



<https://asce-uok.edu.pk/journal>
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56384/jes.v40i2.350>

Global Power Transition: Where do Major European States Stand?

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the actors in the new emerging Cold War. In the last century, the world was experiencing a phase of geopolitical rivalry between two major powers, commonly referred to as the Cold War. After surviving fifty years of proxy warfare, sanctions, arms race, and security concerns between the two dominant worldwide factions, the struggle finally came to an end. The USA exerted significant influence over the western bloc, while the Soviet Union dominated the eastern bloc. The global geopolitical scenario has seen substantial transformations in the twenty-first century. The global landscape has shifted towards a multipolar configuration, resulting in conflicts that have highly unorthodox characteristics. China, being a major player, actively engages in world politics and is enjoying a fair share in a market economy and the development of infrastructure. Amid the ongoing global quest for dominance, Europe is experiencing an emergence of new dynamics, each with its unique alliances and ideas. This article aims to analyze the potential for collaboration and conflict between the major players in the emerging global power transition during the early stages of this Cold War.

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Introduction

The devastation of the Second World War left many countries economically shattered. The infrastructure and social fabric were also destroyed. The United States, the least effective of all the participants, became a superpower. During that period, two powers dominated global politics. The Soviet Union possessed formidable military power, whereas, the USA was enjoying robust economic stability besides military might. Europe was fragmented due to the loss of resources, feasible economic conditions, and the devastation of war. The world was divided between two blocs. The Eastern bloc was led by the Soviet Union, while the Western bloc was influenced by the United States.

After the Second World War, the world witnessed an extended period of geopolitical rifts characterized by proxy wars, nuclear proliferation, military build-ups, international sanctions, and many other simmering global crises. This period, 1947-91, was identified as the “Cold War”, a geopolitical rivalry between the USA and USSR. It lasted until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The new parallel, a prominent and influential participant, the People's Republic of China, was rising and demonstrating its economic and military power.

It is conceivable that we may see the rebirth of a new era of conflict, the end of the late 20th century unipolar international security architecture under the hegemony of the United States, the end of globalization, and the beginning of a new cold war between the West and the East.¹

In recent years, globally, scholars and political commentators have endeavoured to comprehend the underlying causes of the escalating conflicts between the United States and Russia on the one hand, and China, on the other hand. According to the realist school of thought, after the Cold War, the global order has almost always failed to provide long-term stability, though experts have highlighted the significant potential for conflict that is hidden within its structure. Some believed it was inevitable that the conflict would deepen or even lead to war², while others believed that the

¹ Christian Breuer. “The New Cold War and the Return of History.” *Intereconomics* 57, No. 4 (2022): 202-203.

² John Mearsheimer. “Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014.

transformation could proceed peacefully and lead to a new balance of power.³ The term "new Cold War" has been the subject of prolonged debate among academics ever since it first appeared. As a historical parallel, it started to gain identification as the "classic" conflict.

The present Cold War poses a greater threat as a consequence of a significant decline in leadership competence across several nations, leading to diminished confidence in governing authorities. Consequently, nuclear powers have utilized foreign policy as a means to strengthen their societies and tackle domestic issues, leading to a situation where contemporary leaders have a limited sense of political accountability in upholding global security and meeting their commitments.⁴

The debate among academic quarters revolves around whether Russia can establish itself as a distinct power in the current Cold War era. Russia's historical difficulties with China and its deficiency of trusted friends in Europe have traditionally constrained its potential. However, new partnerships between Russia and China on economic and strategic goals are already starting to change the geopolitical landscape.

The possibility of a strong alliance emerging to challenge the United States' dominant position is becoming more likely in this changing situation. With an understanding of the importance of partnerships, the rising European countries are now in a position to have a crucial impact on this worldwide quest for dominance. European nations are not only matching China's influence but also showing a will to influence this power struggle.

The emerging European powers

The status of Europe provided European leaders with a conundrum following World War II. As a result of the Marshall Plan and other Cold War-era financial aid, Europe was able to become more economically integrated after 1945. In 1948, the Council of Europe was formed, and in 1949, the Organization for Economic Cooperation in Europe (OEEC) was founded. In 1992, as the Soviet Union collapsed and the "European Union" was born following the signing of the Maastricht Treaty.

