



# **SUMMARY of the Article**

## **“Tightening embrace,” by Maleeha Lodhi, Dawn, May 27th, 2024**

In her article, Maleeha Lodhi examines the unintended consequences of current US foreign policy, particularly its impact on China and Russia’s strategic partnership. The recent meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Beijing underscores this dynamic, as both nations are drawn closer in response to US actions. The backdrop includes US warnings to China regarding support for Russia’s war in Ukraine and subsequent sanctions on Chinese companies for allegedly supplying military components to Russia. This, along with increased tariffs on Chinese imports by the Biden administration aimed at gaining favor with

American voters, has exacerbated tensions. The joint statement issued during Putin’s visit accused the US of “dual containment” and “hegemonic behavior,” criticizing its Indo-Pacific strategy and missile deployments, and pledging to counter American policies perceived as threats to regional security. Despite their differences, particularly regarding the Ukraine conflict where China maintains a neutral stance and has offered mediation, the growing US pressure has compelled Beijing and Moscow to solidify military and economic ties. This includes increased trade, with 2023 seeing a record high of \$240 billion, largely conducted in rubles and renminbi, and Russia becoming China’s top oil supplier. While their interests do not align perfectly, and China has its reservations about Russia’s actions in Ukraine, the shared pressure from the US has forged a closer alignment. The article highlights that the US’s coercive policies have inadvertently strengthened the Sino-Russian partnership, despite potential long-term limitations due to differing global ambitions and challenges faced by both countries.

## **Easy/Short SUMMARY:**

The article discusses how US actions have brought China and Russia closer together. Due to US warnings and sanctions on China for allegedly helping Russia in its war in Ukraine, and increased tariffs on Chinese goods, China and Russia have strengthened their partnership. They criticized the US for its policies and pledged to counter its influence. While China stays neutral on the Ukraine conflict and has offered to mediate, the shared pressure from the US has led to stronger military and economic ties between China and Russia, with record trade levels and Russia becoming a major oil supplier to China. Despite some differences, US actions have pushed these two countries to align more closely.

## **SOLUTIONS of The Problem:**

### **Diplomatic Engagement**

The US should engage in diplomatic dialogues with both China and Russia to address mutual concerns and reduce tensions. Establishing regular communication channels could help mitigate misunderstandings and build trust.

### **Economic Incentives**

Provide economic incentives for China to reduce its support for Russia. This could include revisiting tariffs and trade restrictions, and offering benefits for compliance with international norms regarding conflict mediation.

### **Multilateral Forums**

Utilize multilateral forums like the United Nations to address and mediate conflicts. Engaging multiple nations can help distribute the burden of conflict resolution and reduce the perception of unilateral US dominance.



## **Confidence-Building Measures**

Implement confidence-building measures such as military transparency initiatives and arms control agreements to reduce the threat perception among these nations and promote regional stability.

## **Joint Humanitarian Efforts**

Encourage joint humanitarian initiatives in conflict zones such as Ukraine. Collaborative efforts in providing aid and rebuilding infrastructure could serve as a common ground for cooperation.

## **Trade Negotiations**

Engage in trade negotiations that address the concerns of both China and the US. Creating a balanced trade agreement can help reduce economic tensions and foster better relations.

## **Sanctions Review**

Review and potentially ease sanctions that disproportionately impact civilian populations and foster resentment. Targeted sanctions focusing on specific entities involved in conflict support might be more effective.

## **Regional Stability Initiatives**

Promote regional stability initiatives in Asia and Europe that include China and Russia as key stakeholders. Ensuring their involvement can help address security concerns and reduce adversarial postures.

## **Promote Mediation and Conflict Resolution**

Support China’s role as a mediator in the Ukraine conflict and other global issues. Recognizing and encouraging China’s neutral stance can help leverage its influence for peaceful resolutions.



## **Collaborative Technological Development**

Encourage collaborative technological and scientific research between the US, China, and Russia. Joint projects can build interdependence and reduce incentives for conflict.

## **IMPORTANT Facts and Figures Given in the Article:**

- Putin's first overseas visit after securing a fifth term as president was to Beijing.
- The US imposed sanctions on Chinese companies for allegedly supplying military components to Russia.
- The Biden administration raised tariffs on Chinese imports, including electric vehicles, computer chips, and medical products.
- The joint statement during Putin's visit accused the US of "dual containment" and "hegemonic behavior."
- Trade between China and Russia reached a record high of \$240 billion in 2023.
- Russia became China's top oil supplier in 2023, overtaking Saudi Arabia.

