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The Role of International Organizations in Russia–China Cooperation Policy

Specialty: 5.5.4. International Relations, Global and Regional Studies

ABSTRACT
of the dissertation for the degree of
Candidate of Political Sciences

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Relevance of the research topic.

In the context of globalization, no state or other actor in international relations can address issues related to its survival and development in isolation. Sovereign states remain the principal actors and driving forces of global development; however, they are not the only actors in international relations. In the face of global and transnational challenges, the role of international organizations and multilateral groupings has become increasingly prominent. International organizations, possessing international legal personality, permanent bodies, and established structures, represent an institutionalized form of interstate cooperation. Multilateral groupings, in turn, function as more flexible mechanisms of coordination and often lack developed bureaucratic systems, while performing similar functions in coordinating positions and formulating collective decisions. Their normative capacity, coordinating role, and unique function as platforms for dialogue encourage major powers to make active use of them to advance national interests and enhance their global influence.

It is important to note that recent Russia–China joint statements routinely identify cooperation within frameworks such as the United Nations (UN), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS, and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) as priority areas of bilateral foreign-policy engagement. Consequently, from the perspective of Russia and China themselves—irrespective of their strict legal classification—these international institutions perform analogous functions and play a common role in advancing the foreign-policy interests of both countries. For this reason, the present study examines international organizations (such as the UN, SCO, and EAEU) and multilateral associations (BRICS, G20) within a unified analytical

framework. This approach allows for a more comprehensive account of the multi-layered nature of Russia–China cooperation on the international stage.

Russia and China are countries with global influence, and their cooperation in the political, economic, and security spheres has extended beyond the framework of bilateral relations. Their cooperation within international organizations and groupings such as the UN, the SCO, BRICS, and the G20 continues to deepen, which is of considerable importance for regional and global strategic stability. Moreover, the two countries hold identical or similar positions on many international and regional issues, including those related to security, economics, and politics, providing an important foundation for their cooperation in multilateral frameworks. In addition, China and Russia currently face a range of uncertainties and threats, making it particularly necessary to strengthen bilateral cooperation at both the global and regional levels through international organizations. Thus, the topic of the present study is highly relevant.

The object of the research is Russia–China interaction within international organizations.

The subject of the research is the policies, mechanisms, and areas of Russia–China cooperation within international organizations.

The aim of the research is to identify the specific features of contemporary interaction between Russia and China within international organizations.

Research objectives:

1. To identify the theoretical and methodological foundations for the study of international organizations and examine the principal concepts of international

organizations in the field of international relations.

2. To identify the historical stages of the PRC's participation in international organizations.

3. To trace the evolution of the Russian Federation's diplomatic strategy within international organizations.

4. To analyze Russia–China interaction in global international institutions through cooperation in the UN on crisis management (the Syrian crisis and the use of the veto) and in the G20 on sustainable development issues (green energy).

5. To examine Russia–China interaction and the convergence of their interests in the Eurasian space through the activities of the SCO, as well as the synergy between the Belt and Road Initiative and the EAEU.

6. To study Russia–China cooperation within BRICS in the fields of scientific and technological innovation and the formation of a new financial architecture, including prospects for cooperation with the countries of the Global South, with particular reference to Africa.

7. To assess the current state and prospects for the further development of China–Russia interaction within international organizations.

The research hypothesis is that international organizations play an increasingly important role in strengthening, developing, and expanding cooperation between China and Russia by facilitating more effective policy coordination and reinforcing their strategic partnership. It is assumed that interaction within multilateral frameworks enables the two countries to shape their agendas more effectively, strengthen regional and global security, and promote sustainable development in key and innovative areas.

The chronological scope of the research covers the period from 1991 to 2024. The choice of 1991 as the starting point is determined by fundamental changes in the global geopolitical architecture, including the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the emergence of Russia as an independent international actor, and the formation of a new model of relations with the PRC, including the transformation of interaction within international organizations. Although the first chapter provides a retrospective analysis of the evolution of the PRC's policy toward international organizations since the founding of the state in 1949, this discussion is intended to provide the necessary historical perspective for a subsequent in-depth examination of the continuity of China's foreign policy, the formation of its approaches to international organizations, and their impact on cooperation with Russia. At the same time, the main focus of the research, particularly the analysis of specific cases of interaction between the two countries within international organizations, is confined to the period after 1991. This approach ensures the coherence of the study and the analytical rigor of its conceptual framework, making it possible to identify the dynamics of Russia–China cooperation under the conditions of the contemporary world order. The choice of 2024 as the end point of the chronological scope is determined by the availability of empirical data and the need to maintain the relevance of the analysis, thereby allowing the study to capture the most recent trends in the development of Russia–China cooperation.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework.

The theoretical framework of the study draws on a combination of different theoretical traditions. Neoliberal institutionalism occupies a central place in the theoretical foundation of the dissertation. This approach was developed in the 1980s

by R. Keohane and J. Nye, who argued that international institutions facilitate interaction among states by reducing the risks of instability and expanding opportunities for multilateral cooperation. This approach is particularly useful for analyzing relations between great powers and international organizations, including in the context of the ongoing transformation of the world order.