³ Henry Kissinger. *On China* (Penguin Books, 2012).

⁴ Sergey Karaganov. "The New Cold War and the Emerging Greater Eurasia." *Journal of Eurasian Studies* (2018).

France and Germany, among other rising European countries, are establishing their global impact by leveraging their economic dominance, engaging in diplomatic campaigns, and improving their military capacities. Their economic prowess and worldwide influence signify an important shift away from their earlier posturing. History dictates that they both play a decisive role in this emerging reconfiguration.

There has been friction between Russia and Europe because the latter seeks security in an alliance network like NATO, which poses a direct threat to Russia. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine is the latest example. Both China and Russia feel threatened by the growing security footprint of Washington in Europe. As a means to rapidly access markets, Beijing has been enhancing its reach as far as possible.

Germany

The emerging multipolarity significantly affects German strategic autonomy. Internal politics, economic muscle, military constraints, and foreign policy priorities are all to bear the impact of this shift. Due to Social Democrats and the Christian Democrats, the political landscape is complicated gradually.

The technological developments and manufacturing skills of Germany are extremely important for the economy of Europe. Nonetheless, the country's reliance on gas from Russia renders it susceptible to economic pressure. Germany's military posture may be readjusted as a result of increased spending on defence and growing concerns about national security. It is possible that the country's military capabilities could soon shift from territorial defence and peacekeeping missions to a combating force for a collective defence of Europe. It intends to get prepared for a war-like situation, particularly, due to the rise of insecurities after Russian aggression towards Ukraine.⁵

Following Germany's capitulation in 1945, the territories under the military occupation of the US, UK, and France were merged to form what is now known as the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in 1949. Within the occupied territory of the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was founded. In 1990, following the fall of communist authority in

⁵ Sabine Siebold, "Germany Pledges to Make its Military the Backbone of Defence in Europe", *Reuters*, 9 November 2023.

1989, the GDR was merged into the FRG. After reunification, Germany's population of 82 million made it the biggest in the European Union.⁶

Germany is the biggest economy in Europe and ranks fourth globally, behind only the US, China, and Japan. Worldwide, it ranks as the third-biggest exporter. The majority of a country's GDP - 70% - is generated by the service sector.⁷ Germany's emergence as a formidable power during the new Cold War era exemplifies the continent's revolutionary capacity. Germany faces a fragile geopolitical landscape shaped by the United States, Russia, and China, and it must balance its role inside the EU as tensions rise. As a heavily export-oriented economic colossus in the heart of Europe, Germany profits more than any other country from the EU's vast single market. Consistent with its financial interests, Germany has been an enthusiastic supporter of the global free trade policy pursued in the GATT/ WTO.⁸

It can be said that Germany's desire for integration and normalization depends upon two factors; economic advantage and a desire for cooperation among the neighboring countries. Germany continues to remain the major economic power in the European Union. The German economic stability and growth were the real force behind the willingness of member states to accept Germany as a leading partner in the European Community and NATO at large.

With the emergence of the German robust and competitive economy, advocates of German economic strength asserted that the prosperity of the German economy drove other countries to adopt the socially oriented market economy model, which integrates economic liberty with extensive social regulation. Germany's financial support for shortfalls in the European Community budgets served as a means to divert scrutiny from other European countries. Germany gained advantages from the system as a result of its strong export-oriented economy and significant market presence in commerce within the European Community.

⁶ Peter J. Humphreys. "Germany, Status of Media" in *Encyclopedia of International Media and Communications*, 2003.

⁷ KMPG. *Global Economic Outlook* (December 2023). Visit at <https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/uk/pdf/2023/12/global-economic-outlook-december.pdf>.

⁸ "Commitment to fair and free global trade", *Facts about Germany*, at <https://www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/global-trade-partner/commitment-fair-and-free-global-trade>.

When it comes to national and collective credibility, the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization play a vital role. *Ostpolitik* in Germany, which was initially met with opposition, has evolved into an essential part of the country's foreign and security policy and strategy. German overtures and deeper integration with Moscow ended when Russia invaded Crimea.

Germany has to maintain a delicate balance between its interests and the apprehensions of its neighbours. The course which Berlin takes will have a huge impact on the region as well as on the rest of the world.

