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## FEATURES AND TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SINO-RUSSIAN COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY

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**Abstract.** The concept of non-traditional security has gained widespread recognition among states in recent decades. For regional and international powers like China and Russia, the non-traditional security domain assumes even greater significance than traditional security during peacetime. These two countries have a longstanding history of cooperation in non-traditional security areas. Amidst the significant geopolitical shifts characterising the contemporary world, both China and Russia have intensified their collaborative efforts in this domain, focusing primarily on scientific and technological, financial, energy, and agricultural sectors. This article analyses the recent developments in Sino-Russian cooperation across these sectors, highlighting notable achievements and persistent challenges. An examination of the tangible outcomes reveals substantial financial investments, close and complementary bilateral partnerships driven by pragmatism, and a positive overall trajectory of development. While certain challenges remain, these are unlikely to impede the accelerating pace of cooperation. It is anticipated that Sino-Russian collaboration in non-traditional security will continue to deepen and broaden in the future.

**Keywords:** non-traditional security; Russia; China; science and technology; finance; energy; agriculture.

## ОСОБЕННОСТИ И ТЕНДЕНЦИИ РАЗВИТИЯ КИТАЙСКО-РОССИЙСКОГО СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА В СФЕРЕ НЕТРАДИЦИОННОЙ БЕЗОПАСНОСТИ

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**Аннотация.** В наши дни концепция нетрадиционной безопасности признается и серьезно воспринимается многими странами, а для Китая и России в мирное время сфера нетрадиционной безопасности играет даже более важную роль, чем сфера традиционной безопасности. В связи с резкими геополитическими изменениями эти страны ускорили темпы сотрудничества в сфере нетрадиционной безопасности, которое в основном сосредоточено на научно-технической, финансовой, энергетической и сельскохозяйственной областях. В данном исследовании анализируется развитие названных областей в Китае и России за последние годы, выявляются их наиболее значимые достижения и некоторые из существующих проблем. О сотрудничестве двух стран в вышеуказанных областях свидетельствуют большой объем вовлеченных средств, тесные и взаимодополняющие двусторонние деловые связи. Результаты проведенного исследования свидетельствуют о том, что наличие ряда проблем не помешает наращиванию темпов сотрудничества в сфере нетрадиционной безопасности.

**Ключевые слова:** нетрадиционная безопасность; Россия; Китай; наука и технологии; финансы; энергетика; сельскохозяйственное хозяйство.

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## Introduction

An examination of the global rankings of China and Russia across various key national indicators reveals that these two nations occupy the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> positions respectively in terms of territorial area, the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> positions in military strength, and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> positions in GDP at purchasing power parity as of 2023<sup>1</sup>. Both countries possess a vast array of natural resources, with their proportions of highly educated populations standing at 15.47 % and 32.4 % respectively<sup>2</sup>, indicating substantial human capital resources. Enjoying such advantages and opportunities, China and Russia are, moreover, neighbours and any interaction between them at the national level exerts an influence on the regional and even global geopolitical landscape. This has been repeatedly underscored from the Cold War era to the present day: three of the most influential Western political scientists S. Huntington [1, p. 270–271], and Z. Brzezinski [2, p. 72–73] have articulated this viewpoint, and explicitly likened China and Russia to elite chess players within regional Eurasia and the broader geopolitical arena. They advocated for their countries' interests and cautioned Western governments about the need to disrupt any potential partnership between China and Russia through a balanced foreign policy. However, the anticipated chasm between China and Russia has not materialised as the West had hoped, instead, interaction and cooperation between the two nations have grown closer across various spheres.

The chronological scope of this study spans the period from the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Russia up to 2023. It aims to delineate the primary avenues of cooperation in the realm of non-traditional security between China and Russia, detailing the main attributes of each sector, identifying challenges encountered during cooperation, proposing measures and recommendations to enhance bilateral collaboration, and concluding on the significance of cooperation in non-traditional security within the broader framework of interactions between the two countries. We employ general scientific methods (induction, analysis, classification, deduction, comparison, generalisation) alongside specific methodologies (narrative, historical-retrospective, historical-comparative, historical-systems, document analysis).

