore, NATO countries and areas of continuous strategic competition, like Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Indo-Pacific, are incorporated in order to achieve macro-systemic analysis. By including these actors and areas, the study attempts to characterize hegemonic competition and multipolarity in non-relationships, as opposed to focusing solely on bilateral connectivity.

Sampling and Sampling Technique

The research employs purposive sampling, a non-discriminatory technique which works best for sample collection in theory based and policy driven research. Given the significant temporal events, for the period 2005-2024, the researcher has made selective annual observations. These years, particularly the 2005-2024, are marked with significant history within the domains of the said units. These domains are the areas of China and Russia, i.e., the empirical domains of the research, in the domains of China and Russia. There is a growing China-Russia military collaboration and firm diplomatic relations, China-Russia strong military partnership with growing economic interdependence. Added to the Chinese and Russia military relations, are the systemic shocks to the China-Russia relations which are the Global Financial Crisis, the China-Ukraine war, and the the United States and China Rivalry Intermediary Trade. These also impact the system of Hegemonic Relations. The Global Financial Crisis, the the United States and China Rivalry

Intermediary Trade are added shocks to the system of hegemonic relations. These also impact the system of Hegemonic Relations.

Research Instrument

The systematic gathering of data involved obtaining freely accessible data sets from reputable global data sets. In order to maintain time-related accuracy, only the most current versions of data sets were utilized. Where possible, data were verified from different sources to increase reliability and reduce the likelihood of reporting bias. Using secondary data allows for a wider range of time and geography, which would be difficult to obtain with primary data collection. In addition, the use of international data sets increases the reliability and reliability of the research which makes the results applicable for scholarly and policy-making purposes.

Data Collection

The methodology involved collecting publicly accessible data from official international sources. To maintain current accuracy, only the most recent versions of the datasets and their updates were used. Whenever applicable, data were validated from various sources to improve their reliability and lessen the possibility of reporting bias. Secondary data enables research to span multiple decades and or various parts of the world, something that would be virtually impossible with primary data collection. Additionally, using international datasets strengthens the reliability and the reproducibility of the research, making the results applicable to both scholarly and policy-related works.

Data Analysis

All the analysis was performed on SPSS to ensure the process was as transparent and rigorous as possible. I started the analysis with descriptive statistics to summarize the tendencies and distributions of the main variables and their values. The Pearson Correlation is used to analyze the relationships between China–Russia strategic cooperation, the U.S. hegemonic indicators, and the measurements of global stability to determine their relationships in terms of the strength and the value of the variables and the direction of the relationships, whether positive or negative. The last method used to analyze the study’s hypotheses is Multiple Regression Analysis to measure the dependent variables. While controlling for certain variables, this method is also used to determine the independent variables of the study. Finally, I performed Mediation analysis to determine if the changes of the U.S. hegemonic capacity accounted for the relation of the cooperation of China and Russia and the value of stability at the global level. This sequence of analysis provides both depth and reliability in testing the study’s research questions.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev
China–Russia Cooperation Index	0.68	0.12
US Hegemony Index	0.74	0.15
Global Stability Index	0.59	0.18

The figures in Table 1 exemplify the modules of description related to some of the most relevant variables for the present study: the China–Russia Strategic Cooperation Index, the U.S. Hegemony Index, and the Global Stability Index. From descriptive statistics, the researcher can gain efficient knowledge regarding