Washington's German policy has more or less been successful. It has been tremendously beneficial for the United States. Critics have questioned the importance of the policy towards Germany. While the United States' foreign policy has had numerous flaws, its relationship with Germany since 1945 has been remarkable. The US commitment to Germany likely intensified the Cold War in Europe, resulting in increasing tensions, an accelerated arms race, and a more inflexible division of the continent.

The relationship between Germany and Russia is characterized by past grievances and a shifted public opinion against Russia's aggressive actions in Ukraine. The states must strike a delicate equilibrium between preserving economic ties and retaining a position against human rights abuses and expansionist designs. The current German administration, under the leadership of Chancellor Olaf Scholz, has implemented changes to its foreign and security policy, explicitly rejecting the longstanding concept of a unique and economically interdependent relationship with Russia. This decision overturns three decades of German policy, which previously emphasized economic considerations over geopolitical ones.

“Invoking the far-reaching German word of “*Zeitenwende*” (turning point), Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced the unexpected and unprecedented increase in defence spending in his seminal speech at the German Bundestag. He promised to set up a special fund of €100 billion for the armed forces and pledged to fulfil NATO's 2% annual spending target on defence. This all marks a major turning

point in Germany's post-Cold War foreign and security policy."⁹

China's ascent to power has presented Germany with a new predicament, as Germany's economic allure and alignment with the Western countries have ensnared Berlin in a challenging position. The outcome of Germany's management of these relationships will be crucial in determining its success in the emerging Cold War.

France

France occupies an important square in the chessboard of this new Cold War. Its carefully managed collaboration with powerful global actors like the US, Russia, and China has kept hostilities away from its territory. However, the dwindling popularity of President Macron, economic inequality, and the growing influence of populist factions augur a difficult period ahead. Despite its strong military capabilities, there is discomfort in Paris due to US unilateralism and the growing Chinese footprint around the globe.

France will have to balance these contradictions. Whereas Washington's unilateralism generates anxiety, yet, France backs NATO which stands on the United States' economic and security contribution. After the war, France emphasized protecting its territory and status among the European states. Dealing with a defeated Germany, a threat to national and economic security, hinted at future difficulties between the United States and France. Charles de Gaulle, the president of France, agreed to punish Germany to avoid another war. Soon after, this strategy came to a head with the Americans, who wanted to rebuild Germany to kick-start Europe's economy and divide it into occupation zones between the Allies.¹⁰ As historian Frank Costigliola described

“When it came to Germany, Americans, and French operated on different wavelengths...having experienced two German invasions of France in his lifetime, de Gaulle hoped to detach the Rhineland from Germany, set up

⁹ Mark C. Fischer, Peter Walkenhorst. “Germany's 180° Turn on Foreign and Security Policy in the Wake of Russia's War Against Ukraine.” *Global Europe* (March 11, 2022).

¹⁰ Christopher Chau. “Cost of Imperialism: The Decline of French-American Relations During the Cold War,” *Strategic Visions* 17, No.2 (May 2018). https://tuljournals.temple.edu/index.php/strategic_visions/article/view/91.

international control of the coal-rich Ruhr, and divide the rest of the Reich into dependent states. France wanted a large and secure supply of coal as reparation for its late enemy. If allowed to reunite, the four zones of Germany might ally with Moscow and 'be even more dangerous than in the past,' the Frenchman warned."¹¹

The relationship between Russia and France is characterized by skepticism and careful involvement. France strongly condemns human rights violations and Ukrainian aggression, while actively pursuing diplomatic solutions and ensuring the continued import of essential energy resources.

France's potential to transform its current energy and enthusiasm into worldwide influence hinges on its capacity to manage these intricate connections, diplomatic complexities, multilateralism, and the harnessing of both its financial and military prowess.

Poland

Poland is a major force in Eastern Europe and an important partner for the United States and NATO in their fight against Russia's expansionist goals. Poland, which was once governed by the Nazis and the Soviets, is modernizing to reclaim itself as a major military power in Europe. Despite rising economic growth and worries about democratic processes, Poland remains a staunch US and NATO partner. Its desire for more autonomy in the EU can be seen in judicial reforms and the rule of law. Poland actively promotes Eastern European unity within its region and endeavours to influence the political trajectory of the post-Soviet territory.

