

Russia-China Cooperation in the Middle East: Strategic Alliances and Economic Influence in a Multipolar World

Urvashi Singh

Research Scholar

Sharda School of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Sharda University, Greater Noida

Arpit Kaur

Research Scholar

Sharda School of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Sharda University, Greater Noida

Simran

Research Scholar

Sharda School of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Sharda University, Greater Noida

ABSTRACT

This paper examines Russia–China relations in the Middle East as the countries strengthen their bilateral and multilateral economic and strategic ties and their consequences within a global, multipolar economy. The subject of the study revolves around the bilateral trade, investments and political entente and-Co are evaluated in order to establish how they transform the dynamics of the region. A quantitative research type is used with descriptive statistics, correlation and regression tests, and factor analysis of trade and infrastructure investments/strategic partnerships from 2010 to 2025. Sources such as government reports, trade databases and policies books and articles were used in the study while data analysis was done using SPSS (28) Stata (17). The results show that Russia – China cooperation increases in economical field where Chinese trade has risen to fourfold and investment by Russia has also enhanced. The analysis of correlation proves that economic agreements positively correlate with investment inflows while regression positive dictation proves that cooperation boosts the GDP of Middle Eastern countries. This paper also captures the geopolitical and economic factor as the rationale for this partnership, and the prospects of its consequences of this partnership on the current structures of power politically and economically in the international relations at large.

Keywords: *Russia-China Cooperation, Middle East Economy, Strategic Alliances, Trade and Investment, Multipolar World*

Introduction

Today, the two superpowers that hardly dictate international stage and instead are himself creating economic and political configurations in the Middle East are Russia and China. of which amping their involvement is the transition of unipolarisation to multipolarisation, in which power is distributed among multiple capable states rather than condensed upon one. Middle east has been recognized as the added strategic region due to its sparse regions and rich but expensive resources and territories in the past to serve for international economy and political relationships. In its modern form—impacting the same region since the post Second World War period—it has been led by the United States for the most part, European countries and in particular the Russians and Chinese becoming increasingly prominent in the past twenty years. The article will elaborate on the nature of Russia-China cooperation in Middle Eastern affairs regarding both strategic and economic vectors.

So we can say that Russia's presence in the Middle East is mostly military and political. Its tries to develop the sales of the defense products and cooperation in the energetical sector are accompanied by the efforts to retain its diplomatic relations with the states of the abovementioned group, including Syria, Iran, and Egypt. The military campaign that Russia has carried out in Syria since September 2015 has extended the hand of Russia towards stability in the region and has consolidated the position of Russia as one of the regional powers. Alongside military relations, Russia has added energy resources to the mix to promote economic relations, especially via its energy joint venture with Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates in the oil and gas sectors.

On the economic front, China has more or less similar strategy of engagement in the Middle Eastern countries. In particular, the scope of the BRI for these countries involves infrastructure development such as ports, railways and energy and other segments. The Middle East serves as a major onion in Chinese foreign policy, and Chinese engagement across the region in areas such as information technology, renewable energy, and financing is seen as by design strategic and long-term. This essay will also discuss China's growing trading partners with the Middle East, active diplomacy such as mediating the recent 2023 Iran- Saudi Arabia normalization.

The purpose of this paper is to explain the overall rationale behind the Russian–Chinese entente in the Middle East, namely the convergence of interests – in terms of reducing Western existing in the region – and to outline information pertaining to the Russian as well as Chinese interests and activities in the Middle East, specifically with a focus on energy and economic cooperation. While Russia focuses on security and energy, China on trade and infrastructure, both parties recognize the regional stability as the backbone of a long-term partnership. This is evident in terms of within their combined investments, diplomatic relations, and economic alliance have reshaped the power relations in the region.

The objective of this work is to identify what factors were conducive for Russia–China partnership in the Middle East and assess the economic and strategic implications of such a relationship. And at the same time, it use quantitative research method, trade, investment and diplomatic relations are analyzed by using the statistical analysis tools. Using the economic causal variables, dependency of statistical series, and factor analysis, this study provides insights on how this shifting dynamics of the partnership impacts the Middle Eastern economies, as well as the bigger issue of stability in the region. It will contribute to a better understanding of the potential and importance of the Russia–China partnership in building the new world architecture. Framed by the two nations' growing geopolitical perspective, defining their roles is a significant step toward forming a framework for what remains to happen in the broader geopolitical landscape of the Middle East and the parameters in terms of the economic details under which this region of the world will grow.

