

## Post-Cold War Great Power Strategic Engagements: United States - China - Russia

Faradillah Isnaeni Putri<sup>1\*</sup>, Rodon Pedrason<sup>2</sup>, Frega Ferdinand Wenas  
Inkiriwang<sup>3</sup>, Kristoforus Evan Andriyanto<sup>4</sup>, Dyah Sekar Arum<sup>5</sup>  
Republic of Indonesia Defense University, Indonesia

**Corresponding Author:** Faradillah Isnaeni Putri [faradillahisnaenip@gmail.com](mailto:faradillahisnaenip@gmail.com)

---

### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Great Power Competition, Strategic Engagement, Post-Cold War, Country Building Measures

*Received :* 13, November

*Revised :* 27, November

*Accepted:* 24, December

©2024 Putri, Pedrason, Inkiriwang, Andriyanto, Arum: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Atribusi 4.0 Internasional](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



### ABSTRACT

The post-Cold War period witnessed the evolution of Great Power Strategic Engagements (GPSE) among the United States, China, and Russia, characterized by cooperation, competition, and complex interactions. These engagements impact global stability through military, economic, and diplomatic spheres. Strategic competition, particularly influenced by economic and technological ambitions, has shaped policies and alliances. This research employs a qualitative approach, analyzing literature to understand how GPSE and Great Power Competition (GPC) interplay affects international order and defense strategies, emphasizing cooperation potential and conflict risks. The study underscores the delicate balance between rivalry and collaboration.

---

## INTRODUCTION

### *Great Power Strategic Engagement*

China, Russia, and the United States are the three most active actors today that fashioned the global geopolitical landscape with their great economic and robust military power. This situation has developed into a Great Power Strategic Engagement (GPSE) among them, even after the Cold War that ended in 1991. According to Graham (2020), GPSE involves the US, China, and Russia working together to achieve mutual goals and stability in the region. This has strengthened the argument from Menon (2009) that GPSE is a relationship between those three countries focusing on stability, peace, and security. Furthermore, Nezhnikova et al. (2018) found that GPSE is a multilateral initiative involving the US-China - Russia, focusing on cooperation and the development of strategic projects. Subsequently, Wissemann (2021) extensively states that GPSE is a strategy rooted in soft power persuasion that can lead to military-to-military cooperation, establish relationships, and stabilize fragile states. Through these various arguments, it can be understood that GPSE refers to the methods of activities and strategies by which powerful nations exert their influence and manage their interests on a global scale. This includes leveraging soft power through engagement, utilizing advanced tools for strategic planning, and exertion of power within global economic structures, to navigate complex international relations and safeguard their interests.

However, GPSE is not always referring to the cooperation between the US-China - and Russia, and oddly depicted as the competition among those three great power countries which may be called the Great Power Competition (GPC). According to Jatmiko (2023), GPC is a hegemony and influence rivalry between global powers, dominated by the US, China, and Russia, to alter the global security constellation for their national interests. This also has been explained by Kroenig (2020) that GPC involves the threat of disruption or displacement of US global leadership by autocratic rivals, in particular China and Russia. Those three countries' GPC derives from the logic of increasing returns, which derives them into competition, whether rivals or allies, in geopolitics, technology, and international institutions, which Ye (2022) argues is the root or major area of GPC.

Farhadi (n.d.) profoundly explains that GPC consists of two elements: offense and defense, with subordinate elements like sustainment, strategy, tactics, adaptability, consistency, competence, and misdirection/deception. Moreover, Vuving (2020) argues that GPC involves the rise and fall of great powers, the balance of power among them, and the character of their relations, which is shaped by human dynamics, technology, and geography. Finally, it can be understood that the rise of China and Russia's re-emergence as a military power has ignited GPC with the US, a rivalry spanning military, economic, technological, and ideological spheres. This competition, marked by the dispute or issue intervention in many regions, fuels the development of advanced weapons, disrupts global economies, and risks escalating into conflict, while also shaping alliances and potentially fostering cooperation on shared global challenges.

### ***Post-Cold War***

Cold War which ended in 1991 has thought countries for a shift from an ideological approach to an economic approach, with many new economic and political powers that have emerged that are connected by location, ideology, and economic activities, such as ASEAN, APEC, and EU.

Post-Cold War has given a geopolitical shift situation that the US emerged as the sole superpower and is generally seen as a status quo power, but the rise of China and Russia has challenged its dominance by competing for influence in different parts of the world. The US is engaged in a trade war with China, and the two countries with Russia are competing in developing advanced weapon systems in their military posture. Those three countries are dominating the current GSPE and GPC, while other nations of the world are trying to find their position within the spectrum of power dynamics towards the global powers by either bandwagoning, balancing, or even hedging. These countries are competing for economic potential, military power, and size. During the post-Cold War, Zhang (2023) argues that renewed GPC is caused by the end of US-led unipolarity and ongoing power de-concentration in the international system, resulting from intensifying security and power competition.

### ***Great Powers in Power Development***

According to Berridge & Young (1988), a great power is one whose reputation for existing or latent military strength may be equaled but not significantly surpassed by that of any other power. The competition among great powers involves mainly economic and military contests, in which Tavares & Schake (2022) found that China is now more economically powerful than the Soviet Union was; the American and Chinese economies are more intertwined now than the US and Soviet Union's ever were; and US allies today are wealthier and more militarily capable than during the Cold War. Meanwhile, Mankoff (2021) argues that Russia is a potent competitor and a true great power rival, despite being perceived as a disruptive disruptor in Western strategic thought.