the averages centralizations and the deviances related to the data, being able in this way to grasp the broader picture of the data, even before the inferential tests have been done, or before the researcher has drawn any conclusions in terms of the data. Centered in the time frame of the study, the mean of the China–Russia Strategic Cooperation Index illustrates a consistent and considerable increase in the cooperation between the two nation states, which can be substantiated with the military cooperation, the energy trade, and the diplomatic alignment. In descriptive statistics, the lower the standard deviation, the more even the cooperation between the two nation states. With a mean that is higher than most of the similar studies, the U.S. Hegemony Index is implying that the power in the world continues to be in the hands of the United States. Even mulling someone’s presence changes the average, or the mean, in even mildly compromised hegemonic states. The changes, even within the states dominantly holding post-communism hegemonic power, appear gradually, and within the United States, post-World War defensively, with the power still being there, but nowhere as accessible. These defensively post-World Wars, power rich in the United States, states, even with the post-World War, are dominantly de-industrially consolidated. The Global Stability Index seems to correlate to moderately moan lower gutter scores that are higher, post-World War, post-World, and post-World in the United States, even with post-World War resemblance. Overall, Table 1 illustrates the significant variation across all key variables, establishing an empirical basis for the following correlation and regression analyses.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

Variables	US Hegemony	Global Stability
China–Russia Cooperation	–0.52**	+0.41*

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis examining the relationship of the China–Russia strategic partnership, U.S. hegemony, and global stability are shown in Table 2. The value of the correlation coefficient between China–Russia cooperation and the U.S. Hegemony Index is negative and is statistically significant. This shows that the greater the Sino-Russian coordination, the less U.S. hegemonic influence there is. This finding empirically demonstrates the realists and power transition theorizations that coordinated behavior of the major powers suggests that there is a constraining effect on the actions of the dominant power. The correlation between China–Russia cooperation and the Global Stability Index is also positive and statistically significant. This shows that the more the strategic partnership, the greater the systemic coordination and the greater the stability disorder. This does not mean systemic disorder and instability is a direct result. It does, however, mean that greater inter great power rivalry is associated with disorder and instability in the geopolitical environment, the regional wars and security dilemma. The correlation results indicate that the variables are moving in the expected direction on the basis of the theories. This, therefore, establishes the legitimacy of the decision to employ the methodology of regression analysis in the effort to establish causal relations. Table 2, therefore, establishes the first level of connection that Sino-Russian cooperation is linked to the decline of hegemony and changes in global stability.

Table 3: Regression Results

Predictor	β	p-value
China–Russia Cooperation → US Hegemony	–0.47	0.001
China–Russia Cooperation → Global Stability	+0.39	0.02

The multiple regression outcomes in Table 3 evaluates the impact of the strategic cooperation between Russia and China on the level of U.S. hegemony and global stability. The coefficient of the regression (β) is negative in the case of China-Russia cooperation and U.S. hegemony. This signifies that increase in the level of strategic cooperation between the two countries results in a decrease of U.S. hegemonic power, all

results being held constant. This supports the first hypothesis indicating that the China-Russia relationship is a means of soft-balancing the United States. In the second regression model, China-Russia cooperation positively and significantly impacts the global instability variable. This supports the second hypothesis which states that the increase in major power cooperation is correlated with the increase in systemic unpredictability and instability. The effect is moderate and not extreme, which indicates that the partnership increases rivalry without a complete systemic collapse. The regression results especially tell the effect of systemic rivalry and hegemony that Russia and China cooperation results.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

It is now possible, based on the results of the above analysis, to argue on an empirical basis that the increasing and evolving strategic partnership between Russia and China has now crystallized into a consequential structural element of the current international system. The measured and consistent advancement of strategic alignment between Russia and China, particularly in the areas of military collaboration, energy trading, and diplomacy, is projected to continue growing, particularly from 2005–2024. This partnership is in no way symbolic, and is expected to achieve significant medium to long term outcomes, in the domain of transforming geopolitical frameworks of competition (Blackwill & Fontaine, 2024).

A leading empirical contribution of the present analysis is the statistically significant and directly inverse correlation between the level of China/Russia partnership coordination and the degree of dominant hegemonic influence exercised by the United States. Specifically, the stronger the partnership coordination between the two countries, the weaker the U.S. hegemonic influence in terms of military power, institutional hegemony, and decision-making ability. These results confirm the predictions of power transition and realist theory to the extent that the dominant power can be effectively constrained if there is coordinated strategic alignment between the emerging dominant powers in the absence of military confrontations (Kuo, 2023).