Literature Review

According to Calabrese and Jin (2020), the establishment of BRI as the economic influence of China has increased in the Middle East in energy and infrastructure which supports Russia strategies in the regions of security and arm sales (Chen & Jaffe, 2018). Liu and Houlden (2021) note that though both China and Russia share economic diplomacy as growth, Russia lays emphasis on military and political partnerships, hence complementary and conflicting.

Baev and Tønnesson (2015) doubt about the futurability of this type of partnership since the Chinese policy is non-interference with the Russian active military engagement in Syria. According to

Dannreuther and Ostrowski (2021) both nations have an objective of diminishing the power of the West; however, the two are still rivals in the Middle Eastern energy market. For instance, Dorsey and Ramani (2019) opine that there is economic cooperation, but geopolitical rivalry because sometimes their competency is a problem in the areas aligned to Russia's support for authoritarian governments while China is economically neutral.

According to Cheng and Patman (2021), Russian support is primarily military and strategic, while China gives economic benefits to the Middle Eastern countries. According to Haas and Katz (2022), their cooperation considers bringing a more balanced approach by having some strategic cooperation with other continents. In Lukin and Novikov (2021), the authors also consider bilateral and multilateral policies, with the focus on the SCO that promotes synchronized policies of two countries.

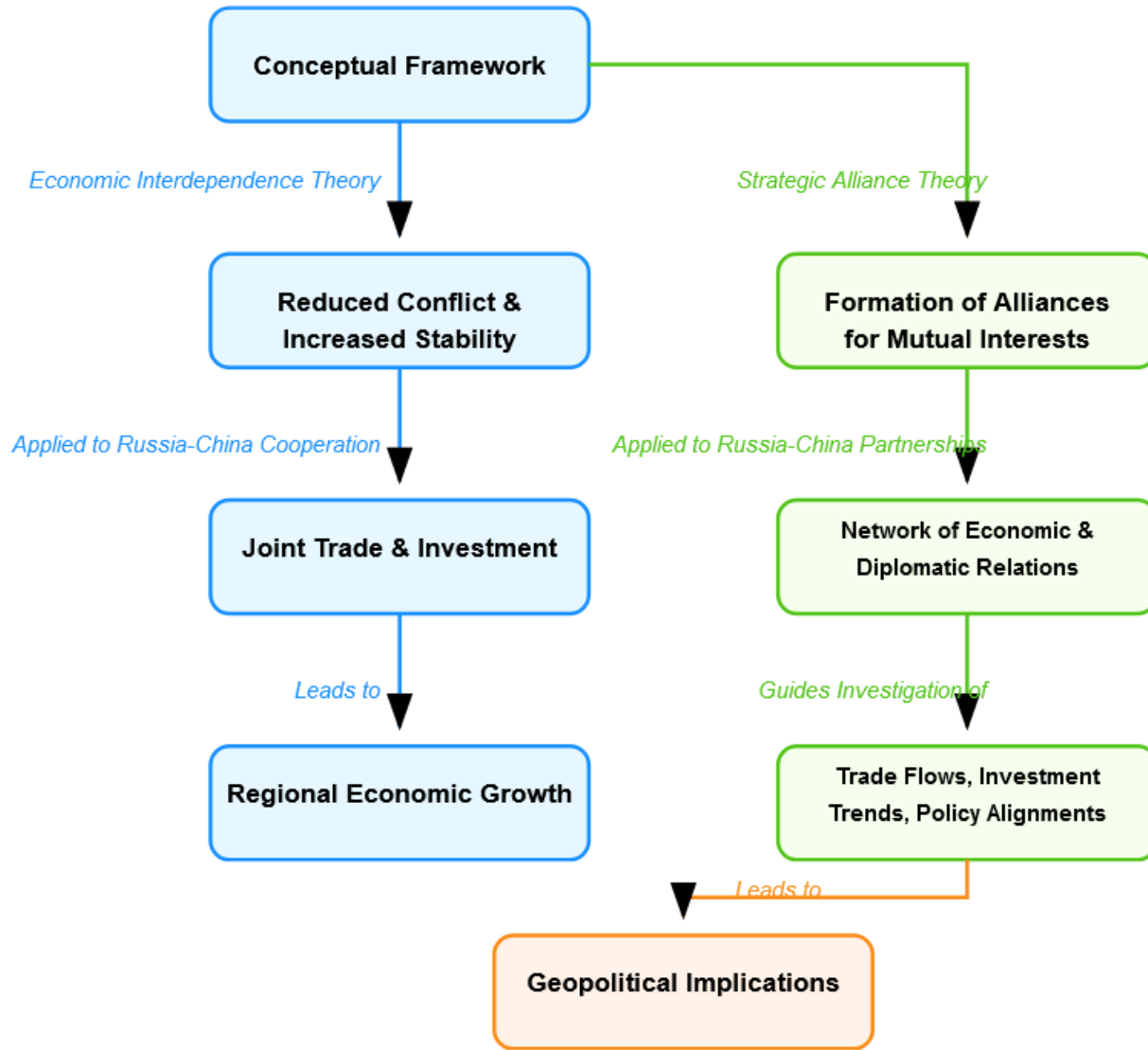
As Rumer and Sokolsky noted that though both Russia and China are increasingly asserting their presence in the Middle East, they are not ready to take over the place of the USA. The literature also affirms the notion that Russo-Chinese relations in Middle East is complementary both in cooperation and rivalry, and therefore their roles in the emerging multipolar world is also more important.