### ***Military Development***

The US Armed Forces are considered the world's most capable military. In 2022, the USA had around 1.4 million active military personnel, making them the world's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest armed force in terms of manpower. The Global Fire Power (GFP) also positions the US at the top of worldwide military power with an index score of 0.0699 (GFP, 2024b).

Meanwhile, China is recognized as a top global military power, ranking 3 out of 145 countries in the 2024 GFP (GFP, 2024a). The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is one of the largest and fastest-growing militaries in the world, intending to "modernize" by 2035 and become a world-class military power by mid-century. China's military modernization has increasingly challenged US defense capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region, although the US still maintains key advantages in human capital and operational experience (RAND Project Air Force, n.d.). The PLA's modernization is a strategic imperative for China, and

the country has been investing in strengthening its military capabilities and projecting power globally (U.S. Department of Defense, 2023).

Moreover, Russia has one of the biggest militaries in the world, with over 830,000 active military personnel, ranking it 5<sup>th</sup> in terms of active personnel (Statista Research Department, 2023). The GFP also ranks Russia as a top 5 global military power, with a power index of 0.0702 (GFP, 2024c). Russia's military power has been boosted in recent years, with President Vladimir Putin ordering the country's military to increase the maximum number of troops by nearly 170,000 people, bringing the strength of the armed forces to 1.32 million service personnel (Aljazeera, 2023).

### ***Economic Strength***

The US is considered a superpower in terms of economic power, with a nominal GDP of \$25.46 trillion in 2022, making it the world's biggest economy (Silver, 2023). The economy is profoundly developed and mixed, and contains a moderately open economy, encouraging adaptable business investment and foreign direct investment (Silver, 2023). Meanwhile, the USD is the currency of record most utilized in worldwide exchanges and is the world's reserve currency, backed by an expansive US treasury market. Within the 2024 Lowy Institute, the US positions 1<sup>st</sup> in terms of economic capability, with a score of 80.7 out of 100 (Lowy Institute, 2023b).

On the other hand, China is the world's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest economy by GDP, and the biggest economy by purchasing power parity. Concurring to the Lowy Institute, China also positioned 2<sup>nd</sup> out of 26 nations for comprehensive power, with an overall score of 72.5 out of 100, reliably for economic relationships, reflecting its strong trade and investment ties with other countries within the region (Lowy Institute, 2023a). China's economic power could be a significant factor in its generally comprehensive power, and it has sustained decades of rapid economic growth, making it a global economic outlier (China Power Team, 2022).

Meanwhile, Russia's economy is considered a significant global power, with a nominal GDP of around USD 1.9 trillion in 2023 (Focus Economics, 2024). The country has a solid resource base, especially in energy, and is one of the world's biggest producers of oil and natural gas (Focus Economics, 2024). In 2023, Russia was the world's 11<sup>th</sup> largest economy by nominal GDP, the 6<sup>th</sup> largest by purchasing power parity according to the IMF, and the 5<sup>th</sup> largest according to the World Bank. The Russian economy has weathered Western sanctions way better than initially expected, much obliged to high energy costs and the nation's capacity to discover new buyers for its exports, especially in Asia (Focus Economics, 2024).

### ***Foreign Policy***

Hill et al. (2022) argues that the foreign policy power of the US, China, and Russia is influenced by their respective strengths and strategies. As the world's largest economy and spends the most on defense globally, the US is giving it

considerable leverage in international affairs. China has grown rapidly in terms of economic size and military strength, posing a significant challenge to US dominance. Russia has a smaller economy and military budget, but maintains a powerful nuclear arsenal and plays a crucial role in maintaining stability in certain regions (Hill et al., 2022).

Bolt (n.d.) found that all three countries cooperate on some issues while competing on others, sharing overlapping views of world order but expressing varying levels of satisfaction with the current system dominated by the US. China and Russia advocate for a multipolar world where the interests of all major powers are taken into account, calling for major international issues to be addressed within the framework of the UN Security Council, where they hold veto power. Russia and China both value state sovereignty and oppose the idea that democracy is necessary for legitimacy, with Russia focusing on preserving its sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Bolt, n.d.).

Moreover, Berg states that the three countries interact strategically in various regions, where they engage in different ways to advance their interests and undermine US influence. Their policies reflect their unique historical experiences, strategic goals, and responses to global trends, resulting in a complex web of influences and competing interests on the global stage (Berg, 2024).

### *Foreign Political Influences*

The US, as a global superpower, plays a significant role in shaping international relations and the global economy. Its influence is evident in various regions, where it faces challenges from China and Russia seeking to deepen its influence at its expense (Berg, 2024). The US engages in GPC with China and Russia, with these relationships setting the direction for the transformation of the international system. Despite historical periods of cooperation, current contradictions exist among these major superpowers (Minakova et al., 2021). The US faces threats to its interests from China and Russia's efforts to undermine its position through covert and overt strategies aimed at reducing its influence in regions like Latin America (Berg, 2024).

China's global influence is multifaceted and economic, aiming to reduce regional support for democratic Taiwan and expand its economic reach through investments. China operates with a focus on creating a "multipolar world" where it is seen as an ascendant power (Berg, 2024). Chinese engagement in the region involves economic investments through state-owned enterprises that can sway decision-making processes and expand its market reach. However, China's influence extends beyond economic investments to include covert and overt strategies that aim to undermine the US positions in various regions, contributing to the remilitarization of global politics (Kurlantzick, 2023).

