



ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND CHINA THE STAKES OF COOPERATION Vs THE CHALLENGES OF COMPETITION

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Abstract:

After the end of the Cold War, Russia and China normalized their relations, this situation opened the door wide for their cooperation in the economic field. In this article, we will discuss and analyse the issue of this cooperation ; in order to achieve this aim methodically, we reviewed the **Russian** and **Chinese** contexts that led them to establish this cooperation; after this, we exposed its different manifestations and exposed its various implications; additionally, we presented a vision of its future prospects, after exploring a number of challenges facing this cooperation; finally, we concluded that: the convergence of interests between Russia and China led to their cooperation ; and, that the divergence of their interests led to their competition in this field.

Keywords: Russia, China, Economic Relations, Cooperation, Competition.

ملخص:

لقد قامت روسيا و الصين، عقب نهاية الحرب الباردة، بتطبيع العلاقات السياسية بينهما، و هو ما فتح الباب واسعا أمام تعاونهما في المجال الإقتصادي. و في هذا المقال، سنتناول مسألة هذا التعاون بالبحث و التحليل، و لتحقيق ذلك منهجيا: استعرضنا الظروف الخاصة بكل منهما و التي أدت إلى قيام هذا التعاون بينهما؛ ثم تطرقنا لمظاهر التعاون الإقتصادي بينهما و تبيان دلالاته المختلفة؛ و في الأخير، قدمنا رؤية عن الآفاق المستقبلية للتعاون الإقتصادي الروسي- الصيني، بعدما تطرقنا لجملة من التحديات التي يواجهها هذا التعاون ؛ و قد توصلنا إلى أن توافق المصالح بين روسيا و الصين يؤدي إلى تعاونهما، و أمّا الضارب بين مصالحها فيؤدي إلى تنافسهما.

الكلمات المفتاحية: روسيا، الصين، العلاقات الإقتصادية، التعاون، التنافس.



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Introduction:

After the end of the Cold War at the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century, relations between Russia and China entered a new phase of their historical course characterized by political normalization between the two countries, which opened a new page of relations between them, under unprecedented global strategic conditions characterized by a clear American tendency towards dominance in the conduct of international affairs; and these two countries, since 2001, have chosen to devote their new relationship within the framework of what they called : « **Strategic Partnership** between Russia and China »; and we have chosen the economic dimension of this partnership to be the subject of our research: « **Economic Relations Between Russia And China: the Stakes of Cooperation Vs the Challenges of Competition** ».

The importance of the topic:

The topic « **Economic Cooperation Between Russia And China** » as a topic is of great importance in **international relations studies**, due to the position of both **Russia** and **China** at the global level, on the one hand; on the other hand, the importance of this topic is due to the repercussions that this **Cooperation** entails and its effects at the global level, especially given their capabilities in political, economic and military fields; and the resulting consequences which affect the course of **International Relations** in general and **Global Economic Relations** in particular.

The Main-Question: Will Economic Cooperation between Russia and China lead them to Integration ?

The Sub-Questions: To facilitate addressing the problem of our topic, we have divided the main-questions related to it into sub-questions, which are as follows:

* what are the contexts in which Russia and China have established their economic cooperation ?.

* What are the manifestations of the Russian-Chinese « Economic Cooperation » ?.



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* What are the challenges facing the « Economic Cooperation » between Russia and China ?.

*and finally: will this « economic cooperation » between Russia and China in the future lead to Integration between them ?.

Study hypotheses :

To analyze our topic, in the light of the main-question of the study and the related sub-questions, we formulated the following **hypotheses**: 1-The common interests between Russia and China lead them to collaboration. 2-The conflict of interests between Russia and China lead them to competition and rivalry.

3- In the case of a combination between Cooperation and competition factors, Russia and China, in order to preserve their **Strategic Partnership**, will work to manage their differences and find satisfactory solutions to them, through the processes of bargaining, and find points of understanding that reduce the intensity of rivalry between them, all this based on a **Political Realism**.