## **MCQs from the Article:**

**1. What was the primary reason for the US imposing sanctions on Chinese companies?**

- A. Trade disputes
- B. Alleged supply of military components to Russia**
- C. Currency manipulation
- D. Intellectual property theft

**2. During Putin's visit to Beijing, what was a significant**



## **accusation made against the US in the joint statement by China and Russia?**

- A. Economic mismanagement
- B. Dual containment and hegemonic behavior**
- C. Environmental degradation
- D. Cultural insensitivity

## **3. Which country became China's top oil supplier in 2023?**

- A. United States
- B. Iran
- C. Saudi Arabia
- D. Russia**

## **4. What was China's position on the Ukraine conflict as mentioned in the article?**

- A. Full support for Russia
- B. Neutral and offering to mediate**
- C. Support for NATO
- D. Indifference

## **5. What economic milestone did China and Russia achieve in 2023?**

- A. Increased defense spending
- B. Technological advancements
- C. Record high trade of \$240 billion**
- D. Major infrastructure projects

## **6. What did the Biden administration do to appeal to blue-collar voters in swing states?**

- A. Increased social security benefits
- B. Lowered taxes
- C. Raised tariffs on Chinese imports**

D. Introduced new labor laws

## VOCABULARY:

1. **Strategic** (adjective) (استراتيجي): Relating to the identification of long-term or overall aims and interests.
2. **Backdrop** (noun) (خلفية): The setting or background for a scene, event, or situation.
3. **Sanctions** (noun) (عقوبات): Official orders or laws stopping trade, communication, etc., with another country as a way of forcing its leaders to make political changes.
4. **Rebuttal** (noun) (رد): A refutation or contradiction.
5. **Hegemonic** (adjective) (هيگموني): Ruling or dominant in a political or social context.
6. **Bloc** (noun) (كتلة): A combination of countries, parties, or groups sharing a common purpose.
7. **Containment** (noun) (احتواء): The action of keeping something harmful under control or within limits.
8. **Conspicuous** (adjective) (متميز): Standing out so as to be clearly visible.
9. **Compunctions** (noun) (مخاض): Feelings of guilt or moral scruple that prevent or follow the doing of something bad.
10. **Dual-use** (adjective) (مزدوج الاستخدام): Items that can be used for both civilian and military applications.
11. **Tariffs** (noun) (رسوم): Taxes or duties to be paid on a particular class of imports or exports.
12. **Alignment** (noun) (توافق): Arrangement in a straight line or in correct relative positions.
13. **Mediate** (verb) (وساطة): Intervene between people in a dispute in order to bring about an agreement or reconciliation.
14. **Coercive** (adjective) (قسري): Relating to or using force or threats.
15. **Punitive** (adjective) (عقابي): Inflicting or intended as punishment.
16. **Compelling** (adjective) (قوي): Evoking interest, attention, or admiration in a powerfully irresistible way.
17. **Mitigate** (verb) (تخفيف): Make less severe, serious, or painful.
18. **Escalation** (noun) (تصعيد): A rapid increase; a rise.
19. **Prudently** (adverb) (باعتدال): In a way that shows care and thought for



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the future.

20. **Rebuke** (noun) (□□□□□): An expression of sharp disapproval or criticism.

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Tightening embrace

Maleeha Lodhi

6 - 8 minutes

WITH election politics dictating current US foreign policy moves, Washington’s actions are driving China and Russia much closer in a strengthened strategic partnership. The unintended consequences of American policies were laid bare by the outcome of the recent meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Beijing.

This was Putin’s first overseas visit after he secured a fifth term as president. It took place against the backdrop of tough US warnings to China not to support Russia’s war effort in Ukraine, where Russian forces are reported to be advancing in an offensive in the northeast. Washington imposed sanctions earlier this month on several Chinese companies for allegedly supplying Russia with components for military use. This happened immediately after Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s visit to Beijing, where he raised US concerns about China’s military dealings with Russia. This met with a sharp response from Chinese officials, who dismissed US accusations as “groundless”. Foreign Minister Wang Yi shot back, saying “China is neither the creator of the Ukraine crisis nor a party to it”.