Russia seeks to influence global and regional policy through arms sales and military engagements across Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, which are aimed at asserting its status as a great power on the global stage (RAND National Security Research Division, 2022). Russia's influence aims to maintain autocratic regimes that align with Moscow's interests (Berg, 2024).

### ***Strategic Engagements***

The engagement of the US, China, and Russia as great powers in military, economy, and foreign policy is characterized by complex dynamics and strategic competition. The return of GPC has been fully acknowledged as the dominant paradigm of interstate relations, with Russia and China being identified as urgent and long-term challengers to US national interests.

During the post-Cold War, the three big-power triangle relations significantly influence global and regional trends, peace and security, and international cooperation. The US National Security Strategy itself has declared that the return of GPC with Russia and China is the greatest threat to U.S. national security and economic well-being. On the other side, the relationship between Russia and China is marked by increasingly compatible economic, political, and security interests, with China holding the upper hand in the relationship and the power asymmetry continuing to grow at the expense of Russia. By these means, the China-Russia relationship has become increasingly challenging for the US and its alliances, with China and Russia sharing interests and a mutual distaste for the U.S. operating in their respective domains.

The relationship between Russia and China has become increasingly important in the context of GPC. The two countries have been working together to counterbalance the US, with increasingly compatible economic, political, and security interests (Stronski & Ng, 2018). China holds the upper hand in the relationship, with the power asymmetry continuing to grow at the expense of Russia (Stronski & Ng, 2018). This has led to concerns in Russia about becoming too dependent on China, and the potential for China to dominate the relationship. The GPC has profoundly changed the conversation about US defense issues, leading to a shift in U.S. defense planning and budgeting. The US has intensified its competition with China and Russia, leading to a focus on developing strategies and capabilities to compete with these countries (Congressional Research Service, 2024). This has included a focus on grand strategy and geopolitics, capabilities for conducting high-end conventional warfare and superiority in conventional weapon technologies, innovation for weapon system development and deployment, mobilization capabilities for an extended-length large-scale conflict, supply chain security, and capabilities for countering hybrid warfare and gray-zone tactics (Congressional Research Service, 2024).

Despite the challenges and rivalry among them, the US, China, and Russia are still maintaining direct communication channels with each other, facilitating dialogue on pressing issues (bilateral channels). Furthermore, the three countries also engage in various international organizations, offering platforms for discussing global challenges and seeking common ground (multilateral forums), in particular; G20 Summits and the UN Security Council. Moreover, the great powers also have indirect confrontations through support for opposing factions in regional conflicts (proxy conflicts and alliances), such as; the US support for Ukraine by providing military and economic assistance, and China's Belt and Road Initiative. Despite rivalries, occasional partnerships among the three countries also occur on specific issues highlighting the potential

for pragmatic cooperation in managing some issues such as the Covid-19 pandemic, and strengthening counterterrorism measures.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Great Power*

The concept of “great power” in international politics is often shrouded in ambiguity, despite its important relevance in international law and diplomacy. Berridge & Young (1988) reject the view that a state needs formal recognition or universal interest to be considered a great power. They also reject the argument that the demonstration of military power through war is a necessary condition for this status. In their literature, Berridge and Young highlight that a great power is a state that has a reputation for military strength, both actual and potential, that is not easily surpassed by other states. This perspective underscores the importance of military capability as a key indicator, though not the sole determinant.

Under this concept, formal recognition in international forums, such as participation in the UN security council, is often insufficient to confer legitimacy as a genuine great power. Such status depends more on the reputation and perception of effective military power. In addition, great powers usually have broader interests beyond their own territory, although Berridge and Young emphasize that the nature of these interests is a consequence of their great status, not a pre-requisite. This illustrates that states with strong military and economic influence at the global level, such as the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, are often considered legitimate great powers.

In the modern context, great powers remain relevant in global political dynamics due to their ability to influence international stability and foreign policy. However, debate continues over whether great power status depends solely on military strength or also requires other elements such as economic stability and diplomatic capabilities.

### *Confidence Building Measures*

Country building measures are often understood as a set of policies and initiatives aimed at strengthening the social, economic and political foundations of a country. Fukuyama (2004) defines country building as a systematic effort to build strong and effective institutions in a country, with a primary focus on political stability and economic development. Fukuyama emphasizes that the success of state building depends on the ability of institutions to perform essential government functions, such as law enforcement, security, and public services. On the other hand, Paris & Sisk (2009) highlight the importance of a more holistic approach to state building that includes economic improvement and social inclusion, as they argue that state building is not only about government capacity, but also about legitimacy in the eyes of society.

The study by Brinkerhoff (2005) adds that country building often has to adapt to the local context to achieve sustainability. According to him, successful interventions require a deep understanding of socio-cultural dynamics as well as community participation in decision-making processes. Thus, country building measures require not only top-down strategies from the central

government or international actors, but also integration with local structures. These approaches emphasize that effective state building requires a balance between institutional strengthening, economic development, and public participation and trust to achieve long-term stability.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research method in this study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through literature studies. The main data is obtained from literature, academic journals, and related reports relevant to the issue of Great Power Competition between the United States, China, and Russia. The analysis is based on a content analysis approach to identify patterns and strategies used by the three major countries in building their influence on the international stage. In addition, this research uses the theoretical framework of great power engagement to understand how each country builds military, economic and diplomatic power to achieve its national goals. Data sources were systematically searched to ensure the accuracy of information and relevance to the topic at hand. This approach allows the author to explore the relationship between great powers and their impact on global foreign policy stability and development.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### ***Confidence Building Measure among Great Powers***

The GPC has significant implications for the CBM of the three countries. The competition is likely to have significant implications for regional peace, security, and development. The countries seek to assert their presence and influence in the region, and their competition is likely to have significant implications for the CBM of the countries. As these nations compete for influence and power in the region, their strategic competition is expected to impact regional peace, security, and development significantly.