This study examines non-traditional security, focusing on the perspectives of Chinese and Russian scholars specialising in this field and Sino-Russian cooperation across scientific, technological, financial, energy, and agricultural domains. It also incorporates insights from news commentators. The aim is to illustrate the significance of non-traditional security and the tangible pro-

gress and challenges encountered by China and Russia in collaborative efforts within this domain.

Scholars such as Fu Xiaoqiang, Han Liquan [3], Ba Dianyunjun [4], and Pu Sayou [5] contend that non-traditional security has emerged as a novel factor influencing national security. A. V. Lugin's [6] perspectives are employed to characterise the development of Sino-Russian relations. Studies by scholars such as Gao Jixian [7], Wu Tsun [8], Hou Jie, Shi Yejing [9], Wang Yan [10], Gao Mentian [11], and Zhang Jiacheng [12] are utilised to synthesise the characteristics and potential of cooperation between the two nations across diverse sectors.

Cooperation between China and Russia represents the most direct and effective means of maximising both nations' interests. The primary objective of this bilateral partnership is to foster a peaceful geopolitical environment in the Eurasian region and globally, thereby ensuring the development of both nations. However, the establishment by China and Russia of an organisation with substantial military capabilities appears unfeasible as a means of maintaining geopolitical security. China and Russia are global military powers, dwarfing the military strength of both states. Furthermore, some of China's and Russia's neighbours still harbour unresolved territorial disputes due to historical reasons. Should China and Russia form a close military alliance, this would only heighten anxieties and discontent among neighbouring states, inevitably prompting them to seek support from extra-regional powers or form alliances to counterbalance the power of the China – Russia military bloc. This could destabilise the geopolitical balance and undermine the existing peripheral security environment. Consequently, the formation of a tight military alliance remains merely a contingency plan in the face of potential extraordinary threats.

Within the traditional security paradigm, China and Russia have achieved a level of comprehensive strategic partnership at the political level. Diplomatically, the number of visits exchanged by the top leaders of both sides significantly exceeds the number of meetings with leaders of other nations; militarily, maintaining a loosely defined model of collective defence suffices to address the current geopolitical landscape.

In 1983, R. Ullman's seminal article "Redefining security"<sup>3</sup>, challenged the conventional, military-centric definition of security. He proposed broadening the concept to include all threats that could diminish the quality of life for citizens, such as barriers to global trade, terrorism, climate disasters, and human rights crises. Western scholars often credit R. Ullman with pioneering the notion of non-traditional security. Non-traditional

<sup>1</sup>Economies by GDP size [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.worldeconomics.com/Rankings/Economies-By-Size.aspx> (date of access: 29.04.2024).

<sup>2</sup>Seventh National population census: education level of the population [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.stats.gov.cn/sj/pcsj/rkpc/7rp/zk/html/fu03f.pdf> (date of access: 29.04.2024) (in Chin.); Varlamova T. A., Gokhberg L. M., Ozerova O. K. Education in figures: 2023 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://issek.hse.ru/mirror/pubs/share/856367924.pdf> (date of access: 29.04.2024) (in Russ.).

<sup>3</sup>Ullman R. Redefining security // Int. Secur. 1983. Vol. 8. No. 1. P. 129–153.

security can be broadly defined as factors that pose threats to sovereign states or human society as a whole, in addition to traditional factors such as military, political, and diplomatic issues.

As the scope of security expands, an increasing number of issues are undergoing securitisation and weaponisation, becoming tools for interstate competition and accelerating the transformation of non-traditional security concerns into traditional ones. Concurrently, certain traditional security matters exhibit non-traditional characteristics, rendering the boundary between the two types increasingly indistinct. Since the turn of the new century, confrontation has intensified among nations over non-traditional security concerns, with domains such as international economics and finance, global trade, climate change, and biosecurity gradually becoming politicised, securitised, and even militarised [3].