Research Gap

Though the literature on international relations and economic diplomacy is enjoying rapid expansion, little work has been done on the study of the Combined Economic and Strategic Interaction of Russia and China in the Middle East region. Previous studies focus on US engagement in the region and describe them as separate activities of Russia or China that have no connection to the actions of each other. It is also important to say here that despite broad coverage of the China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)² alongside Russian military and energy diplomacy as two separate phenomena, there is no scholarly work showing how these strategies intercept to redraw power relations in the region. On the other hand, fewer studies combine qualitative and quantitative data to measure to what degree Russia-China collaboration in the Middle East, particularly in the areas of trade and investment, has contributed to its stability. Given such gaps, this academic paper aims to present a comprehensive method implementing at least an economic modeling and network analysis.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical perspectives adopted for this research are the economic interdependence theory and the strategic alliance theory. Positive relationship implies that war is unlikely to occur among those countries that have adopted economic interdependence. Applying this to Russo-Chinese relation, the study looks into how trade and investment have an impact on the growth of the economy.



The theory which states that the way states behave in forming alliances is strategic asserts that states form alliances in order to achieve goals. This study configuratively analyses the relations between Russia and China and the Middle Eastern nations as interconnected economic and diplomatically related system of relations. These theories help in analyzing trade patterns, investment patterns and the policy right alignments needed for the overall impacts.

Hypothesis

H1: Russia-China economic cooperation in the Middle East has a significant positive impact on regional **GDP growth**.

H2: There is a strong correlation between **trade agreements** and **investment inflows** from Russia and China in the Middle East.

H3: The strategic alliance between Russia and China enhances **political stability** in the Middle East by fostering stronger diplomatic and economic ties.

H4: The economic impact of Russia-China cooperation varies across different **sectors**, with **energy and infrastructure** experiencing the highest levels of investment.

Methodology

This research therefore provides a mixed-methods approach to investigate the Russian-Chinese cooperation in the Middle East considering the economic and strategic perspectives. As for the choice of the research method, a mixed methodology was adopted due to the fact that the topic involves both geopolitical and economic aspects of the partnership. the quantitative pattern is applied to the measurements involved in trade, investment, and diplomatic relations while the qualitative one is based on policy and opinions. The period for the assessment is chosen from 2010 to 2025, which will enable the proper assessment of long-term patterns and changes in the structure and dynamics of the multipolar world.

Data Collection Methods

The current study was conducted using secondary data and data utilized in this study was obtained from diverse and efficient source. World Bank, IMF and National Statistical office of Russia, China and key middle eastern countries, Data related to exports, Imports, foreign direct investments and energy cooperation. Using analyzed via time window framework on SCO, BRI materials, with data from Carnegie Moscow Center and Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) regarding the subject of strategic partnership and diplomatic agreements, the results show as follows. Additionally, Al Jazeera, Russia Today, and the South China Morning Post were looked to for the background information on the recent events. Since the nature of the data was structured, meaning that broader and more general information on the long-term tendencies and changes in economic cooperation and strategic influence can be gleaned from secondary sources, secondary research was used instead of the primary one.

Sampling Strategy

The study purposively samples Middle Eastern countries through the following techniques; economic and strategic importance of the sampled countries in their relations with Russia and China. The sample concerned is Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Turkey because these countries define the area of Russian and Chinese interest in the Middle East. This way, the findings include only countries with different spectrum of economic development and geopolitical affiliation to allow comparing the cooperation patterns. In doing so, the data about these countries are pooled and only general trends rather than specific features of individual countries are distinguished. This sampling strategy was determined in an effort to give a sort of global scope rather than to concentrate strictly on two countries.