The US and China, being the world's top two economic and military powers, have been engaged in a complex competition that has reshaped discussions on US defense issues. Hill et al. (2022) has found that the U.S. has been actively working to maintain its military superiority in the region, while China has been rapidly modernizing its military capabilities and expanding its presence. The US has been advocating for democratic development, good governance, and human rights in the region as part of its strategic approach, while China has been making diplomatic inroads across the region and pushing for a more prominent role in regional security processes. Economically, China's BRI has been extending its economic influence across various regions, while the US has been focusing on maintaining its economic influence through strategic trade agreements and investments (Hill et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, Russia has been increasing its military presence in key regions such as the Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea. In response to Western sanctions, Russia has been diversifying its trade and investment partners to mitigate the impact of these sanctions. Russia has also been working to strengthen its relationships with China and other countries in the region, to counter the influence of the U.S. and its allies (Hill et al., 2022).



The GPC has prompted a significant shift in US defense planning and budgeting toward developing strategies and capabilities to effectively compete with China and Russia. Reports to Congress have underscored the implications of heightened US competition with these countries for defense capabilities, funding requirements, and the overall US defense industrial base (Hill et al., 2022).

The GPC has brought about a renewed focus on various aspects of defense planning including grand strategy formulation, force-planning standards, organizational restructuring within the Department of Defense, advancements in nuclear weapons technology, global military posture adjustments, enhancement of military capabilities in critical regions like the Indo-Pacific and Europe, development of new operational concepts, maintenance of technological superiority, innovation in weapon systems development and deployment speed, readiness for large-scale conflicts mobilization capabilities, ensuring supply chain security resilience, and countering hybrid warfare tactics effectively (Hill et al., 2022).

The competition among the US, China, and Russia is also expected to have significant implications for the CBM of the countries in the region. As these nations seek to assert their presence and influence in the region, their strategic competition is likely to impact regional peace, security, and development significantly. The US and its allies have been working to maintain their military presence in the region, while China has been expanding its military capabilities and presence, while Russia has also been increasing its military presence in the region, leading to concerns about the potential for conflict.

The GPC has also led to a shift in the conversation about US foreign policy, focusing on the GPC and the need to develop strategies to compete with China and Russia. The US has been working to promote democratic development, good governance, and human rights in the region, while China has been advocating for a more active role in regional security processes. Russia has been working to counter the influence of the U.S. and its allies in the region.

#### ***Case Study: Russia - the United States in Russia and Ukraine War***

The Ukraine War has been a significant conflict in Eastern Europe since 2014, with Russia annexing Crimea and supporting separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine. The conflict has had a significant impact on the region and the world, with the GPC between the US, Russia, and China playing a significant role.

The GPC is characterized by the multifaceted approaches of the three countries, combining military modernization, economic expansion, and assertive foreign policy initiatives to enhance their influence and power in the region. The Ukraine War has the markings of GPC between the US-led Western bloc and the Russian-led bloc (Graceffo, 2023). The return of GPC following the Russian invasion of Ukraine has also affected China in gathering its strength to make strategic geopolitical gains, by becoming a market for Russian exports currently sanctioned by the West, and as a result, having a stronger supply of oil and natural gas (Davis & Slobodchikoff, 2022).

In this war, the US and Russia have built their coalition, including far-away allies, rewriting the existing global security architecture. Graceffo (2023)

argues that in GPC, two powerful nations compete to set the norms and practices of trade and investment. By organizing a coalition and bringing sanctions, the US has been dictating the norms and practices of trade with Russia and controlling Russia's trade with most of the world. Ukraine War is a GPC that will most likely set the tone for all future conflicts, whereby the winner will be more powerful and the loser less powerful (Graceffo, 2023).

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to the West focusing on Eastern Europe, while China is gathering its strength to make strategic geopolitical gains. Davis found that Beijing has provided a market for Russian exports currently sanctioned by the West, and as a result, China has a stronger supply of oil and natural gas. Western sanctions have not hurt Russia's economy as originally conceived, and the ruble, which collapsed as the war began, has recovered. As China has consumed Russian energy, this has allowed Moscow to stabilize its economy and permit the war to be fought indefinitely (Davis & Slobodchikoff, 2022).

### ***Case Study: China - the United States in China and the United States Trade War***

According to Wu (2020), China and the US involve intense competition for control over international relations, and regional strategies, particularly in trade and development. Both countries are intensifying their strategic competition, with the potential for a vicious conflict or two blocs with different ideologies, political values, and economic models, as well as control over the rules, norms, and institutions that will govern international relations in the decades to come.

As China's economic strength grew, its trade surplus with the US ballooned, raising concerns in the US about job losses and unfair trade practices. This, coupled with broader strategic rivalry and ideological differences, fueled tensions and led to the imposition of tariffs by both sides in 2018.