Methodology:

In our topic : « **Economic Relations Between Russia And China: the Stakes of Cooperation Vs the Challenges of Competition** », we used the **descriptive method** to determine the characteristics and elements of this cooperation, on the one hand ; on the other hand, we used the **analytical method** to analyze the subject of our research, because we do not stop at the limits of static description of the subject, but aim to reveal the reasons that led to the occurrence of the studied phenomenon; in addition to description and explanation, we draw a conclusion for our study. **Research objectives:** the research aims to examine the possibility of **Economic Integration** between **Russia** and **China**.



THE FIRST TOPIC:

Contexts of Russian-Chinese Economic Cooperation

It's impossible to build, correctly, a vision of a social phenomenon without understanding the various contexts and conditions in which it occurs, and in which its development and course remain conditioned; therefore, we will deal, below, with those contexts of both Russia and China in which the two countries have established their economic cooperation.

First requirement:

The Russian contexts

Since **Vladimir Putin** came to power in the Kremlin, especially after his election as head of State on March 07, 2000, **Russian Foreign Policy** has been characterized by an emphasis on strengthening Russia's position and its pivotal role in international relations; this new policy, under this rule, worked to accomplish the **Renaissance** of **Russia** again, and the authorities in Moscow have decided that this **Renaissance** will be through building a strong **National Economy**; by this way, Russia can realize its **Economic Security**, which **Christoph M.** defined as: « protecting and ensuring the integrity of the structure of generating and flourishing the capabilities of a particular political entity, in light of the external risks and threats it faces, within the **global economic system** »¹.

Second requirement:

The Chinese contexts

The end of the Cold War provided **China** with a favorable environment for achieving its **Economic Renaissance**, it has worked to strengthen its relations with all countries where it finds opportunities to achieve its national interests, through following a multi-faceted diplomacy; so, it has made the issue of joining the **World Trade Organization** one of its priorities in the economic field, a goal which has been achieved.²



THE SECOND TOPIC:

Economic Cooperation Between Russia and China, Profile and Manifestations

Since the normalization of relations between Moscow and Beijing, especially since the signing of the Treaty of friendship and cooperation between them in 2000, and this was in light of internal and external contexts that contributed to the formulation and I pushed her to focus her policies on Asia in general and **China** in particular;³ with this qualitative shift of **Russian** politics, Moscow was able to expand and strengthen its relations with all Asian countries in general and with China in particular; in addition to diversifying the export markets of its raw materials, Russia, with its new orientation, sought to achieve a number of strategic goals, among which we mention the following:

** Developing infrastructure in its eastern regions with the search for financing some projects of the utmost importance.*

** transferring advanced technology to develop the Russian economy, especially in light of the Western sanctions imposed on it and the subsequent freezing of many important projects for the country.*

** bringing investments to the Russian economy, which has become suffering as a result of the flight of Western capital from the country in response to the sanctions imposed on Russia due to the Ukrainian crisis of 2014.*

As for China, the rulers in Beijing are aware of their need to cooperate with neighboring Russia, especially with the blockade on Beijing following the events of the « Tian en man Square » in the late eighties of the twentieth century, and therefore they sought to strengthen cooperation with the Russians, especially in the economic field, especially cooperation with them in the sector of hydrocarbons and the import of raw materials. Among the manifestations of Russian-Chinese economic cooperation, we mention the following:



First requirement:

Trade Cooperation

Trade exchanges between Russia and China occupy an important part of the total complex of interactions in their economic relations; and here, it should be noted that: since 2010, **China** has become **Russia's** first trading partner.⁴

Initially, it was the border areas between Russia and China that saw an increased frequency of trade exchanges between the two countries; Russians living in the regions of the **Russian Far East** found their way to goods coming from China, especially in light of the economic crisis that Russia went through after the fall of the former Soviet Union, and these Chinese goods enjoyed competitive prices compared to goods coming from other countries; and here, we record that, since 2001, the volume of trade exchange between Russia and China has doubled, reaching in 2014 about 95.3 billion; and Russia became China's the first trade partner;⁵ this, after the trade between Russia and China had been, at the beginning of the nineties of the last century, representing about 05 billion; and Russia became China's most important trading partner of Russia;⁶ it is also noteworthy, in this regard, to notice that the trade exchange between them at the level of their border areas was also a qualitative leap, as in 2007 it represented 06 billion dollars of the total trade exchange between them during this year (2014), which amounted to about 35 billion dollars.⁷