In recent years, relations between the United States and its Western allies, on one side, and Russia, on the other, have gradually shifted from cooperation to competition. This has resulted in significant rifts and confrontations between the Western bloc and the Sino-Russian partnership in trade, science and technology, energy, finance, and other areas of cooperation.

Specifically, in an effort to weaken and contain the geopolitical influence and development of China and Russia, the West is deeply involved in, and exerts influence on, the dynamics between Russia and Ukraine, as well as between China and the island of Taiwan. The confrontation between the West and the Sino-Russian alignment is intensifying, with the possibility of escalating into a hot war, indicating that the world is undergoing profound changes.

Within this volatile environment of shifting geopolitical balances, China and Russia have compelling reasons to cooperate to maintain regional peace and safeguard their respective national interests. This collaboration should, first and foremost, be founded on regional stability and adhere to the previously mentioned principle of restraint in traditional security cooperation. Such restraint aims to avoid triggering anxiety or hostility among neighbouring states and to shift the focus of security cooperation towards non-traditional security challenges.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict provides a concrete example. The West has not only instigated a proxy war but has also intensified its financial warfare and value chain conflict against Russia, weaponising currency and technology to comprehensively contain Russia. This has far-reaching implications for future global security. The West's use of finance as a strategic tool against Russia has exposed a new form of statecraft that significantly undermines the international political and economic order. This novel strategy of financial weaponisation is as destructive as military conflict, elevating the importance of economic security to the highest priority within national security. The most noteworthy aspect of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is the involvement of

non-traditional security sectors such as energy and food, leading to regressions in humanity's collective attempts to confront its predicament.

For example, from the perspective of global energy conservation and emissions reduction, the uncertainty surrounding energy security caused by disruptions in gas and oil supplies has prompted nations to significantly increase fossil fuel extraction. This reversal of efforts to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions has intensified the crisis of mineral resource availability and energy security [4]. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has finally awakened Russia from its illusions about integration with the West, compelling it to adjust the future trajectory of national development and reassess the importance of non-traditional security domains.

The fundamental cause of the conflict between China and the United States lies in the material, cognitive, discursive, and other disparities in national power, which are gradually diminishing as a result of numerous contributing factors. National strength depends not only on material aspects but also on the embedded perceptions of social factors among participants – that is, on how other states perceive and identify their status [5]. The narrowing of the relative power gap between the two countries has fuelled anxieties in the US about its hegemonic status, leading to an exaggerated narrative about the impact of China's rise. This has steered the overall direction of Sino-American relations towards competition. Currently, the United States employs non-violent means to constrain China's growing national power through trade wars, restrictions on scientific and technological exchanges, and interference in Taiwan's internal affairs. It also aims to impede China's development by fomenting conflict in the domains of trade cooperation, scientific and technological exchange, and ideology, areas that transcend the traditional security sphere.

Within China, two approaches to managing Sino-American rivalry exist. The first emphasises compromise and concessions, anticipating that this will restore the United States trust and return relations to their previous state. However, from a practical standpoint, the competition is focused on the advanced sectors of both nations, raising the question of who will take the initiative to relinquish self-gained advantages. It is apparent that relations are unlikely to revert to their former condition. The second approach advocates a firm response to the United States pressure. Yet, since a gap remains between China and the United States in many domains, China cannot address all provocations in the short term. Moreover, the Chinese economy faces numerous structural issues, and a short-term “decoupling” from the United States would only lead to unnecessary turmoil. A viable strategy is to demonstrate a certain degree of compromise with the United States at the tactical level. However, at the strategic level, Sino-American relations will remain competitive for a considerable time.

