

## China and Russia: co-operation and/or competition?

### (Abstract)

The possibility of the emergence of a Sino-Russian axis has caused serious concerns for the developed West for the past few years. The relationship described by Western analysts as the 'embrace of the dragon and the bear' has been characterised by Russia and China as 'strategic partnership'. The real question is whether this means a shaping strategic ally between the two gigantic countries or not? If the answer is yes, what are the common interests? Or, what factors hamper the emergence of a real strategic ally between the parties? Results of Sino-Russian relationship have been really suggestive for the past one and half decades. However, when having a closer look at the economic, political and social dimensions of the bilateral relationship, it seems clear that beside mutual interests one may find serious clashes of interests and rivalries as well. When making a deeper analysis even apparently common interests seem to be rooted in different motivations, and the overall picture of the relations is a rather complex one with lots of disagreements.

The competition between the two powers is most evident in their common neighbourhood, that is in Central Asia. Its elements can be found in the regional co-operation framework, concretely within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation as well. The study puts a special focus onto this rivalry. It has been highlighted that China launched a massive economic expansion in the Central-Asian region. Beside trade it is strongly present in Central-Asian economies as provider of loans, assistance and investments. Russia has been more and more pushed back into its traditional role as a guarantor of military security, although its economic positions are still strong in the region. A most outstanding example of the duality of Sino-Russian co-operation and competition is the sphere of energy. A sphere that is far from being indifferent for the West, including Europe as well.

Impacts of recent economic crisis leading to important decisions in both analysed countries provide us with a clearer picture on real features of Sino-Russian relationship. The study puts a special emphasis on all developments in mutual relations connected to the world economic crisis.