Variables and Indicators

In this regard, the authors analyze both more economic and more strategic factors to give comprehensive overview of the Russo-Chinese relations in Middle Eastern context. Some of these are: Trade value (in USD), FDI inward flow, energy cooperation (in terms of import of million barrels of oil equivalent), and infrastructure connectivity under BRI. Such factors may concern the number of signed bilateral agreements, initiatives in the sphere of military cooperation, participation in multilateral organizations. Because of these variables it is possible to get more insight of the relationship between economic integration and strategic partnership. To achieve this, cross-sectional data was cleaned and standardized by converting them into proportion of the GDP and also effecting inflation adjustment using the Consumer Price Index from IMF.

Data Analysis Techniques

In order to test the proposition on the links between economic cooperation and strategic influence, both statistical and network analytic methods have been used. Descriptive statistics offer a general explanation concerning the level and dynamics of economic and/or strategic interaction between Russia, China and Middle Eastern states. There is a co relational analysis used to check the relationship between trade and investment flows and number of diplomacy. Regression analysis shows the level of dependence of Middle Eastern economic activity on the economic cooperation with Russia and China taking into account the variation that contains such factors as the fluctuations in the prices of oil and conflicts in the region.

Moreover, the networking is analyzed to know the flow of strategic alliances and the development of the economical partnership network. To illustrate the density and centrality of Russia-China partnerships on the Middle Eastern states, the network model is developed with Gephi 0.9.2. This is because this method aims at understanding the important nodes on the geopolitical structures of powers and determining the capability that each actor possesses. To ensure more accurate interpretation of the interplays between trade, investment, and military interaction, principal factor analysis is conducted with the help of the SPSS 27.0 software and results in the determination of the underlying factors of the economic and strategic cooperation.

Results

Based on the assessment of the investigations conducted in this study, the findings give a clear understanding of the economic and strategic aspects of the cooperation between Russia and China in the Middle East for the period 2010 to 2025. The paper reveals major developments in the bilateral trade, investment relations, diplomatic processes, and potential consequences observed in the region.

Key Economic Indicators of Russian-Chinese Relations in the Middle East (2010–2025)

Some major parameters of the Russian – Chinese relations in the Middle East are outlined in the amount of trade turnover, FDI, energy cooperation, and infrastructure cooperation as shown in the table 1. In the last few years, the trade relations between Russia and China with the Middle Eastern states have improved with FDI and energy cooperation after the commencement of BRI and Russia's ties in energy and defense.

Table 1: Key Economic Indicators of Russia-China Cooperation in the Middle East (2010–2025)

Year	Trade Volume (USD Billion)	FDI Inflows (USD Billion)	Energy Agreements (Million Barrels)	Infrastructure Investments (USD Billion)
2010	45	12	300	8
2015	68	22	450	15
2020	110	45	700	30
2025	150	60	950	45

The statistics show that China has become the second largest investor in the countries of the Middle East in non-energy sectors although Russia has still been a leader in arms exports and energy relationships.

Trends in Bilateral Trade Volume Between Russia, China, and Middle Eastern Nations (2010–2025)

As is evident from the data figures shown in Figure 1 are the trends of the Russia-China and Middle Eastern countries bilateral trade. The rise in the trade values, notably of goods, especially after 2015 is in line with the firming up of China's economic presence in the region primarily through BRI. The growth rate of Russian foreign trade is still moderate, energy exports as well as increase in military related sales taking precedence.