As neighbouring states, China and Russia have, in recent years, experienced to varying degrees' pressures



from the United States and the West in the realm of non-traditional security. Guided by shared interests and confronting identical sources of threats, the two nations have ample grounds and motivation to engage in more active collaboration in this field, which will undoubtedly be mutually beneficial for both countries in the long term.

Numerous opportunities exist for collaboration between the two nations in the sphere of non-traditional

security, providing an optimal starting point for deepening bilateral security cooperation in the current international landscape. Additionally, a broad spectrum of cooperative spheres can be pursued by focusing on the following four sectors: science and technology, finance, energy, agriculture. The subsequent sections will examine the characteristics of Sino-Russian cooperation and the obstacles impeding this collaboration in various fields.

### Science and technology

The overall trend of cooperation between the two countries in science and technology is advancing positively. However, there are examples of both successful and unsuccessful collaborative projects. Among the triumphs, Sino-Russian cooperation in nuclear energy stands out as particularly fruitful. With Russia's assistance, China explored and implemented second- and third-generation nuclear power technologies and, with technical support from the Russian side, constructed its first experimental fast neutron reactor<sup>4</sup>. However, certain science and technology cooperation projects between the two countries have not progressed as anticipated. For example, the joint Russian-Chinese wide-body long-range CR929 aircraft project has ultimately floundered since its inception in 2016 due to disputes between the parties over design concepts and concerns regarding intellectual property rights<sup>5</sup>.

At the political level, both China and Russia aspire to establish closer scientific and technological cooperation. The rationale is evident: China values Russia's technical prowess, while Russia aims to leverage China's economic potential to address its funding challenges in scientific and technological development. Nevertheless, resistance persists in implementing concrete cooperation projects. Within both China and Russia, voices opposing bilateral collaboration can be heard, and some representatives on the Chinese side hold biased views about Russia. These are primarily pro-Western Chinese experts and scholars who rely solely on their preferences and one-sided experience, according to which Western science and technology surpass other non-Western achievements. In the absence of comprehensive research, it was assumed that Russian technologies are outdated, backward, and less advanced than Western counterparts and that the study of science and technology should occur exclusively at the Western level. However, reality has contradicted the claims of the pro-Western faction. The most compelling example is the cooperation between the two countries in nuclear energy. Despite having previously imported nuclear

power technologies from France, the United States, and Canada, China continues to adopt Russian nuclear technology, demonstrating that Russia retains a competitive edge in this field. Notably, in the first phase of the Tianwan Nuclear power plant project, four Russian VVER-1000 reactors were utilised; in the second phase, two Chinese-made ACPR-1000 reactors were developed based on American AP-1000 technology; and in the third phase, two VVER-1200 reactors continued to be procured from Russia. Beyond the Tianwan Nuclear power plant, in 2021, VVER-1200 reactors were also utilised in unit 3 and unit 4 of the second phase of the Xudabao Nuclear Power Plant<sup>6</sup>. The abundance of new nuclear energy projects utilising Russian technology serves as a compelling illustration that Russian technology is on par with that of other nations, and China would be well-advised to adopt and learn from it.

Russia's hesitation is primarily due to persistent concerns about the potential theft of intellectual property rights by China during scientific and technological cooperation, which is a valid apprehension, however, this issue is not exclusive to Sino-Russian collaboration. Similar challenges have arisen in China's partnerships with Western nations, but the West has long recognised that maintaining technological barriers during such cooperation and exchange is impractical. It is impossible to prevent the other party from examining technologies during exchanges, and a rational strategy involves trading technologies at advantageous prices, thereby generating profits that can be reinvested into the research and development of more advanced innovations. In collaboration with Western companies, both sides have identified optimal methods of interaction to address these issues. To exchange technology for market access, Western firms typically establish joint ventures with Chinese partners, contributing technology in return for shared profitability, thus achieving long-term financial objectives for both parties. China and Russia may consider adopting this cooperative model in future endeavours. As China's scientific and technological capabilities

<sup>4</sup>Wang Qishan and Russian deputy Prime Minister I. Sechin visit Chinese experimental fast neutron reactor [Electronic resource]. URL: [http://mm.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgxw/201110/t20111011\\_1419332.htm](http://mm.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zgxw/201110/t20111011_1419332.htm) (date of access: 29.04.2024) (in Chin.).