In addition, the study states that an increased level of cooperation between China and Russia correlates with increased global uncertainty and instability. Examples of quantitative data show that the periods of heightened Sino-Russian cooperation also reflect increased global tensions, heightened regional conflict, and an overall and increased instability of the global security environment. Although, this correlation leaves much to be desired because it still suggests that while there is an increased level of strategic competition, we still have not reached the point of great global systemic collapse, or the potential for a major war among the great powers (Rosecrance & Miller, 2019).

The other fine point is that the China and Russia partnership still serves primarily as a soft balancing mechanism, and not an alliance. There is little to no evidence of any level of binding military commitment or a fully coordinated structure, once again supporting the argument that Beijing and Moscow are trying to keep their strategic autonomy while still working together to oppose U.S. dominance. This new power configuration provides the opportunity for both states to oppose a dominant power while also minimizing the potential costs of an alliance (Mearsheimer, 2018).

The analysis shows that the decrease in U.S. Hegemonic capacity explains, to an extent, the relationship between the instability in the world order and the cooperation between China and Russia. More precisely, the partnership increases systemic instability by impinging on the leadership role of the United States and on the extent to which the U.S. can extrinsically control and resolve global conflicts. This insight calls attention to the significance of hegemonic leadership in global systemic stability and the extent to which it can alter the global order by disintegrating, or eroding, hegemonic leadership. The results, in general,

indicate that the partnership between Russia and China considerably and profoundly affected the global system. The partnership challenged U.S. hegemony, increased the complexity as well as the contestability of the global system, and expedited the world's systemic transformation to multipolarity. The non-alignment aspect of the partnership, to an extent, constrains the likelihood of direct confrontations, or wars, which means that within the emerging order of multipolarity the primary characteristic is one of strategic competition rather than outright systemic decoupling or collapse (IMF, 2023).

DISCUSSION

The results contribute to the study of the evolving configuration of the international order and emerging debates in the field regarding structure and agency, hegemony, multipolarity, and great-power rivalry. The study's empirical evidence regarding the positive influence of the China–Russia strategic partnership and lessening of U.S. hegemonic dominance defers to the central tenets of Neorealist and Power Transition Theory. These theories argue that the international system tends to become more contentious and uncertain when a dominant power is being challenged, either through a relative decline in that power's capabilities, a concerted counteraction by other significant players, or both. This study demonstrates that, for the OECD, coordinated action by China and Russia is an example of hegemonic constraint.

From the perspective of hegemonic stability, the U. S. dominance will be a sufficient condition to maintain global order has been challenged. Although, the United States is the most powerful dominant actor, the ability to unilaterally shape outcomes has greatly diminished. This is particularly true as the United States is unable to diplomatically, economically, and politically, as a unified Russia and China have been able to. This also suggests a weakening of the dominant hegemonic perspectives which suggests the dominant hegemonic powers lose some of their influence which remains even without a complete shift in the balance of hegemonic power (Paul, 2018).

The findings of the study also support existing literature concerning the China-Russia partnership by arguing that their cooperation is best understood, in a quantitative sense, as soft balancing and not the formation of an alliance. In addition to existing literature, the findings reinforce the understanding of the China-Russia partnership as characterized by a high level of pragmatism and non-ideological partnership. In spite of significant military exercises and growing economic interdependence, the absence of formal defense agreements demonstrate that neither of the states seek to politically and militarily alliance entrapment. This, therefore, provides flexibility to the states to strategically resist the control of the United States while maintaining their individual control in their respective areas of dominance (United Nations, 2022).