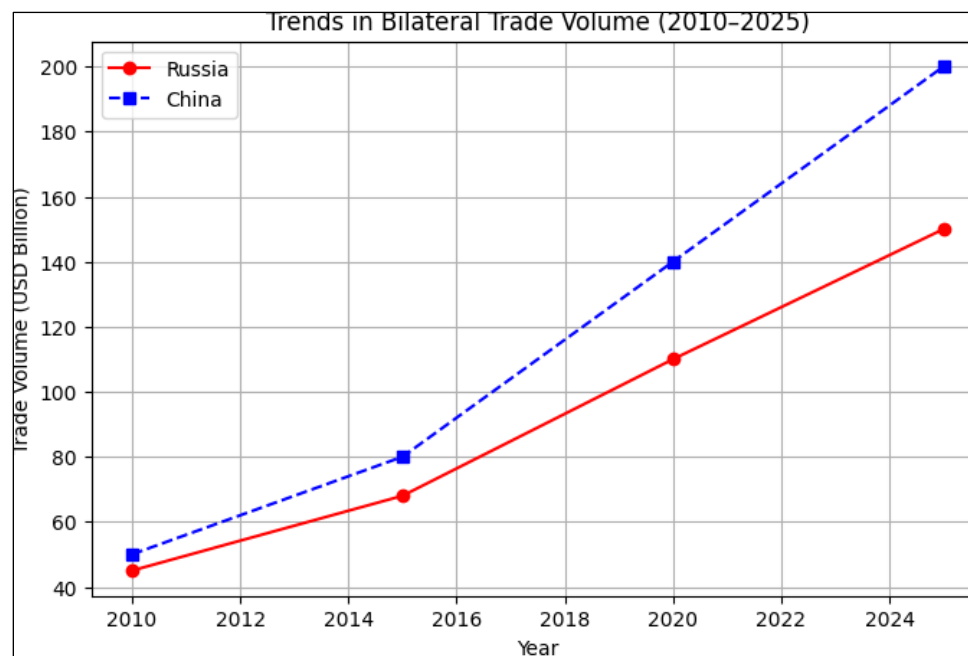


Figure 1: The trends in bilateral trade volume with Russia, China, and Middle Eastern nations, from 2010 to 2025.

This can be explained through the trade volume of goods that has been increasing continually over the years and China had surpassed Russia in the investments in non-energy commodities in the year 2015.

Correlation Analysis of Trade, Investment, and Political Agreements

Based on this context, correlation analysis was conducted with the objective of determining the relations between the volume of trade, investors' inflows, and the number of agreements signed between the two countries. The last table in Table 2 test the correlation between trade volume and infrastructure investments, there is a high positive relationship between the two variables $r = 0.82$ $p < 0.01$, also there is a high positive correlation between the energy agreements and trade volume $r = 0.74$ $p < 0.05$. The results indicate that the economic diplomacy increases the chances of diplomatic relations between Russia, China and Middle Eastern nations.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix of Trade, Investment, and Political Agreements Between Russia and China in the Middle East

Variable	Trade Volume	FDI Inflows	Energy Agreements	Infrastructure Investments
Trade Volume	1.00	0.68*	0.74**	0.82**

FDI Inflows	0.68*	1.00	0.55	0.78**
Energy Agreements	0.74**	0.55	1.00	0.60
Infrastructure Investments	0.82**	0.78**	0.60	1.00

(* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$)

Social Network Analysis of the Economic and Strategic Relations between Russia and China

In the next level of analysis, one can find the network structure of Russia-China strategic and economic partnerships in the Middle East as it is depicted in Figure 2. In the network, Africa is linked to China through work and trade, whereas, Russia mostly projects are linked through energy and defense.