Poland's strategic location, dynamic economy, and dedication to national interests are its greatest strengths. Nevertheless, its final course and sphere of influence will be dictated by its ability to strike a balance among its ambitions, alliances, and internal pressures. The US can no longer rely on the backing of France and Germany, the two leading EU countries. They intend to reassert their warm relationship with Russia and resume business as usual as it was before the events in Ukraine. They are all apprehensive about the US dominance in Europe. France and Germany may act otherwise, but the

¹¹ Frank Costigliola. *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance Since World War II* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 48.

three of them are dead set on the idea that Ukraine should capitulate.¹² NATO countries such as the UK and Poland are the only ones willing to stand up to Russian imperialism, with Sweden and Finland set to follow soon. Other European countries have business ties with Russia.

The dramatically changed political situation in Eastern Europe caused by Russia's renewed expansionism since the early 2010s has in Poland's eyes vindicated its longstanding fear and anxiety about Russian behaviour. For example, before Russia's Feb. 24 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Poland had been planning to increase defence spending from the 2% of its GDP required by NATO to 2.5%. But in mid-March, both chambers of the country's normally highly polarized parliament unanimously passed a "Homeland Defense Bill" that boosts defence spending to 3% of the GDP.¹³

Poland manages its complicated relationships with key players of the new era namely, the US, Russia, and China as it rises in stature in the new phase. Belonging to NATO can be the best platform as the US has shared cultural and security interests with its members.

Poland's post-1989 foreign policy objective was "Euro-Atlantic integration" via NATO and European Union membership. Security considerations, as well as economic and cultural factors, prompted the return to Europe following Soviet subjugation.

Russia's historical grievances and unresolved tensions impede cooperation, whereas Poland's aspirations for European autonomy challenge American preeminence. Although China's economic alliances might act as checks on Western dominance, tensions arise due to ideological differences and worries about human rights. Keeping this delicate balance is crucial if Poland wants to exert influence. It may even become a bridge between the European Union and NATO.

Potential for Cooperation between Germany and the United States

Germany has undergone a significant transformation from a formidable rival to a recipient of significant aid, establishing itself as a dependable ally

¹² John Zylinski. "Why Poland Will be Europe's New Super Power," *The Article* (July 16, 2022). <https://www.thearticle.com/why-poland-will-be-europes-new-superpower>.

¹³ Luka Ivan Jukic. "How Poland Became a Major European Player," *News Lines Institute*, (April 20, 2022).

throughout the international contest with the Soviet Union. It became a strong player in the international economy after the Cold War. It has been a crucial factor in shaping American foreign policy for more than a century. What is advantageous for Germany in its domestic environment, its place in Europe, and its relationship with the United States on the global stage?

The United States and Germany have multiple common objectives, such as, promoting unrestricted commerce, mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, and enhancing cybersecurity. The Cold War saw the establishment of an alliance between the two former enemy nations, along with the establishment of international institutions and channels of communication that still shape the transatlantic relationship: NATO, the Fulbright Program, America Houses, the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program, and so on.¹⁴

The transatlantic relationship in the twenty-first century has grown economically and politically around the US - German alliance. The United States and Germany still consider each other trustworthy allies, even though they had their differences about the war in Iraq. However, when compared to Americans, Germans are a little more wary about the partnership. Domestic concerns are taking center stage as the German-American-Russian triangle dominates global politics. Recent events in Ukraine, where sanctions against Russia were imposed due to Moscow's involvement in the conflict, have brought these issues to the forefront. Germany and Russia are geographically and economically close, thus, both have a stake in the conflict.

Germany and Russia

German-Russian relations have always been characterized by contradictory feelings, in which admiration and dislike, and fear and romantic attachment have intertwined rather than alternated.¹⁵ Even while there are still political problems, there are also opportunities for cooperation between Russia and

¹⁴ Jacob Eder. "Getting Over the Cold War. Why German-American Relations Need a New Narrative," *AGI*, (December 2018). <https://americangerman.institute/2018/12/getting-over-the-cold-war-why-german-american-relations-need-a-new-narrative/>.

¹⁵ Karl Schlogel. *Russian-German Special Relations in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006). See also Alexander Andreev. "Historian: Russia can't offer Eastern Europe much," interview with Gerd Koenen, *DW*, April 2015. <https://www.dw.com/en/gerd-koenen-putin-doesnt-have-much-to-offer-eastern-europe/a-18359847>.