The study also draws on the ideas of realism, liberalism, and constructivism. Each of these theoretical traditions offers a distinct explanation of why states interact and what role international organizations play in this process. While neoliberal institutionalism serves as the principal theoretical foundation of the study, it is combined with insights from other approaches. Such an integrated framework allows for a deeper and more comprehensive analysis of the research object.

The dissertation employs the following research approaches and methods:

Structural-functional approach, which made it possible to examine international organizations as integrated systems possessing specific structures and sets of functions that shape the interaction among member states.

Institutional approach, focused on analyzing the role of international institutions in deepening the Russia–China strategic partnership and coordinating their foreign policy courses.

Geopolitical approach, used to analyze the strategic dynamics of Russia–China interaction in the context of their influence on the Eurasian space and the formation of a new regional security architecture.

Historical approach, used to analyze the evolution of China's and Russia's participation in international organizations, identify the main stages of this process for

each country, and determine the general trends in their development.

Qualitative document analysis, which constitutes the core of the research methodology. A systematic examination of joint statements, charters of international organizations, resolutions, and official foreign policy doctrines made it possible to identify the key priorities and positions of the two countries on major issues of the international agenda.

Analysis of secondary statistical data, which enhanced the empirical validity of the study through the processing of statistical data, analysis of voting results, and other quantifiable indicators.

Case study analysis. The dissertation examines specific cases of Russia–China cooperation within international organizations and multilateral groupings.

Comparative analysis, aimed at identifying common features and specific differences in the political approaches and national interests of Russia and China in the course of their participation in international organizations.

Source Base of the Research. The study is based on a diverse body of sources, systematized into the following categories

1. Official legal and regulatory acts and documents: Russia–China joint declarations related to the subject of the dissertation; the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation; policy documents on bilateral cooperation in the political, economic, diplomatic, cultural, scientific and technological, and environmental spheres; intergovernmental agreements and legal acts concerning strategic areas of Russia–China interaction; and annual White Papers issued by the State Council Information Office of the PRC.

2. Official administrative documentation: materials of international organizations; interagency memoranda; bulletins and reports of the executive authorities of the Russian Federation and the PRC.

3. Public and media sources: transcripts of speeches, interviews, and statements by the leaders of the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China; analytical publications by government officials in relevant media outlets, including Chinese publications (People's Daily, China Daily, Xinhua), Russian media (TASS, RIA Novosti, Interfax, RT), and international publications (The Guardian, The Economist).

4. Departmental information materials: current bulletins issued by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Russia and China, as well as statistical compilations published by the relevant ministries of the two countries.

The scientific novelty of the dissertation research lies in the following:

– a comprehensive analysis of the strategies of interaction between the PRC and the Russian Federation within international organizations has been conducted, integrating theoretical and methodological foundations with the practice of policy coordination under conditions of transformation of the world order;

- the phenomenon of "mutual empowerment" in relations between international organizations and great powers has been identified through the example of Russia and China, whereby international organizations not only depend on great powers but can also shape the trajectory of their cooperation through institutional influence;

- the possibility of forming a new paradigm of crisis management within the UN has been demonstrated through an analysis of Russia's and China's use of the veto

at different stages of the Syrian conflict;

- areas of convergence and conflict between Chinese and Russian interests in Central Asia have been identified through the example of the SCO, and the concept of a "spillover effect" within the organization has been proposed, referring to the transition from security cooperation to economic integration;

- the impact of the Russia–Ukraine conflict on the interaction between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) has been established, and the role of this cooperation in the development of the Eurasian region and in countering Western sanctions has been identified;

- the potential for using the scientific and technological advantages and geopolitical influence of China and Russia within an expanding BRICS framework to promote the sustainable development of the Global South, particularly Africa, through infrastructure investment, digital economic cooperation, and technology transfer has been demonstrated, thereby contributing to the formation of a multipolar world order;

- the complementary roles of the UN and the G20 in climate policy coordination have been identified, and a model has been proposed in which the UN establishes normative goals while the G20 implements specific economic projects in the field of green energy;

- prospective scenarios for the development of Russia–China cooperation within international organizations have been proposed, taking into account the combined effects of exogenous and endogenous factors, as well as the growing institutional role of the countries of the Global South in shaping the multilateral agenda.

Provisions Submitted for Defense:

1. Analysis of the evolution of China's strategy within international organizations demonstrates a transition from the position of an external observer to active participation in global governance and the assumption of the responsibilities of a great power, a process closely linked to the growth of the country's comprehensive national power. In turn, an examination of Russia's foreign policy concept reveals a shift from a predominantly Western-oriented approach toward a pragmatic reorientation to East Asia, with particular emphasis on cooperation with the PRC, followed by the institutionalization of interaction with the countries of the Global South. Thus, the historical evolution of the strategies of the two states confirms their growing interest in using multilateral institutions to advance their national interests and shape the international agenda.