The US aimed to reduce the trade deficit, address concerns about intellectual property theft, and pressure China to open its markets more readily. On the other side, China sought to protect its domestic industries, counter US dominance in the global trade order, and assert its economic and technological prowess. Neither country has implemented extensive CBM, but the US and China have maintained limited official communication, engaging in economic and trade discussions at various levels. This effort resulted in a Phase One Trade Deal that was signed by the two countries in 2020, as a step forward towards building trust and reducing uncertainty. However, it is believed to be a normative effort to resolve the trade war issue between the two giants, which could be worsened to be decoupling if trust among them collapses.

### ***Case Study: China - Russia Treaty of Friendship to Strategic Partnership***

Since 1996, Russia and China have been united in what both call a 'strategic partnership'. While Beijing values its strategic partnership with Russia, particularly as a means for obtaining arms and energy, it has no illusions that Russia and China can create an effective counterweight to the US.

According to Yu (2020), China has worked and cooperated with Russia to formulate a strategic partnership in the post-Cold War era to counter US containment, to make the world order “more reasonable” and “fairer”. Yu (2020) extensively explain that China and Russia have intensified military cooperation over the past two decades, aiming to contain US hegemony and promote a new international order. The rapidly enhanced military cooperation between the two countries is a visible manifestation of China’s goal for military modernization for the owned PLA to face the challenges of a potential military intervention scenariolaunched by the USA in the Taiwan Strait and the disputed South China Sea, as well as for a delicate moment of global power shift caused by the rise of China asthe new world order or China’s power transition strategy by enhancing its “hard power” to elevate its status at the global systemic level. Yu argues that China wishes to achieve two interconnected objectives; the first is to safeguard its territorial sovereignty over Taiwan and SCS, to achieve a strategic and secure environment, which from the Chinese perspective has been in escalating disputessince the US adoption of the strategies of “pivot to Asia” and “free navigation operations; and the second is to protect China’s long cherished dream of nationalrejuvenation and reemergence as great power by restoring its past glory of “Fugiang” – wealth and power – from being interrupted by foreign intervention, byenhancing its national power and rising in the global power hierarchy.

In 2001, China and Russia signed a Treaty of Friendship, which paved the way for the expansion of military ties and strategic cooperation, they describe this relationship as a comprehensive collaborative strategic partnership”. This has been developed into a “friendship with no limit” that declared by President Xi Jinping and President Vladimir Putin on February 2022 through a joint statement,that some interpreted as heralding a formal Sino-Russian alliance to counter the West.

China and Russia use 'soft' or 'normative' power assets, such as alternative norms like sovereign democracy, to offset US military superiority without engagingAmerican power directly. To that end, Chinese and Russian strategists have adopted ‘soft’ or ‘normative’ power assets as strategic capabilities in their military and foreign policy. Alternative norms, such as the concept of ‘sovereign democracy’, allow China and Russia to deliberately ignore human rights issues toachieve diplomatic advantage concerning the US. The two powers have institutionalized these norms within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which they use to counterbalance US interests in Central Asia.

### *Analysis of CBM among GPC*

#### 1. Comparison

The US is maintaining its position as the world’s economic and military behemoth, however, it faces the challenges of adapting its Cold War strategies to a multipolar world, balancing alliances with strategic competition. Meanwhile, China as a rising economic giant and increasingly assertive power, is seeking to reshape the global order to reflect its growing clout, prioritizing economic expansion, especially through BRI, and regional influence. Lastly, Russia wields its considerable military capabilities and geopolitical savvy to

retain a significant role in international affairs by playing the current role of spoiler or power broker.

## 2. SWOT

### a) The United States

The US has its strength as the world's largest economy, most powerful military, network of longstanding alliances, as well as the democratic system and commitment to the rule of law. Bringing from that strength, the US has opportunities to attract partnerships and cooperate with traditional allies/partnerships with emerging powers. However, the US is currently facing international trust decreasing in its leadership, internal polarization and divisions, and also ballooning national debt. This makes the US is facing the threat of the rise of non-Western powers and massive challenges in the ongoing regional conflicts that involved them.

### b) China

China has a close relationship with Russia, while posing as the world's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest economy and largest military force, coupled with a strong centralized government under President Xi Jinping, however, the era of President Xi is on the edge, while China is still facing wealth disparities locally. Although China can surpass the US and Russia's military technology as they're intensifying modernization and have ambitious global infrastructure projects with BRI, they're still facing international criticism and pressure, while the US and Russia will not relax their guard against China's development.

### c) Russia

Despite having deep ties with China and other non-Western powers while also having strong national resilience because of the substantial military force with deterrence capabilities and significant natural resources, Russia is currently facing economic sanctions and isolation which make Russia have to achieve economic dependence. This is a massive challenge for Russia along with limited soft power and international trust amid military competition and regional instability.

## 3. Advantages and Disadvantages

The US-China-Russia were engaged in a technological competition, and the CBM among them can lead to innovation and progress, as each country will try to outdo the others. However, it could be a challenge for Arms Control and Nuclear Proliferation if their distrust of each other continues into tension and the international organization can't set control.

Aside from that, CBM among great powers could divert focus from addressing other foreign policy priorities, time-consuming, and resource-intensive, because the lack of trust-building from them could lead to "normative" communication. However, overreliance on CBMs' can create a false sense of security, and those three nations will play along with the security dilemma.

#### 4. Effectiveness of CBM

CBMs between China, Russia, and the US have the potential to significantly impact defense cooperation and diplomacy on both regional and global scales. The strategic engagements between them present a unique opportunity to leverage CBMs as effective tools for enhancing mutual understanding, fostering transparency, and facilitating cooperation in defense matters.