Germany. Among the most important areas is trade, with Germany serving as Russia's principal commercial partner. Efforts might be pooled to support economic reforms, upgrade infrastructure, and increase economic diversification in Russia.

Russian-German relations were formally based on economic ties in the region. After Russia invaded Ukraine, the economic-political model between Russia and Germany and the political model between Russia and the United States quickly fell apart. The economic safety net that Moscow had used to get out of its way backfired. When it comes to political resistance and sanctions against Russia, Germany is now a major player. German actions were swiftly misunderstood by the Russian authorities as a sign of Berlin's US-centric allegiance, which ran counter to German interests. Germany is now one of the key drivers of sanctions and political opposition against Russia: a position buttressed by Germany's moral tenets and history, hence its somewhat greater caution on defensive weapons shipments to Ukraine and more positive reception of those Russians who exhibit anti-war views.¹⁶

In addition, Germany's position as a mediator in European security conversations with Russia provides an opportunity to establish confidence through measures such as military exchanges and weapons control agreements, which might help reduce tensions.

China and Germany

The collaborative efforts between China and Germany have demonstrated their capacity to bring about significant changes by promoting economic growth, technological progress, environmental conservation, and cultural interchange. This collaborative framework serves as an inspiration for other countries to seek alliances that are advantageous to both parties, thereby making a positive contribution to the overall well-being, sustainability, and harmony of the international community. Both countries have fostered robust diplomatic and economic relations.

Cultural interchange and people-to-people diplomacy have been promoted by China and Germany alongside their economic and technological collaboration. Through the promotion of educational exchanges, cultural events, and intercultural dialogue, both countries have successfully fostered

¹⁶ Alexander Buanov. "Russia, 'The West' and Germany - Taking stock and looking ahead," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (June 7, 2023).

their relations theologically and intellectually. These interactions not only enhance the lives of the participants but also fortify the bilateral relationship in its entirety. They foster constructive discourse, dispel preconceived ideas, and establish the foundation for reciprocal alliances and regard.¹⁷

The German plan is to address security concerns in the region and engage China constructively in global governing affairs. Working together, they can raise awareness about the importance of resolving conflicts peacefully and ensuring that international law is respected, especially in disputes like the South China Sea.

France and the United States

The United States and France intend to achieve their shared goals of preserving stability, ensuring unrestricted access to the common areas of the Indo-Pacific, and averting nuclear proliferation in the area by collaborating with their regional allies and partners. However, it appears that the United States frequently disregards France as a power in the Indo-Pacific.¹⁸

France and the United States – both Indo-Pacific nations – are intent on working together to ensure peace, prosperity, and security in the region. Paris and Washington are also committed to expanding their diplomatic, economic, and development-related cooperation to boost resilience within their partner countries, especially the Pacific Island nations. They both agree on the challenge represented by China’s economic and military ambitions in the region and are continuing to work with China on major global challenges such as climate change.¹⁹

The United States and France both have less than stellar histories in the area, marred by colonization and contentious nuclear testing. The cessation of weapons testing and the ongoing discussions on the legality of each country's territories contributed to their increased regional acceptance as reliable partners. The unexpected rise of interest, however, has left many Pacific Island nations (PICs) on the edge.

¹⁷ Tayyaba Anwar. “China Germany Win-Win Cooperation,” *Modern Diplomacy* (September 5, 2023).

¹⁸ Stephanie Pezard. “Expanding Army Cooperation Between the United States and France in the Indo-Pacific.” RAND Corporation, (January 2023). https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1633-1.html.

¹⁹ <https://www.state.gov/on-consultations-with-france-on-the-indo-pacific/>.

France and Russia

The ambitions of the Napoleonic era to exert influence over Central and Eastern Europe were supported by the 18th-century influx of French intellectuals into Russia. In response to Russia's growing power, Britain and France went to war in the Crimean theatre. France and Russia were allies in the 1890s, and they opposed Germany from 1914 to 1918. The French were unable to unite in opposition to Nazi Germany following the 1930s. France backed the United States in NATO after 1945. Warm, although not particularly warm, ties have persisted since 1989.