The significant development in economic relations between Russia and China in is due to a number of factors; here, it should be noted that the Russian economy has experienced a significant renaissance between the years 1999 and 2008, recording an annual growth of 07 %, due to the rise in **oil prices**; this cooperation within the framework of their financial institutions is considered a precedent in the history of the two countries;⁸ this is a very significant new phenomenon in their economic cooperation, and it is on a noticeable increase, which is evidenced, for example, by the size of the Chinese currency reserves at the Federal Bank of Russia, which is estimated at: 1/6 of its total cash reserves;⁹ it should be noted that among the factors that gave a strong impetus to this cooperation between Moscow and Beijing in the economic field, we find Russia's accession to the **World Trade Organization**, after



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China preceded it in this way, so that Russia became more open to the world economy, which provided other opportunities for Chinese goods to enter its market.¹⁰

Second requirement:

Energy cooperation

After the normalization of relations between Moscow and Beijing, Russia and China, since the mid-nineties of the last century, have worked to strengthen their energy cooperation by building a network of pipelines to transport Russian gas and oil to China; here, it is recalled that the real cooperation between the two countries, in this regard, began only in 2004 ad; Russia's oil exports to China increased from 03 million tons of oil in 2002 to 16 million tons during 2006, and in this context, the Chinese company **CNPC** provided 06 billion US dollars for **RosNeft** as an advance on China's import bill for the amount of 48.4 million tons of oil that they agreed to export from Russia to China from 2004 to 2010; we also record the completion of the first stage of the development of the infrastructure necessary for this cooperation in the end of 2010 with the construction of the **ESPO** line connecting the Chinese city of Daqing to start exporting Russian oil through it in 2011 with a volume of 1,3 million tons of oil per year¹¹.

Energy resources have become one of the most important pillars of economic cooperation between the two countries, especially after China's oil production is not enough to meet its growing needs over time;¹² officials in Beijing also skillfully played the financial card, so the idea of loans in exchange for oil came up until they reached an agreement within the **Russians**,¹³ it should be noted that since 1993, China has transformed from a net exporter of hydrocarbons to a net importer of them; here, it should be noted that China has become the second largest consumer of Petroleum after the Americans and accounts for 61 % of its energy imports in 2010;¹⁴ the consensus between the two sides came in this regard because Russia is looking to diversify its energy export markets away from Europe, and China was looking to reduce the dependence of its imports on the Malacca Strait route, especially in light of the new security challenges that characterize the international situation;¹⁵ among the indicators of energy cooperation between Russia



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and China, we mention that the **China Development Bank** granted a loan of USD 25 billion to **Trans-Neft** oil company in exchange for supplying oil to southern China, and then provided another loan to Rosneft oil company in order to raise its oil exports to China from 300 thousand barrels per day to one million barrels per day starting in 2012, the agreement also came between the Russian **Ros-Neft** and **Chinese National Petroleum** Starting from 2012;¹⁶ as the agreement between **Ros-Neft** and **Chinese National Petroleum Company**, in 2013, came to give a new impetus to sino-russian cooperation in the energy field and to grant the Chinese company three licenses allowing it to participate in the Arctic region, as well as a share of 20% from the shares of **TAAS Yuriakh Company**.¹⁷

As for natural gas, the historic agreement between the Russian company **GazProm** and the **Chinese National Petroleum Company** on May 21, 2014 the export of Russian gas to China marked a major turn in the energy policy of the two countries;¹⁸ at the same time, this deal represents an important pillar in strengthening the **Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership**, especially in the economic field.¹⁹

Cooperation between Russia and China in the energy sector is not limited only to oil and gas, so the two countries are also cooperating in the field of Nuclear Energy, which is another dimension of cooperation between the two countries in this field.²⁰ and this is after the first agreement between them was made in 1992 and it was to build two platforms for the **Tien Wan** nuclear plant; they have also been cooperating in the field of electricity since 1992, and they signed an agreement in 2014 under which Russia will supply China with electricity for a period extending to 2030; and also, their cooperation in the field of coal with a value of 06 billion US dollars to invest in the coal industry sector in exchange for supplying it with coal in the amount of 15 million tons per year until 2015 and raising this amount to reach 20 tons of coal per year until In 2030, this agreement is considered as a second version of the oil for financial loans agreement.²¹