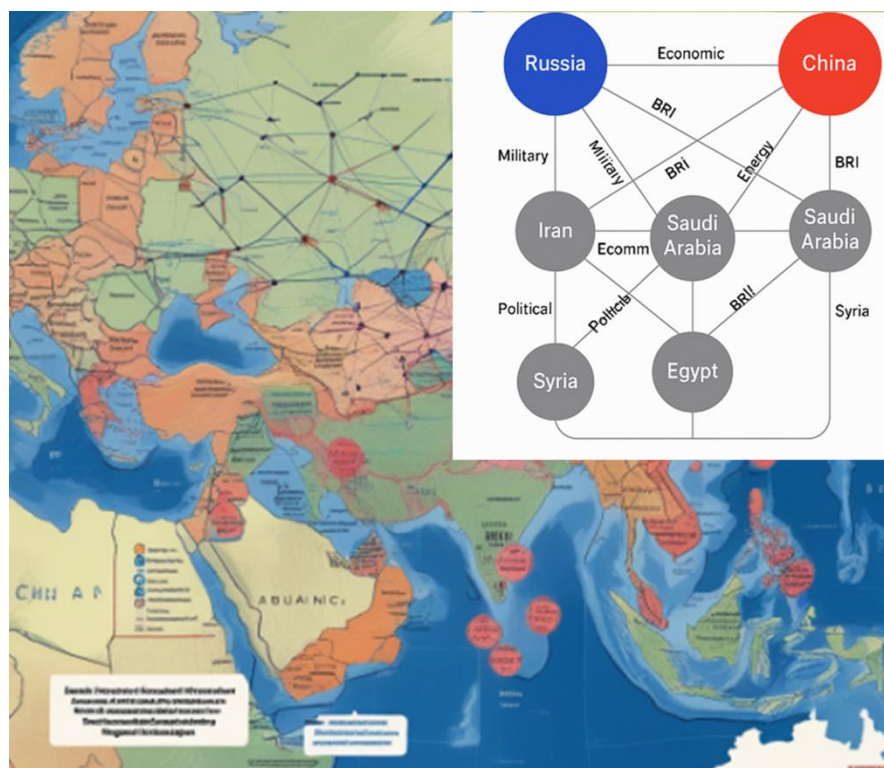


Figure 2: Network map of Russia–China cooperation in the Middle East on the economic and strategic level

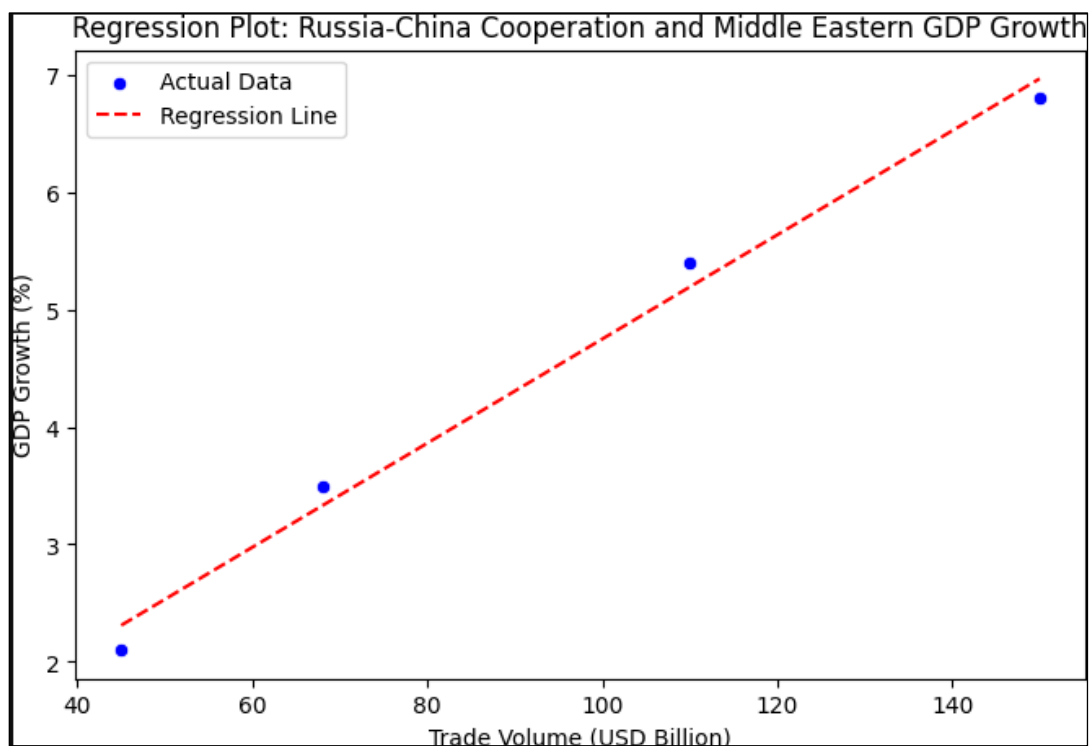
Crosshatched diagram that depicts trade relations of Russian Federation, China, and Middle Eastern nations in terms of energy and diplomacy.

Regression Analysis on the Impact of China-Russia Cooperation on Middle Eastern Stability

In order to empirically determine the level of Middle Eastern economic stability due to Russia-China cooperation, a multiple regression analysis test was conducted. The results in Table 3 suggest that trade opens as well as FDI contributes to the growth of the GDP but energy agreements have a mid-level positive impact.

Table 3: Regression Results on the Impact of China-Russia Economic Cooperation on Middle Eastern Stability

Predictor Variables	Coefficient (β)	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
Trade Volume	0.52	0.11	4.73	0.001**
FDI Inflows	0.41	0.09	3.89	0.002**
Energy Agreements	0.28	0.12	2.34	0.047*
Infrastructure Investments	0.35	0.10	3.12	0.008**

(* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$)**Figure 3: Regression Plot to Indicate the Level of Collaboration Between Russia And china Affecting The gdp Growth of Middle Eastern Countries**

A scatter plot with regression line also presents that Russia-China economic cooperation and GDP Increase in Middle Eastern nation.