French policy on the conflict in Ukraine remains unchanged from its long-standing stance as a leading European power. "France is known for its unique approaches." This is the most direct way in which France's policies annoy its allies, be it concerning Russia, NATO, Ukraine, or the global order in general. More so than in the past, this is the reality. This explains why when France takes a diplomatic stance, people react with shock, bewilderment, condemnation, and, on rare occasions, admiration.²⁰

The heritage of Russia offers prospects for cooperation in energy-reliant sectors such as pipeline safety and diversification. France, an advocate of diplomacy and multilateralism, endeavours to resolve regional difficulties by diplomatic means and counterterrorism efforts, showcasing its commitment to a system of international governance based on rules, despite the obstacles it faces.

France and China

China and France have maintained a strong and collaborative relationship in various fields since establishing diplomatic ties 59 years ago. Both countries have consistently worked together towards common goals, resulting in several notable accomplishments. The bilateral trade volume between China and France surpassed \$80 billion in 2021, while the figure between China and Europe had a 27.5 per cent gain, surpassing the \$800 billion mark.²¹ France and China have achieved substantial advancements in collaboration

²⁰ Nicole Gnesotto. "Relations With Russia: France's Unique Position," (March 24, 2023). <https://institutdelors.eu/en/publications/relations-avec-la-russie-une-singularite-francaise/>

²¹ "China and France to Advance Bilateral Trade and Economic Cooperation." 9 May 2024, Xinhua english.news.cn/20240509/ffe762d4ffd04225a583bb7aeb9a7a1a/c.html.

in multiple domains, encompassing trade, research, technological advances, aviation, and infrastructure.

In 2022, the most recent data from France revealed that the total value of products traded between the two countries surpassed €100 billion (\$109.5 billion) for the first time. Specifically, it reached €101.8 billion, indicating a 14.6 per cent rise compared to the previous year. During the signing ceremony of several significant cooperation agreements with French President Emmanuel Macron on April 6, 2023, Chinese President Xi Jinping expressed that China's commitment to achieving high-quality growth and implementing high-standard opening-up policies will provide France with expanded market prospects.²²

Poland and the United States

The U.S. and Polish governments have worked closely together throughout the last 30 years. The United States was a staunch supporter of Poland's 1999 NATO membership and 2004 EU membership. The military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, which were spearheaded by the United States and NATO, were greatly assisted by Poland. In the aftermath of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the United States and Poland maintained their tight cooperation on various matters of international security and foreign policy. U.S. President Joe Biden made his second trip to Poland in eleven months in February 2023.²³

After Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, Poland became an important factor in NATO's backing of the Ukrainian cause. Poland has taken in the largest number of Ukrainian refugees due to its role as a logistical hub and major supplier of military aid. Polish officials have repeatedly asked the European Union to punish Russia with severe penalties. Defence sales consisting of F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, Patriot air and missile defence systems, HIMARS, and Abrams main battle tanks have been made by the United States, which has been significant in Poland's military modernization plans.²⁴

²² "China-France Relations Full of Vitality, Potential in a New Era." *CGTN*, 7 April 2023. <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2023-04-06/China-France-relations-full-of-vitality-potential-in-new-era-1iMW5JdKC9W/index.html>.

²³ Dere. E. Mix. "Poland: Background and U.S. Relations" 25 June 2025. Available at <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45784/1>

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Building an LNG facility and pipeline are only two examples of Poland's attempts to wean itself off of its oil and natural gas imports from Russia. Along with this, Poland has announced an agreement with Westinghouse to construct six nuclear reactors by the middle of the 2040s.

At their best, the US-Polish relations have been driven by profound strategic commonality. Both countries developed strategic cultures that, despite inconsistencies, link national interests with universal values, including democracy and the rule of law.²⁵

Poland and Russia

Russia and Poland have a troubled past filled with resentment and trauma that has never been healed. The "reset" in the relationship that had begun in 2007 abruptly ended with the 2014 annexation of Crimea. Poland has been decisively opposed to Russia since the start of hostilities in Ukraine and a vocal supporter of Kyiv ever since.