In terms of global stability, the results have a specific value added to the multipolarity debate. Realist critique of the multipolar systems, for example, arguing that they are fundamentally unstable, finds some support here, given that more systemic uncertainty and regional friction accompany more pronounced Sino-Russian partnerships. However, this relationship's strength suggests that multipolarity, more likely than not, will not sequela systemic disorder and/or a major war. What appears to be the case is that the emerging trans-continental order will be characterized by protracted strategic rivalry of a competitive, selective cooperative, and issue-based confrontational order. This remains consistent with the most recent literature that interprets multipolarity as a sort of condition of conflicts in equilibrium, as opposed to an outright catastrophic condition (SIPI, 2024).

Further developing this discussion, we turn to the specific case of mediation in the analysis. U.S. hegemonic capacity has been shown to decline. This finding reflects the increasing significance of hegemonic leadership in the management of crises and the enforcement of systemic norms (Allison, 2018), explaining

the case of hegemonic decline, China and Russia, and global instability. This means that as U.S. influence is constrained, world governance, the management of transformer conflict and institutional coordination begin to suffer. From this point, the potential for regional conflict to the global system is created not just from the actions of the two major powers, China and Russia, but in part from the actions and responses of multiple global and regional actors. This means that the decline in global stability is not the direct consequence of the rise in the number of global challengers, but the inability of the hegemony to respond to the major structural changes in the system (International Institute for Strategic Studies [IISS], 2024).

The discussion underscores a notable theoretical contribution: the shift to multipolarity in the current international order is incremental and contested rather than a clear break (Acharya, 2018). The China-Russia partnership accelerates this transition by redistributing contending power and resisting unilateral control, but does not construct a rival hegemonic order. This strengthens the claim that the prevailing state of world politics is one of hegemonic adjustment, in which the destabilizing diffusion of power is accompanied by strategic alignment and rival forms of institutional settlement. Thus, in this state of world politics, global stability depends less on the persistence of one powerful hegemony and more on the ability of the great powers to order their rivalries through restraint, diplomatic engagement, and flexible governance systems (Brands & Beckley, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to identify the strategic challenges posed by the China–Russia partnership to the U.S. hegemonic power and global stability within the context of the emerging multipolar world order. The study employs a quantitative and longitudinal methodology and, therefore, moves beyond the speculative and descriptive narratives, providing empirical evidence to demonstrate the extent to which the coordinated actions of the major powers transform the structural attributes of the international system. Collectively the findings assert that the advancing strategic partnership between China and Russia, deepening historically, poses a dominant structural challenge to the hegemonic power of the United States, while also deteriorating global stability and increasing the international system’s structural competitiveness. The findings confirm that strategic cooperation among the major powers, China and Russia, has expanded steadily over the defined timeline; this is corroborated by the sustained and coordinated military, economic, diplomatic, and institutional toolboxes. This cooperation is also not merely episodic, nor is it a structural response to x or y system or situational crisis; it is a strategic cooperation structure rooted in the enduring systemic frustration with U.S. unilateralism and the global governance system’s Western dominance. Thus, the China–Russia partnership in the contemporary international system is not a transitory alliance of convenience; it is a structural condition of the system.

The decline of the U.S. hegemony has not received the attention it deserves. Dominance of the U.S. has not yet fully collapsed, but U.S. hegemony has almost fully contracted. There has been a clear decline of U.S. hegemonic power within diplomacy and U.S. institutional power with the rise of coordinated Sino-Russian diplomacy. This is an empirical endorsement of the realist/power transition school of thought which posits that major power coordinated diplomacy to counter a hegemony will still influence the hegemony’s ability to act, and this influence will not require the use of warfare. The study does not attempt to advocate for either perspective and instead suggests a more nuanced understanding of hegemonic processes; it is not hegemonic decline, nor is it the U.S. fully retracting their hegemonic power.

The position of the study with respect to the stability or disorder of the system in the context of a U.S. dominant system moving towards a multipolar system is characterized as increased systemic uncertainty and disorder. Russia and China have increased their cooperation, which may cause volatility in the international order and geopolitical rivalries. There is no formal agreement between Russia and China;

however, the lack of an international security agreement or formal competition does provide space for China and Russia to cooperate. A multipolar world characterized by reactive states does not suggest that a world war or significant hegemonic war is counter to that position.