Recent initiatives and developments indicate a growing interest among China, Russia, and the US in utilizing CBMs to manage their complex relationships and navigate the intricate dynamics of great power competition (Ashford, 2021). China's proactive endorsement and implementation of CBMs to improve bilateral ties, especially with Russia, demonstrate a strategic commitment to utilizing diplomatic means to foster stability and reduce tensions. This proactive stance underscores the recognition of the potential benefits that well-crafted CBMs can offer in enhancing defense cooperation, promoting dialogue, and mitigating risks associated with strategic competition among these influential nations.

Despite the positive intentions behind CBMs, several challenges exist that may impede their effectiveness in practice. One significant obstacle is the absence of comprehensive CBM frameworks involving all three powers, which limits the scope and impact of these measures on addressing multifaceted geopolitical dynamics effectively. Additionally, divergent strategic priorities, historical rivalries, and underlying mistrust between China, Russia, and the US present formidable hurdles to the successful implementation of meaningful CBMs that can address shared security concerns comprehensively (Ashford, 2021).

Furthermore, an evaluation of existing CBMs reveals their mixed success in promoting long-term stability and preventing conflicts within the context of greatpower interactions. This underscores the ongoing challenge of developing and implementing robust CBM strategies that can effectively manage risks associated with geopolitical rivalries while enhancing diplomatic relations among these key players on the global stage. Despite these limitations, continued exploration and refinement of CBMs hold promise for fostering constructive dialogues, enhancing crisis management capabilities, and mitigating potential sources of conflict in defense cooperation and diplomacy among them (Ashford, 2021).

By prioritizing transparency, communication, mutual understanding, and sustained engagement through CBMs, these great powers can work towards building a more secure, stable, and cooperative international environment for the benefit of all stakeholders involved. Embracing a proactive approach to CBMs within their strategic engagements can pave the way for enhanced defense cooperation, improved diplomatic relations, and a more peaceful global order characterized by mutual respect, trust-building efforts, and collaborative security initiatives among China, Russia, and the US (Wagener, 2023).

#### 5. Important Role of CBM

CBM between China, Russia, and the US plays a critical role in maintaining regional and global security by fostering trust, transparency, and cooperation.

These measures are essential tools for managing the complexities of international relations and promoting stability in an increasingly interconnected world. Throughout history, CBMs have been instrumental in reducing tensions and preventing conflicts, particularly during periods of heightened geopolitical rivalries like the Cold War. In today's context, CBMs offer a pathway toward enhancing mutual understanding, building confidence, and mitigating risks in the interactions between these major powers.

One of the fundamental ways in which CBMs contribute to security is by promoting transparency. By sharing information about military activities, exercises, and deployments, countries can reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings or misinterpretations that could lead to unintended escalations (Ashford, 2021). Transparency builds trust among nations and fosters an environment of openness that is conducive to peaceful dialogue and cooperation. Establishing clear communication channels and mechanisms for information exchange enhances predictability and reduces the potential for miscalculations or inadvertent conflicts. Moreover, CBMs play a crucial role in encouraging cooperation among China, Russia, and the US on a wide range of security challenges. Collaborative efforts on issues such as counterterrorism, cybersecurity, non-proliferation, and disaster response not only strengthen ties between nations but also demonstrate a shared commitment to addressing common threats to global security (Horowitz & Scharre, 2021). By working together to tackle these shared challenges, great-power countries can build resilience, enhance stability, and promote a rules-based international order that benefits all stakeholders (CSIS, n.d.).

Furthermore, effective CBMs are essential for managing crises that may arise in the regional or global context. Establishing protocols for crisis communication, de-escalation measures, and conflict resolution mechanisms can help prevent minor disputes from spiraling into larger confrontations. By having clear procedures in place for handling emergencies and incidents, countries can navigate turbulent situations with greater confidence and reduce the risks of unintended consequences.

Despite their potential benefits, CBMs face challenges when applied to the complex dynamics of great power interactions. Differences in strategic priorities, historical grievances, divergent interests, and power competition can complicate the implementation of CBMs effectively. Overcoming these challenges requires all parties involved to prioritize dialogue, cooperation, and conflict-prevention strategies that promote mutual understanding and trust-building.

#### 6. GPSE in Promoting CBM

The strategic engagements between China, Russia, and the US hold immense potential to promote CBMs at regional and global levels. While not forming a traditional alliance, China and Russia have developed a durable alignment based on shared interests and mutual interdependence. This alignment has profound implications for global security dynamics and presents opportunities for the promotion of CBMs that can enhance trust, transparency, and cooperation among these major powers (Krepon, 1997).

China's endorsement and utilization of CBMs to improve bilateral relations, particularly with Russia underscore the importance of such measures in fostering stability and reducing tensions in regions prone to conflict (Ashford, 2021). By engaging in CBMs, these nations can establish cooperative security patterns, enhance communication channels, and mitigate the risks of misunderstandings or miscalculations that could lead to conflict escalation. Furthermore, improved relations between China and the US is a crucial for Asian stability and the successful implementation of CBMs in the region.

The practice of CBMs within the context of Great Power Strategic Engagements offers a pathway toward building confidence, managing security challenges, and promoting a more stable international order. By leveraging CBMs as tools for dialogue, transparency, and crisis prevention, China, Russia, and the US can contribute to regional peace and global security. The establishment of effective CBMs requires a commitment to open communication, respect for each other's interests, and a willingness to address shared concerns collaboratively.