Subsequently, the Biden administration significantly raised tariffs on Chinese imports including electric vehicles, computer chips and medical products in a bid to woo blue-collar voters in America’s swing states, where the president is trailing his rival, Donald Trump. This added to a growing stream of US trade restrictions, which Beijing sees as aimed at containing China and thwarting its economic progress. Predictably, the latest curbs provoked a furious response from Chinese officials.

The wide-ranging joint statement issued during Putin’s visit directed strong words at the US. It accused Washington of following a policy of “dual containment” towards China and Russia and engaging in “hegemonic behaviour.” “The United States,” it said “still thinks in terms of the Cold War and is guided by the logic of bloc confrontation putting the security of ‘narrow groups’ above regional security and stability, which creates a security threat for all countries in the region.” The statement criticised America’s Indo-Pacific strategy and also denounced US missile deployments around the world that “pose a direct security threat to China and Russia”. Both pledged to counter America’s “destructive and hostile course” that they cast as undermining global peace and stability.

China and Russia have a common interest to resist US pressure but ties have limits.

The lengthy, comprehensive statement also listed the steps the two countries planned to take to solidify military ties and scale up economic relations while identifying other areas of cooperation for a “new era of partnership”. Both restated support for the other’s core interest. Russia reiterated its recognition of Taiwan as an “inalienable” part of China. China joined the Russian critique of Nato activities in Europe. The statement also expressed their shared view on North Korea. Conspicuous by its absence was any Chinese endorsement of Russia’s military intervention in Ukraine.

In fact, China has adopted a ‘neutral’ position on the Ukraine conflict and offered to be a mediator in the crisis. From the outset, it had misgivings about Russia’s 2022 invasion. It often communicated these to Moscow and occasionally even publicly voiced them in a veiled manner. In the meeting between Xi and Putin on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in 2022, the Chinese leader conveyed his reservations over escalation of the Ukraine crisis. Putin later acknowledged that “concerns and questions” were raised by the



Chinese president. China’s repeated calls for a ceasefire and negotiations for a political solution reflects its strong preference for a speedy conclusion to the war. Last year, it also offered a 12-point plan for a political settlement of the Ukraine crisis.

But hostile US actions and its trade and tech war with China have only aligned Beijing more closely with Russia and relegated differences with Moscow on Ukraine and other issues to the background. To be sure, China-Russia interests do not converge on many issues especially as China, as a rising global power, has nothing to gain by upending or destabilising the international system, while Russia has few compunctions to act responsibly. Moreover, they confront different challenges and have different stakes in global stability.

US threats of sanctions against Chinese banks and companies engaged in transactions that can aid Russia’s military machine have apparently made Beijing somewhat cautious. Nevertheless, Beijing has responded strongly to US allegations that it is supporting Putin’s war by supplying critical weapon components. It has countered these charges by insisting it is not supplying lethal arms and it “prudently handles the export of dual-use items in accordance with laws and regulations”. Mounting US pressure on this count has led Beijing to rebuff Washington by strengthening its military relations with Russia. Their deepening strategic cooperation has in turn perturbed Western nations.

Uneasy China may be with Putin’s Ukraine adventure, but what the war has done is to significantly deepen its economic ties with Russia and tied the economies of the two countries more closely. For Russia, facing Western economic sanctions, growing economic relations with China have enabled it to mitigate the impact of Western financial and trade curbs. In 2023, two-way trade between them reached a record high of \$240 billion. The bulk of this trade is conducted in rubles and renminbi.

Last year, Russia also became China’s top source of oil supply, overtaking Saudi Arabia, providing discounted, cheaper crude. China is Russia’s biggest trading partner, exporting a range of products from cars and machinery to electronics.

Both countries face pressure and sanctions — on different grounds — from the US in an increasingly coercive and punitive approach, even if Western actions against Russia are of a different order. This has created a greater incentive and



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common interest for China and Russia to join forces to resist US pressure. While there will be limits to the Sino-Russian relationship over time because the interests of the two countries don't converge on many counts, for now, US policies have ensured they will maintain a close alignment to counter Washington's pressure.

The writer is a former ambassador to the US, UK and UN.

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