2. The United Nations retains its status as a universal, representative, and authoritative intergovernmental institution within the system of global governance. Russia–China interaction during the Syrian crisis demonstrates the dual nature of the UN: on the one hand, the organization possesses unique instruments for conflict resolution; on the other, it faces structural constraints. This is evident in the case of Syria, where Russia and China coordinated their positions. Their joint stance, including 10 instances of jointly exercising the veto on draft UN Security Council resolutions concerning Syria, contributed to prioritizing diplomatic rather than coercive approaches, preventing foreign intervention in Syria, and preserving the authority of the United Nations. Although not all UN mechanisms have proved sufficiently effective, its role remains particularly important in the formulation and adoption of collective decisions.

3. Strategic interaction between Russia and China within Eurasian regional institutions is pursued through the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the alignment of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Although the SCO was initially established as a security mechanism, over time the two countries accumulated sufficient mutual trust to move beyond its original objectives and expand cooperation into the economic, cultural, and other spheres. At present, the organization serves not only as a platform for multilateral dialogue but also as a mechanism for shaping the regional agenda, ranging from counterterrorism to infrastructure development, thereby contributing to stability in Central Asia. In parallel, the alignment of the Belt and Road Initiative with the EAEU is advancing. Through this process, the two countries are developing a model of coordination aimed at enhancing the region's economic and transport connectivity and facilitating trade and transportation. Under current conditions of geopolitical turbulence and Western sanctions, this alignment provides an institutional counterweight to external pressure, promotes the development of alternative logistics chains, and strengthens strategic stability in Eurasia through multilevel cooperation.

4. Russia and China are deepening cooperation within BRICS by leveraging their technological strengths and geopolitical influence. China maintains strong positions in 5G and cloud technologies, while Russia retains advantages in fundamental sciences and the aerospace sector. This complementarity provides a foundation for joint projects ranging from the deployment of fifth-generation networks to developments in artificial intelligence and big data processing. The New Development Bank (NDB) also plays an important role. Through this institution, Russia and China promote de-

dollarization and the development of an alternative financial architecture, thereby challenging the established Western-dominated financial system. In addition, cooperation between the two countries within BRICS extends to the sustainable development of the Global South, particularly through infrastructure, economic, and technological projects.

5. Coordination between Russia and China in the fields of climate policy and green energy constitutes a strategically important area of cooperation. At UN climate summits, the two countries coordinate their positions on the basis of the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" and seek to safeguard the interests of developing countries. Within the G20, the climate agenda, which moved from the periphery to become one of the key priorities in 2009, has become a platform for Russia–China interaction through policy coordination and the implementation of joint projects in areas such as the gas sector and hydrogen energy, thereby compensating for the UN's limited capacity for economic policy coordination. The complementarity of the UN and G20 mechanisms creates a multilevel framework for strengthening the role of the two countries in the low-carbon transition, within which overcoming differences and institutionalizing cooperation are expected to become key directions of multilateral climate negotiations.

6. The strategic interests of China and Russia within multilateral institutions are broadly compatible; however, their practical implementation faces a number of challenges, including differences in approaches to global governance, a deficit of strategic trust, situational competition in certain sectors, U.S. containment policies, and institutional bureaucratic barriers. Addressing these challenges requires the

institutionalization of dialogue mechanisms, the pursuit of compromise through the creation of new areas of mutual benefit, and better coordination between bilateral and multilateral interaction. This would make it possible to transform potential contradictions into opportunities for the sustainable development of the partnership and enhance its adaptability to the dynamics of the changing world order, with international organizations playing a key role as platforms for coordinating positions, formulating collective decisions, and advancing Russia–China initiatives at the global level.

Theoretical and practical significance of the Research.

The study contributes to the development of international relations theory through a systematic analysis of the dialectical interaction between great powers and international organizations, thereby helping to overcome the fragmentation of contemporary approaches to the study of Russia–China cooperation. The dissertation further develops the theoretical framework by integrating concepts from institutional theory with research on great-power relations, thus possessing not only academic value for the historiography of Russia–China relations but also providing a theoretical basis for understanding the transformation of global governance in the twenty-first century.

From a practical perspective, the findings of the study have applied significance for improving the foreign policy planning of the Russian Federation and the PRC in multilateral formats, developing mechanisms for adapting international institutions to the challenges of sanctions pressure and digital transformation, and advancing cooperation with the countries of the Global South. The materials of the study may also be used in the educational process for the training of specialists in international relations.

Dissemination of results. The results of the study have been presented in 10 academic publications, 5 of which were published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals included in the list approved by the Higher Attestation Commission of the Russian Federation (VAK). The main findings of the dissertation were presented and discussed at 3 international and national academic conferences held in St. Petersburg in 2024 and 2025.

Structure of the dissertation. The dissertation consists of an introduction, three chapters comprising nine sections, a conclusion, and a bibliography containing 314 sources. The total length of the dissertation is 210 pages.