The relationship between Russia and China presents a unique challenge for the US as both countries share long-term foreign policy goals that aim to promote autocracy, undermine democracies, and establish a new international order dominated by great powers. The deepening partnership between Moscow and Beijing poses strategic implications for global security dynamics. This partnership extends across various domains including energy cooperation, military exercises, diplomatic support on territorial disputes, information operations, and efforts to counter Western influence (Horowitz & Scharre, 2021).

The collaboration between Russia and China is not limited to regional initiatives but extends to international platforms where both countries align on issues related to sovereignty claims, economic initiatives, alternative economic institutions to reduce dependency on Western financial systems, and mutual support at international organizations. This alignment underscores a shared interest in challenging Western-led norms and institutions while advancing their geopolitical agendas.

Moreover, China's significant reliance on Russian energy supplies underscores the interdependence between the two nations. Russia plays a crucial role in meeting China's energy needs which are vital for China's economic growth and political ambitions. This energy trade not only sustains Russia's economy but also contributes to China's military modernization efforts through acquisitions of advanced military hardware from Russia.

In light of these developments, it becomes evident that the strategic partnership between Russia and China poses challenges for US interests globally. The convergence of their foreign policy objectives aimed at reshaping international order underscores the importance of effective diplomacy and strategic engagement by the US to navigate this evolving geopolitical landscape while safeguarding its national security interests.

### ***Future Possible Relationship***

Known that the U.S. National Security Strategy has declared that Russia and China are the greatest threat to U.S. national security and economic well-being, the US has a dream to continue becoming the sole hegemonic power in international politics, despite the assertiveness of emerging powers like China and Russia. Future possible relationships among these three great powers might not replicate the American-Chinese- - Chinese - Soviet strategic triangle of the 1970s that refashioned the global geopolitical landscape, Graham (2020) argues that a new strategic triangle among them may not exist due to the US' lack of interest in establishing a working link with Russia.

Perhaps surprisingly, international relations scholarship does not have much to say about who wins great power rivalries, and many contemporary analysts argue that America's autocratic rivals will succeed in disrupting or displacing U.S. global leadership. However, democracies have built-in advantages in international geopolitics, and despite its problems, America's fundamentals are still better than Russia's and China's, making it an optimistic candidate for global leadership in the future.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The big-power triangle's relations significantly influence global and regional trends, peace and security, and international cooperation. All three countries have experienced an evolution in their approach to CBMs over time. The implementation of CBMs by all three countries has involved bilateral agreements with other nations. This indicates a common approach to fostering trust and reducing tensions through direct engagement with specific countries. CBMs can be effective in defense cooperation and diplomacy by reducing tensions, promoting stability, and fostering trust and cooperation between states. CBMs can be an important contributing factor to creating and managing security in the regional and global context.

### **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

The interplay between the major powers within the international system is a crucial determinant of both regional and global security dynamics, as well as broader trends in diplomacy and international cooperation. Over time, the three key countries at the center of this "big-power triangle" have evolved their approach to Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs), adapting them to changing geopolitical realities. The bilateral implementation of CBMs between these powers and other nations underscores a shared commitment to reducing tensions and fostering mutual trust through direct diplomatic engagement. This strategic use of CBMs has proven effective in stabilizing defense relations, mitigating conflicts, and enhancing cooperation in a variety of security contexts. By promoting transparency, predictability, and dialogue, CBMs serve as pivotal tools in managing security challenges both regionally and globally. These measures not only contribute to the immediate reduction of tensions but also play a fundamental role in the long-term maintenance of peace, making them indispensable in the framework of international diplomacy and global governance.



## REFERENCES

- Aljazeera. (2023, December 2). Russia boosts size of armed forces by 170,000 troops. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/2/russia-to-boost-size-of-armed-forces-by-170000-troops>
- Ashford, E. (2021). *Build Cooperation Cycles, Not Security Spirals*. Atlantic Council. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Ashford-Reality-Check-1-Build-cooperation-cycles-not-security-spirals.pdf>
- Berg, R. C. (2024, February 12). *China and Russia engage Latin America and the Caribbean differently. Both threaten US interests*. Atlantic Council. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/china-and-russia-engage-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-differently-both-threaten-us-interests/>
- Berridge, G., & Young, J. (1988). What is a Great Power? *Political Studies*, 36, 224–234. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1467-9248.1988.TB00226.X>
- Bolt, P. (n.d.). *US, Chinese, and Russian Perspectives on the Global Order*. <http://users.metu.edu.tr/utuba/Krauthammer.pdf>;
- Brinkerhoff, D. W. (2005). Rebuilding governance in failed states and post-conflict societies: Core concepts and cross-cutting themes. In *Public Administration and Development* (Vol. 25, Issue 1, pp. 3–14). <https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.352>
- China Power Team. (2022). *Unpacking China's GDP*. China Power. <https://chinapower.csis.org/tracker/china-gdp/>
- Congressional Research Service. (2024). *Great Power Competition: Implications for Defense- Issues for Congress*. Congressional Research Service. <https://crsreports.congress.gov>
- CSIS. (n.d.). *Confidence-Building Measures*. Center for Strategic and International Studies. Retrieved February 26, 2024, from <https://www.csis.org/programs/international-security-program/isp-archives/asia-division/confidence-building-measures>
- Davis, G. D., & Slobodchikoff, M. (2022). Great-Power Competition and the Russian Invasion of Ukraine. In *JOURNAL OF INDO-PACIFIC AFFAIRS*. [https://media.defense.gov/2022/Jul/31/2003046336/-1/-1/1/14\\_SLOBOHICKOFF\\_COMMENTARY.PDF](https://media.defense.gov/2022/Jul/31/2003046336/-1/-1/1/14_SLOBOHICKOFF_COMMENTARY.PDF)
- Farhadi, A. (n.d.). *The Great Power Competition*. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-64473-4\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-64473-4_12)