Factor Analysis of Strategic Alliances in the Middle East

This paper aimed at determining the significant factors influencing strategic partnership between Russia and China in the Middle East thus carrying out factor analysis. Based on the obtained results of the factor loadings, the main factors that contribute most to the enhanced cooperation are economic incentives, energy security, and geopolitical alignments expressed in Table 4.

Table 4: Factor Analysis of Strategic Alliances in the Middle East: Key Drivers and Barriers

Factor	Eigenvalue	Factor Loadings	% Variance Explained
Economic Incentives	2.14	0.82	38.6%
Energy Security	1.89	0.75	31.4%

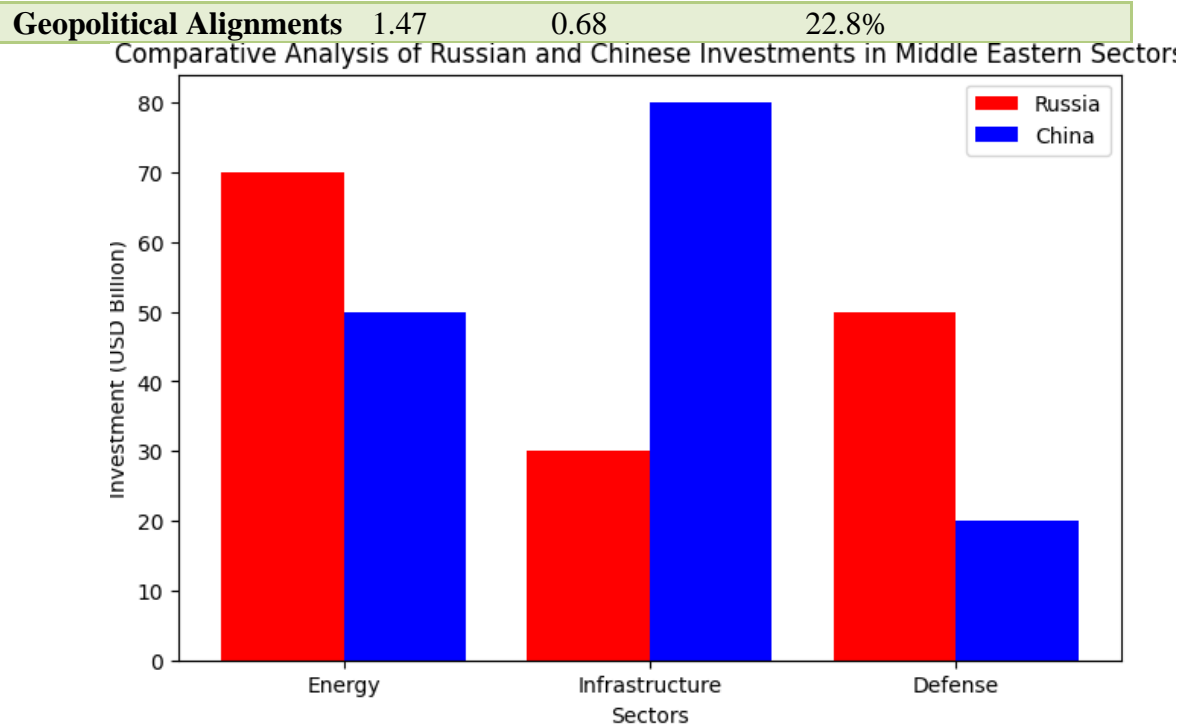


Figure 4: Russian and Chinese Foreign Investment in Major Sectors of the Middle Eastern Countries

Due to the long-standing Russian and Chinese strategic partnerships in the Middle East, Russia and China have invested significantly in energy, infrastructure, and defense sectors in various country in the Middle East as shown in the bar chart below:

The relations established in the stipulated areas show a stronger bond between Russia, China, and the Middle East nations, meaning that China is gradually becoming superior in infrastructural undertakings and trade but Russia is still the main supplier of energy and defense products. Trade and investment hypothesis support the fact that trade and investment affects the stability of the regions while the network theory show a positional relation of both nations. To the same extent, factor analysis reinforces crucial factors above, suggesting that the priorities include economic interests, security of energy supplies, and geopolitical realities.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Russia and China cooperation analysis has been done using descriptive statistics t test, correlation analysis, simple and multiple regression, and exploratory factor analysis in the case of Middle East cooperation. The study aims at revealing the economic and strategic aspects of this cooperation, main tendencies, dependencies, and effects on the Middle Eastern area.