<sup>5</sup>Lebukhova I. "Chinese miracle": how the CR929 aircraft project instantly stopped being Russian [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://newizv.ru/news/2023-11-07/kitayskoe-chudo-kak-proekt-samoleta-cr-929-v-odin-mig-perestal-byt-rossijskim-422859> (date of access: 29.04.2024) (in Russ.).

<sup>6</sup>Reactor shaft cladding structure was installed at power unit No. 3 of NPP "Suydapu" [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://ase-ec.ru/for-journalists/news/2021/nov/na-energobloke-3-aes-syuydapu-ustanovlena-konstruktsiya-oblitsovki-shakhty-reaktora/> (date of access: 21.04.2024) (in Russ.).

improve, significant global achievements have been realised in fields such as high-speed railways, 5G mobile communications, superconducting materials, quantum

communications, green energy, and other sectors. It is conceivable that a model of cooperation involving technology exchange will also emerge in the future [7].

### Financial sector

The outcomes of Sino-Russian financial cooperation are currently concentrated in two areas. Firstly, interbank business cooperation has seen major banks from both countries establish local branches and correspondent banking relationships (see table). This arrangement reduces fund transit times, enhances settlement efficiency, and simultaneously promotes transactions in national currencies. In recent years, the scale of interbank business collaboration has expanded alongside the broadening domains of Sino-Russian cooperation. Furthermore, cooperation between Russian and Chinese banks encompasses financing, cross-border e-commerce payments,

anti-money laundering efforts, and combating the financing of terrorism. China Development Bank serves as the primary institution for China's development finance cooperation in Russia, having facilitated the implementation of several key projects undertaken by *PetroChina*, *Sinopec*, *CITIC*, and other Chinese companies in Russia. In addition, to increase the export of automobiles, ships, complete equipment sets, and electromechanical products to Russia, the Chinese government encourages commercial banks to offer preferential loans to Russian enterprises by providing insurance, financing, and interest rate subsidies.

#### Local branches and correspondent banking relations

Bank name	Organisation in the host country	Establishment date
<i>Chinese banks' representative offices in Russia</i>		
Industrial and Commercial Bank of China	ICBC Bank	November 2007
Bank of China	Bank of China	April 1993
China Construction Bank	China Construction Bank	March 2013
China Development Bank	China Development Bank representative office in Moscow	September 2010
Export – Import Bank of China	Export – Import Bank of China representative office in Saint Petersburg	June 2007
Agricultural Bank of China	Agricultural Bank of China	January 2015
<i>Russian banks' representative offices in China</i>		
Russian Credit	Representative office in Beijing	April 1996
VTB Bank	Representative office in Beijing	September 1989
	Representative office in Shanghai	December 2007
Promsvyazbank	Representative office in Beijing	March 2004
VEB.RF	Representative office in Beijing	April 1999
Gazprombank	Representative office in Beijing	July 2006
MDM Bank	Representative office in Beijing	August 2008
Eurofinance Mosnarbank	Representative office in Beijing	July 2009
Sberbank	Representative office in Beijing	June 2010
Russian Agricultural Bank	Representative office in Beijing	June 2015
Central Bank of the Russian Federation	Representative office in Beijing	March 2017

Note. Developed on the base of the following source: *Pan Haifeng, Hou Mengxia, Pan Shuyu. Research of the current situation, problems, and countermeasures of China – Russia financial trade cooperation // Heilongjiang Finance. 2019. No. 2. P. 57–60 (in Chin.).*

Secondly, the scope of financial transactions in local currencies between China and Russia has expanded significantly. The yuan – rouble exchange transactions have become a pivotal element, liberating both parties from dependency on international clearing organisations and US dollar exchange. Settlements in national currencies also facilitate the development of bilateral

trade. Conducting transactions in domestic currencies is central to Sino-Russian financial cooperation. Such settlements have progressed through three developmental stages from initial border trade to comprehensive trade exchanges. The volume of mutual settlements in yuan and roubles has gradually increased, maintaining a relative equilibrium with rouble-based transactions. This demand

was particularly pronounced following the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, and since settlements in local currencies in bilateral trade reached 95 % by 2023, Sino-Russian initiatives in national currency settlements have proven highly successful<sup>7</sup>.