- Focus Economics. (2024). *Russia Economy*. Focus Economics.
- Fukuyama, F. (2004). *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*. Cornell University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctvrf8c1g>
- GFP. (2024a). *2024 China Military Strength*. Global Fire Power. [https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country\\_id=china](https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=china)
- GFP. (2024b). *2024 United States Military Strength*. Global Fire Power. [https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country\\_id=united-states-of-america](https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=united-states-of-america)
- GFP. (2024c). *Russia Military Strength*. Global Fire Power. [https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country\\_id=russia](https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=russia)
- Graceffo, A. (2023, March 21). *The Ukraine War and Great Power Competition*. Modern Diplomacy. <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2023/03/21/the-ukraine-war-and-great-power-competition/>
- Graham, T. (2020). China-Russia-US Relations and Strategic Triangles. *Polis. Political Studies*, 6, 62-72. <https://doi.org/10.17976/JPPS/2020.06.05>
- Hill, F., Madan, T., Sloat, A., & Solis, M. (2022, July). *Balancing act: Major powers and the global response to US-China great power competition*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/balancing-act-major-powers-and-the-global-response-to-us-china-great-power-competition/>
- Horowitz, M. C., & Scharre, P. (2021). *AI and International Stability Risks and Confidence-Building Measures*. <https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/AI-and-International-Stability-Risks-and-Confidence-Building-Measures.pdf>
- Jatmiko, B. (2023). Indonesia's Defense Policy in the Great Power Competition Era. *Jurnal Pertahanan*, 9(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.3317>
- Krepon, M. (1997). *Chinese Perspectives on Confidence-building Measures Pragmatic Steps Toward Ideal Objectives*. Stimson. <http://www.stimson.org>
- Kroenig, M. (2020). *The Return of Great Power Rivalry*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190080242.001.0001>

- Kurlantzick, J. (2023, October 20). *Responding to China and Russia's Influence on the Militarization of Global Politics*. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/responding-china-and-russias-influence-militarization-global-politics>
- Lowy Institute. (2023a). *China*. Lowy Institute. <https://power.lowyinstitute.org/countries/china/>
- Lowy Institute. (2023b). *United States*. Lowy Institute. <https://power.lowyinstitute.org/countries/united-states/>
- Mankoff, J. (2021). Russia in the Era of Great Power Competition. *The Washington Quarterly*, 44, 107-125. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2021.1970905>
- Menon, R. (2009). The limits of Chinese-Russian partnership. *Survival*, 51(3), 99-130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330903011529>
- Minakova, I., Bukreeva, T., Solodukhina, O., & Golovin, A. (2021). The USA, Russia and China as a Center of Influence in Global Economy. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 92, 09009. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20219209009>
- Nezhnikova, E., Papelniuk, O., & Gorokhova, A. (2018). Russia-China Energy Dialogue: Research of the Most Promising Energy Areas for Interrelation. *International Journal of Energy Economics and Policy*, 8, 203-211.
- Paris, R., & Sisk, T. D. (2009). *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations*. Routledge.
- RAND National Security Research Division. (2022). *Russia's Means of Global Influence*. RAND .
- RAND Project Air Force. (n.d.). *An Interactive Look at the U.S.-China Military Scorecard*. RAND. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from <https://www.rand.org/paf/projects/us-china-scorecard.html>
- Silver, C. (2023, December 15). *The Top 25 Economies in the World*. Investopedia. <https://www.investopedia.com/insights/worlds-top-economies/>
- Statista Research Department. (2023). *Armed Forces of Russia*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/topics/9957/armed-forces-of-russia/#topicOverview>
- Tavares, J., & Schake, K. (2022). Not your grandparents' Cold War: Why America should emphasize economic rather than military strategies in its rivalry with

- China. *TheHeritageFoundation*, 78, 324–328.  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.2022.2132739>
- U.S. Department of Defense. (2023). *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*.
- Vuving, A. (2020). Great Power Competition: Lessons from the Past, Implications for the Future. *SocArXif*.  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/dmrvbw>
- Wagener, L. (2023). China-US Nuclear Relations: From Securitization to Trust Building. *Global Public Policy Institute*. <https://gppi.net/2023/12/21/china-us-nuclear-relations-from-securitization-to-trust-building>
- Wissemann, M. W. (2021). Great (Soft) power competition: Us and chinese efforts in global health engagement. *Parameters*, 51(3), 65–78.  
<https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.3080>
- Wu, X. (2020). Technology, power, and uncontrolled great power strategic competition between China and the United States. *China International Strategy Review*, 2(1), 99–119. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42533-020-00040-0>
- Ye, T. (2022). The Roots of Great Power Competition: An Analysis Based on the Increasing Returns Mechanism. *Social Sciences in China*, 43, 77–97.  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/02529203.2022.2166286>
- Yu, L. (2020). Contending Chinese Perspectives on China-Russia Military Partnership. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 53, 240–259.  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1525/J.POSTCOMSTUD.2020.53.4.240>
- Zhang, B. (2023). Polarity and Strategic Competition: A Structural Explanation of Renewed Great Power Rivalry. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*.  
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/poad012>