Third requirement:

Agricultural Cooperation

There is cooperation between Moscow and Beijing in the agricultural field; here, it is mentioned that Russia intends to raise its exports of agricultural products to about 9.5 billion U.S. Dollars, but it seems that this goal remains difficult to achieve under the conditions in which the Russian economy in general and the agricultural sector in particular.²²

Fourth requirement:

Financial Cooperation

Among the manifestations of cooperation between Moscow and Beijing in the economic sphere, we find the financial cooperation between the two parties in order to counter the dominance of the US Dollar in international trade exchanges; and many Westerners have considered that cooperation between Moscow and Beijing in this regard represents a great challenge for financial institutions of the existing international system.²³

Fifth requirement:

Cooperation within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative

Moscow's involvement in the Chinese project: the « ***Belt and Road Initiative for the 21st Century*** » occurred due to its search for Chinese financing of infrastructure projects in Russia, especially related to this Chinese initiative.

THE THIRD TOPIC:

Comparison of the situation of Russia and China in the framework of their Economic Cooperation

The ***Economic Cooperation*** between ***Russia*** and ***China*** takes place between two countries that have many similarities; but they, also, differ in other elements; while they share the policy of economic cooperation between them, in the context of Western pressure exerted against them for many different motives,



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they differ in many aspects in their situations, perhaps among them the following: **Russia**, resorted to cooperation with the Chinese following the collapse of the former **Soviet Union**, as well as after a major economic crisis caused by the policy of (**Shock Therapy**), under President **Yeltsin**; on the contrary, **China** is witnessing a distinctive economic renaissance evidenced by the growth levels that its economy has been recording over time; therefore, we can say that the ongoing economic cooperation between **Moscow** and **Beijing** is between two unequal parties in terms of strength, **Russia** came from a position of **Weakness** “**Falling**” in international relations arena; as for **China**, it came to this cooperation from a position of **Strength** “**Rising**” (*state of ascent*).

THE FOURTH TOPIC:

The Challenges Facing Economic Cooperation Between Russia and China: Manifestations and Significances

Despite the various gains that Russia and China have achieved in the framework of their **Economic Cooperation**, since the end of the Cold War, this cooperation faces various challenges that may limit its effectiveness and therefore limit its continued success in the future, and these challenges are fueled by various factors affecting the political as well as the military field; among these challenges we mention the following:

*- The persistence of the historical Mistrust factor among Russians, especially in light of what some Russians consider the expansion of Chinese activity in the territory of the **Russian Far East** is a situation that limits the extent of cooperation between the two parties and opens the door to conflict and disagreement between the two parties.²⁴

*- The **difference** between **Russia** and **China** regarding what the nature of the **SCO** should be: on the one hand, **Russia** wants this organization to have a comprehensive dimension, **Moscow** doesn't prefer that the **SCO** have only an economic dimension, but it tends to make it a more explicit strategic in order to stand it in the face of Western projects targeting Central Asia; on the other hand, Russia seeks to coax the Central Asian republics into the fold of its various regional projects, such as the **Eurasian Economic Union**, the **Customs Union** and



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the **Collective Security Treaty Organization**, which indicates that Russia - China relations are clouded by the spirit of rivalry in Central Asia;²⁵ and China has begun the process of expanding its influence in the Central Asian countries since the fall of the former Soviet Union, and this continued especially in the late 2000s, and it was at the expense of Russia; and in this context, China has become the most important economic partner of the Central Asian countries, which Moscow considers one of its areas of special influence, especially since it was subordinated to it during the former Soviet Union.²⁶

*- Challenges of trade exchange between Russia and China: the trade exchange between the two parties has known a number of problems, including the following:

- Anti-dumping restrictions applied to goods imported from Russia, subjecting them to monitoring and investigations on this subject, similar to what happened in 2004 in the livestock trade sector of tensions between the two countries; we also find the same thing happening with Russia due to avian influenza imported from China;

- Conflicts and tensions between Moscow and Beijing, from time to time, due to informal trade, as happened in 2004 and 2005.²⁷

- Russian exports to China have become dominated by raw materials, especially **Petroleum**; and for China, the opposite is the case, especially through the high percentage of its exports to Russia of industrial equipment; a situation that has remained in place even within a year 2019; this fact often fuels the rivalry between Moscow and Beijing and increases the difficulties of their relations at the bilateral level;²⁸ all this, generates competition between them, and often caused tensions between them regarding their trade relations.