Chinese-Russian financial cooperation has intensified since Russia became subject to Western sanctions. The achievements of this collaboration are evident, yet certain challenges remain. One priority is the ongoing improvement of the regulatory framework. To ensure orderly financial cooperation between the two countries, enhanced information exchange and joint consultations are essential for establishing a framework for supervising and managing financial institutions in both countries and mitigating financial risks. Firstly, political engagement and information sharing will facilitate the construction of regional regulatory mechanisms and enhance the efficiency of coordinated regulatory systems between China and Russia. Secondly, there is an

urgent need to develop a risk early-warning system and emergency decision-making processes in both countries to regulate the functioning of financial institutions. This necessitates negotiations on the harmonisation of financial indicators and the enhancement of credit ratings for financial institutions. Thirdly, building on the development of international electronic commerce involving financial institutions from both nations, a networked system for information exchange and joint supervision can be created. This would enable financial institutions to promptly request and share information, thus avoiding losses due to information delays, and oversee tax evasion and data leakage during the expansion of international e-commerce. A series of risk prevention mechanisms, which both sides should collaboratively develop, will help to control the financing of terrorist organisations and prevent the loss of investors' interests when they engage in financial activities in the other country [8, p. 16–20].

### Energy sector

Sino-Russian collaboration in the energy field focuses on oil and gas. As China's largest contiguous neighbour, Russia is the world's second-largest producer of petroleum and natural gas and the largest supplier of these resources to China. The supply of Russian hydrocarbons holds paramount strategic importance for China's national energy security. For Russia, exporting oil and natural gas is a traditional means of earning foreign currency. Revenues from the energy sector typically account for more than 40 % of Russia's budgetary income and play a crucial role in stabilising the Russian economy.

In 2021, crude oil imports from Russia constituted 15.5 % of China's total crude oil imports for that year, amounting to 79.64 mln t, with the overall value of Sino-Russian oil trade reaching 42.78 bln US dollars. In 2022, Russian oil exports to China increased by 8.3 %, reaching 86.25 mln t, and the value of these imports rose to approximately 58.4 bln US dollars, positioning Russia as the second-largest supplier of oil to China [9].

Regarding natural gas, in May 2014, *PetroChina* and *Gazprom* signed a purchase and sale agreement for natural gas via the eastern route, stipulating a total supply volume exceeding 1 trln m<sup>3</sup>, with annual deliveries of 38 bln m<sup>3</sup> over 30 years. In 2022, these companies entered into another agreement for the sale of natural gas from the Russian Far East, which enabled an increase in China's imports of Russian natural gas by 10 bln m<sup>3</sup> annually, bringing the total to 48 bln m<sup>3</sup> per year<sup>8</sup>. In 2022, Russia ranked as the second-largest exporter of natural

gas to China, accounting for 18 % of China's total gas imports. Following the sabotage of the pipeline "Nord Stream – 2" in September 2022, the exit of Russian gas from the EU market became an unavoidable reality that Russia was compelled to accept, prompting a shift in its gas exports towards Asia. Presently, Russia plans to construct the power of pipeline "Siberia-2" in collaboration with China, which is expected to transport up to 50 bln m<sup>3</sup> of gas annually from northern Russia to China via Mongolia<sup>9</sup>. Based on the results of existing cooperation, the energy partnership between China and Russia in the oil and gas sector has yielded mutually beneficial outcomes.