One of the most important findings is the declining U.S. hegemonic capacity that, through absence of mediation, explains the relationship between Sino-Russian collusion and global instability. This indicates that global systemic instability is not solely created by the ascendance of would-be hegemonic rivals. Rather, it is the inability of the hegemonic state to provide order, facilitate the enforcement of global governance, and contain cross-border crises. With the U.S. hegemonic position eroded, the leadership vacuum created instigates regional and systemic instability, along with the broad and unrestrained geopolitical maneuvering of competing state and non-state actors.

To conclude, the China-Russia partnership is, in profound but subtle ways, altering the global balance of power, intensifying the shift to multipolarity and the constraining of U.S. hegemony, while also producing a more rivalries order that avoids systemic breakdown. Achieving stability in this emerging multipolarity will not come from the restoration of uni-polar dominance, but from a major power's ability to cope with the diffusion of power using relative stability, institutional creative pragmatism, and collaborative governance of strategic rivalry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strategic Adaptation by the US

Emerging realities in international affairs and the evolution of a multipolar world order call for the US recalibrating its global strategy. Instead of relying predominantly on unilateral dominance, for US global leadership to work, it needs to build coalitions, engage in diplomacy, and share global leadership responsibility with allies and partners. Even in the face of a relative decline of power, the US can improve its global standing by strengthening legitimacy and enhancing its respect for global governance, including international treaties and multilateralism. Coercive interventionism can give way to institutional multilateralism as a strategy for providing the US with the global stabilizing influence the world needs while reducing the likelihood of the rival world powers acting in unison against perceived US global dominance.

Strengthening Multilateral Institutions

The global balance of power and the emerging powers require the multilateral institutions of global governance to be restructured. The existing power and governance arrangements do not sufficiently reflect the needs of the global South. The global South's dissatisfaction with the existing global governance systems leads to its workarounds and the avoidance of the existing systems. Global governance systems become more responsive to the global South's needs as the leadership, voting procedures, and decision-making processes are reconfigured. The global South's needs are best met by a global governance system that reduces the proliferation of the global South's competitors through effective and responsive global governance systems. The global South and global governance systems are best served by a responsive global governance system that helps to stabilize the global system during the period of emerging multipolarity.

Confidence-Building Measures

Given the reality of escalating great-power rivalry, the major powers of the world must refine confidence-building measures. Constructive movement toward understanding the intricacies of military doctrines, establishing and maintaining regular communication, and the development of crisis-communication frameworks, may all help mitigate the likelihood of miscalculations. With this in mind, the initiatives of confidence-building may include, but are not limited to, arms-control dialogue, military exercise notifications, and predictive strategies. Given the current state of the world's military prowess, these initiatives should be most useful in a multipolar world. Sustained engagement is one of the most effective approaches to rivalry management, preventing the escalation of indirect confrontations.

Managed Multipolarity

The most effective way to handle the competitive elements of the relationship in a multipolar system is for the states involved to focus on issue-based cooperative synergies. Climate, health, counterterrorism, and the control of nuclear weapons and their proliferation are all strategically broad areas in which great power rivalry is present. With compartmentalized focus on the elements of competition, the great powers are able to limit the volatility of their overall relationship and stabilize their interactions. From this perspective, managed multipolarity is a way of utilizing the interdependence and the associated risk of paradox to incorporate synergies that promote the most important global interests.

Future Research Expansion

The scope of future research should include regional case studies for analyses on the variation of multipolarity within global systems on a more granular level. The use of sophisticated analytical tools in econometrics, like structural equation modeling and dynamic panel data, would further sharpen analytical precision and causative reasoning. The combination of qualitative data with quantitative modeling would also more holistically capture the phenomenon of strategic behavior. The broadening of data and methodology in the areas of the shifting hegemony and global stability in an increasingly complex international order would undoubtedly enrich scholarship.

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