THE FIFTH TOPIC:

Future Prospects of Economic Cooperation between Russia and China

The geographical proximity between **Russia** and **China** makes easier for them to maintain their **Cooperation** they have reached in the **economic field** across various fields, especially in trade exchanges domain, notably **Cooperation** in the **Energy Field**; it should be noted here, that it is possible that disagreements may emerge between them on economic issues, but these



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disagreements will remain within the limits of their simple competition between the two countries, because Moscow and Beijing don't want to waste and lose the benefits that their cooperation provides for them, and the announcement by **Russia** and **China** of 2020 and 2021 as **two years of Bilateral Cooperation** in the fields of scientific, technical and technological development, is one of the indicators of the achievement in this **Cooperation**;²⁹ among the sectors that have more chances for the continuation of economic cooperation between Moscow and Beijing and its expansion is the energy sector, especially in the field of Petroleum, where the latter still comes at the top of Russian exports to China, where in 2019 it amounted to almost 70 % of its total energy exports, which is about 15.7% of its total energy imports;³⁰ We, also, note in this context that the rise in the volume of trade between **Russia** and **China** during the last ten years is due in part to the deterioration in relations between Russia and the West since 2014, on the one hand; and on the other hand, due to the altitude. Also to the expansion of trade of China with all its partner economies, including Russian; also note on trade between **Moscow** and **Beijing** continued predominance of raw materials exported from **Russia** to **China** and in return, the predominance of manufactured goods to China's exports towards Russia, And that did not experience economic relations between the two countries leaprise to the level of political relations between the two countries; and this increase in the volume of trade exchanges between the two countries is due to two factors, namely:

*- The strategic importance of energy resources for the economies of Russia and China.

*- The existence of close ties and contacts between the world of politics and the economy in the two countries.

Conclusion:

Since the political consensus between **Moscow** and **Beijing**, the way has been opened for them to start a new page of bilateral relations between them, and these Russian-Chinese relations have known important milestones in their course, perhaps the most prominent of which are: their announcement in September 1994 of what they called: a « **Constructive Partnership** »; at another stage, the



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« **Strategic Partnership between Russia and China** » was announced on April 25, 1996; on the one hand, the conclusion of the « **Treaty of Good Neighborliness, Cooperation and Friendship** » on July 16, 2001; and in September since 2010, Russia and China have issued their joint statement announcing the upgrade of their **Strategic Partnership** to: a « **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** »; then, to make it in 2016: a « **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Equality, Mutual Trust, Mutual Support, Mutual Prosperity and Friendship** »; due to all these transformations and development, we can say that the sino-russian relations show how strong this **partnership between the two countries** has been gaining through its various stages of development; within the framework of this historical process of bilateral relations between Russia and China, Economic Cooperation has been established between them; accordingly, we can say that the manifestations of economic cooperation between Russia and China, mentioned earlier, its fields and the challenges it faced confirm the second hypothesis, which considers that the existence of a conflict of interests between Russia and China leads to the emergence of conflicts between them, which limits the extent and degree of their cooperation; and despite that the reality of relations between the two countries is formed by a combination of factors of cooperation and motives of competition, the interaction of their relations does not follow the logic of the « **zero-sum game** »; but their relations will continue to follow the logic of the « **non-zero sum game** », an approach characterized by a **politic-pragmatism**; in the same time, this bilateral situation prevents the establishment of economic integration between Moscow and Beijing, especially since economic integration requires a high level of political consensus and a significant amount of mutual trust between them, which is what the development of economic relations between Russia and China reveals its absence in their actual economic cooperation.

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