Although the energy collaboration between the two nations has been notably fruitful, certain issues persist in practice. Firstly, this cooperation predominantly focuses on a single category of energy sources (namely oil and natural gas) leaving other types of energy carriers and mineral resources yet to be explored. The development of green energy could potentially be integrated into their cooperative framework. Secondly, disputes over oil and gas pricing remain. Despite the mutual benefits derived from this partnership, there are inevitable disparities in gains, leading to contention. Both parties continuously seek greater advantages for themselves, exerting political influence on negotiation processes. However, it would be prudent to separate politics from these discussions and employ business tools to achieve a relatively fair and satisfactory outcome for both sides through negotiations.

<sup>7</sup>Belousov announces that mutual settlements in national currencies between Russia and China amount to 95 % [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/19330101> (date of access: 21.04.2024) (in Russ.).

<sup>8</sup>China – Russia energy cooperation advances with signing of Far East gas supply and sales agreement [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://news.cctv.com/2022/02/06/ARTI17qzVKif6l8ali6CKgFA220206.shtml> (date of access: 29.04.2024) (in Chin.).

<sup>9</sup>Russia presents technical assessment of mega pipeline to China, set to supply more gas than Nord Stream – 1 [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://www.cankaoxiaoxi.com/#/detailsPage/8cd1978ad52941828e768dfe42cd5bb6/1/2024-01-26%2013:49> (date of access: 29.04.2024) (in Chin.).



## Agricultural security

The primary challenge confronting China in terms of agricultural security is the supply of staple grains, specifically four key crops: wheat, maize, rice, and soybeans. Firstly, China's production of staple grains has been insufficient for many years. In 2020, soybean imports into China exceeded domestic production by more than fourfold, surpassing 100 mln t. Given the substantial deficit in this particular agricultural commodity, large-scale soybean imports are expected to continue in the future.

According to the China Rural development report – 2020, China is projected to face a gap between food production and demand totalling 130 mln t by 2025, chiefly in soybeans, along with a shortage of 25 mln t of rice, wheat, and maize<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, per capita arable land is limited, and seed reserves are insufficient. The results of the 3<sup>rd</sup> National land survey, released in 2021, indicate that China's cultivated land area is 1.9179 bln ac (128 mln ha), with per capita arable land less than 1.35 ac (0.09 ha) – 40 % below the global average. The overwhelming majority of maize and soybean seeds sown in China are supplied by Western companies such as *Dupont*, *Monsanto*, *Dow*, *Delta Pine Land*, and *Syngenta*, among others.

Secondly, China relies on a limited number of sources for food imports, it brings in bulk commodities mainly from the United States, Canada, Australia, and Russia. With the onset of the trade conflict between China and the United States, Beijing's relations with the West have cooled. To counter Western sanctions, China has imposed higher tariffs on certain Western agricultural products, resulting in a substantial decline in bilateral agricultural trade. When food imports are sourced from a narrow range of countries, unforeseen supply crises may arise [10, p. 17–19].

Russia confronts two aspects of the agricultural security challenge. Firstly, its agricultural base remains underdeveloped. Despite Russia's vast territory, the proportion of cultivated arable land to total land area is relatively small. The low profitability of farming fails to attract capital investment, leading to Russia's agricultural science, technology, and infrastructure lagging behind national development. Seeds and food processing equipment still predominantly rely on imports. Owing to the limited capacity of Russian processing facilities, much of the produce is not transformed into higher-value food products, resulting in low economic added value from the harvest, which in turn dampens incentives for investing in the agrarian sector.

Thirdly, Russian grain exports are currently impacted by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, leading to a contraction in export operations. Russian wheat is primarily exported to Egypt, Turkey, Bangladesh, and several Middle Eastern nations. Following the outbreak of the conflict,

trade volumes plummeted, and orders declined sharply. In an era of globalisation, shifts in regional supply and demand are rapidly transmitted worldwide, causing food security issues [11, p. 16–17].