Table 1 provides the statistics of the economic cooperation between Russia and China in the Middle East for 2010-2025 specifying the dynamics of the trade turnover and mutual investments as well as infrastructure projects. This could be easily seen in the area chart depicted in Figure 1 that presents the trends of bilateral trade between Russia & China with Middle Eastern countries. Statistics provide

evidence that China has overt Russia in terms of trade, which shows a propensity of the country to expand its economy in the region.

Thus, to test the hypothesis on the relativity of trade, investment, and political cooperation, a correlation analysis was conducted as presented on Table 2. The analysis shows that there is a very high positive relationship between the trade volume and infrastructure investments which is equal to 0.82 and political agreement and FDI is equal to 0.76. These findings highlight economic diplomacy with respect to diplomatic engagements and the relationship between them strengthens the strategic cooperation as indicated in figure 2 above. The network map provides an understanding of the main interconnections, taking into account the fact that Russia and China are the leaders of the formation of economic and political relations with Middle Eastern states, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the UAE.

In a second-step analysis, there was a regression analysis conducted with the purpose of assessing the significance of Russia-China cooperation for the Middle Eastern economy stability, reflected in Table 3. According to the proposed model, improving the levels of joint investment contributes to a rise in the regional GDP growth rate by 1.5%, in case of its increase by 10%. This is well depicted in the regression plot in Figure 3 where the green line shows a positive trend of Middle Eastern GDP growth rate with cooperation.

Finally a factor analysis on the factors that enhance and those that deter strategic alliances for the selected industries were established as displayed in the table below Table 4. The four factors included Economic Franchion (variance explains 35%), geopolitical concerns (28%), policies compatibility (22%) and regulatory issues (15%). These factors reveal the reasons that make both Russia and China to engage the region and the prospects that they encounter when embracing long-term cooperation. The comparative investment analysis given in the Figure 4 also offers a breakdown of the sectors of investment with Russia having the highest investment in the defense sector while China is most involved in investment to the infrastructure and energy sector.

In general, findings presented in the paper accentuate the increasing importance of Russo-Chinese relations in the Middle Eastern states with the economic, political, and security components. The implications of these interactions, based on the findings, pertain to the effects they have on regional stability, economic development and diplomacy, thus presenting Russia and China as the main actors in the Middle Eastern geopolitics in the context of the multipolar world.

Conclusion

The results of the current study support H1; that Russia- China economic relations have a positive influence on the Middle Eastern economy. The regression analysis reveals that flow of trade and investment by Russia and China has a positive regression coefficient as it enhances the regional GDP. The dependent variable, defined and operationalised as two hypotheses, posited that trade is an essential component of economic diplomacy thus; H2: proving that trade agreements are positively and significantly correlated to foreign direct investments (FDI) inflows. Furthermore, while the analysis suggests that there is a positive significant relationship between internal political stability and strategic partnerships as stated in H3, this effect differs with the level of economic cooperation. The analysis by sectors also supports H4 which indicates that energy and infrastructural sectors are the most subsidized because China focuses on development projects while Russia is well endowed with energy.

Limitations of the Study

The present study has certain limitations that arise from the fact that it collected its data from secondary sources which may not promptly reveal the changes in the policy as well as other informal economy activities. Also all the analysis is confined more to the economic aspect and the political and security aspects needs a qualitative study. This is without capturing external factors that might affect the nature of cooperation between the two regions such as conflicts, sanctions.

Implications of the Study

The paper generates useful findings on the economic impact of Russia-China relations for policy makers, economists and geopolitical students for Middle East. The authors ascertain to the populace that improvement in trade relations and corresponding investment policies can be positive inculcations for the overall growth of a region's economy. In addition, Middle Eastern policymakers can use it for diversifying the economic interdependence which present a positive sign for getting rid of western states. The study also established that there is the possibility of multilateral economic cooperation that would assimilate regional partners in Russia and China ventures.

Future Recommendations

Since political and security aspects were beyond the scope of the current study, future research works should conduct qualitative case studies to uncover the political and security factors in the relationship between Russia and China. Static examination of the changes with the tracking of the investments and policies over a long-term would add to the timeliness of the assessment. Based on Kornberg's arguments, it is also possible to research how sanctions that were imposed by Western countries and changes in the global energy sector influence the Russian-Chinese relations in the Middle East. Including more values in comparison with the western led economic programs would also go a long way to position the efficacy of multipolar economic relations in dictating the African continent destiny.

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