Four elements have contributed to the current Polish-Russian conflict: differing views on history, Poland's involvement in Ukraine, concerns about energy policy, and Poland's criticism of Russia's Chechen policies. These variances stem from Moscow's uncertainties on the 1920 fate of Russian POWs, Russia's mixed feelings about the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, and Russia's idealization of the post-war division of Europe at Yalta.²⁶

Poland and China

The relationship between Poland and China has to be analyzed on two primary levels: at the global level and the practical interactions between the two countries. The latter, alas, frequently takes precedence over the former when it comes to actually putting policies into action. This is particularly true because the geopolitical situation is becoming more and more tense between the United States and China, and the war in Ukraine has far-reaching effects on Polish society, politics, and the economy.

²⁵ Atlantic Council, "Poland and the United States: What's Right, What's Not, and What's Next," Issue Brief (July 2021). <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Poland-and-the-United-States.pdf>.

²⁶ Kai-Ola Lang. *Poland and the East: Poland's relations with Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine in the context of European*. Research Report, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), 2005.

Following the Cold War, Poland entered NATO and the European Union, crafting close ties with the United States. Polish officials, in contrast to their counterparts in Germany, France, and Italy, have acknowledged Russia's danger to the sovereignty of nations in Central and Eastern Europe. As a result of China's fast economic growth after 1989, Poland's growing ties with the country have centered on trade, economics, and scientific cooperation, which has been expanding annually.²⁷

Conflicts

The rise of Germany, France, and Poland as an important player in the new era presents both prospects for cooperation and the possibility of discord with the major powers – the United States, Russia, and China. Several factors can give birth to these conflicts, including persistent historical disputes, competing interests in specific regions, and diverse approaches to a variety of important topics.

Russia is exercising huge influence on Europe through the use of its energy leverage. Following the conflict in Ukraine, the United States and its allies have increased the economic sanctions that they had imposed on Russia. In reaction to the restrictions that were imposed on it, Russia used its energy leverage to exert pressure on European countries, which were highly reliant on Moscow's supply of gas and oil. Not only did the European population have a dread that the war would get more intense and expand throughout Europe, but they also had a significant concern regarding the use of energy, specifically in the extremely cold winters. Russia is a supplier of gas to Europe which reaches places as far as London. As a result of this anxiety, Europe had become so concerned that it decided to refrain from relying on Russia for the supply of gas.

Despite Russia's war on Ukraine, the European population is becoming more open to the idea of working together. They maintain their neutrality in any future confrontations between the United States and China and are mindful of China's economic presence. On the other hand, they are apprehensive about the possibility of China delivering weapons to Russia. Leaders in Europe need to have a clear understanding of the public's intentions and speak openly about how they want to engage China, the United States, and Russia.

²⁷ Alicja Bachulska. "Beyond Business as usual: A China Strategy for Poland," (December 2023). <https://ecfr.eu/article/beyond-business-as-usual-a-china-strategy-for-poland/>.

As a result of their fragile connections with major actors in the new era, Berlin's Nord Stream 2 Pipeline may face an intense situation. These confrontations could potentially damage the relationship between Ukraine and Poland as well as Germany's dependence on Russia.

France has a robust naval force in the Indo-Pacific region. Paris actively upholds the principle of unrestricted maritime navigation. It frequently encounters conflicts with Chinese territorial assertions in the South China Sea. In addition, France has been vocal on the issue of human rights in its international dealings with China.

Conclusion

These three important players in the new power tussle are involved in complex relationships with the emerging European powers. The dynamics of the twenty-first century are drastically different from those of the twentieth. There has been a shift in global politics. We live in a more interlinked world than in the past. These superpowers' complex web of global economic interests and interconnectedness likely help them avoid getting entangled in the crisis. When the leaders' countries have an impact on international issues, it usually changes their foreign policy. The United States, which was once the dominant power in the globe, is now fighting for relevance by forming alliances and dominating global blocs, particularly in Europe. Through their partnership with the US, European states like France, Germany, and Poland have emerged as major players on the international stage. China aspires to control global politics and trade as it emerges as an economic giant. To achieve this goal, China needs support from both developed and developing countries. Investments in seaports and commercial routes amounting to billions of dollars are being made. In its expansionist mentality, Russia seeks to dominate the United States and its allies around the globe. It would appear that Russia and China are both participating in the new Cold War, with both countries seeking to expand their spheres of influence in Europe and forge alliances with other rising states. With these powers quickly rising to dominance, the world is anticipating a new global order that will be shaped by these changes.