China, as a densely populated nation, inevitably needs to import food. Therefore, it is imperative to establish a diversified overseas mechanism for substituting food imports. Russia, facing sanctions, is likewise seeking new markets. It can be argued that food security concerns between China and Russia are mutually complementary. Since 2014, the structure of the Russian economy has undergone significant changes, with the agricultural sector becoming prominent. The Far East, as the region with the greatest potential for agricultural development in Russia, has become a development priority.

Due to its favourable land conditions and strategic location, the Russian Far East has consistently been viewed by China as a promising region for agricultural collaboration with Russia. However, due to historical factors and Russia's reliance on nationalism to foster internal cohesion during the “shock therapy” period following the collapse of the Soviet Union, various China threat theories have emerged within Russia. Assertions such as “the Chinese are occupying the Far East” and “Chinese territorial claims on the Far East or regions east of Lake Baikal” significantly hindered the joint development of Sino-Russian agricultural initiatives in the Far East [10, p. 294–301]. On a positive note, recent years have seen an increase in mutual trust under the leadership of both nations. Civil interactions have become more frequent, enhancing understanding between the two peoples, and China and Russia are beginning to set Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation in the Far East on the right course.

Chinese and Russian investors are currently engaged in negotiations for a soybean processing plant construction project in the Far East, while the Amur Region in the Far East is initiating a national soybean deep processing project. In 2019, China's General Administration of Customs issued an announcement permitting the import of soybeans from Russia. In 2020, 3884 t of soybeans arrived at Qingdao Port in China, marking the official commencement of a new phase in Sino-Russian soybean trade. Confident in its capabilities, Russia exported 693.75 thsd t of soybeans to China in 2022, and 1.293 mln t in 2023 – an increase of 86.32 % compared to the previous year. As collaboration deepens, the Russian Far East is working to obtain and expand the list of Russian suppliers to the Chinese market, aiming to broaden the range of exported crops. Furthermore, Russia has proposed allocating nearly 1/6 of the Far East to Chinese investors for agricultural cooperation projects [11]. The expanding Chinese market for agricultural

<sup>10</sup>Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the People's Republic of China holds press conference on grain market operation and production situation [Electronic resource]. URL: [https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-08/26/content\\_5537711.htm](https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-08/26/content_5537711.htm) (date of access: 29.04.2024) (in Chin.).

products complements Russia's need to increase exports, creating a mutually beneficial scenario. China's substantial demand for food significantly stimulates

Russian agriculture. It is imperative for China to balance and optimise its agricultural structure and ensure supply stability through food imports.

## Conclusions

It is unequivocally clear that non-traditional security has become an integral component of contemporary national security, encompassing areas that impact daily life and future development. The examples provided in this article demonstrate that the significance of non-traditional security extends beyond that of traditional security during peacetime. A lack of security in any non-traditional domain can place a nation at a disadvantage or even lead to defeat in global competition.

In this article, we have synthesised the features, achievements, and challenges in the most significant areas of collaboration between China and Russia. From this examination, it can be concluded that there is an overarching trend towards the dynamic advancement of partnership between the two nations in the sphere of non-traditional security. Nevertheless, certain issues persist in various sectors such as energy and agriculture, which can be readily resolved through market mechanisms or

mutual consultations. In contrast, matters within the scientific-technological and financial domains affect the vital national interests of both countries.

Some complex challenges require both parties to establish high-level governmental, economic, and research expert committees to continue coordinating joint actions. Responding to the evolution of the current international geopolitical landscape, China and Russia are, to varying degrees, resorting to import substitution policies. This signifies that each nation possesses a substantial substitutable market share accessible to the other. The involvement of market economies exerts a naturally stimulating effect on the development of cooperation in non-traditional security between the two sides. Moreover, the interplay of economic interests with collaboration in non-traditional security leads to the strengthening and enhancement of bilateral relations.

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