



New Hybrid CoE Research Report: Russia and China as hybrid threat actors – a growing alignment for a joint revisionism?

The present state and future direction of collaboration between China and Russia are subject to an intense debate. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has created new global dynamics of (re-) alignment. To understand what drives Chinese and Russian hybrid threat activities vis-à-vis democracies, an analysis of underlying domestic factors is essential.

The new Hybrid CoE Research Report by **Jukka Aukia**, Senior Analyst, and **Lucjan Kubica**, Deputy Director of Research and Analysis, discusses the underlying logic and narratives of authoritarian rule in Russia and China. The report analyzes the doctrines and worldviews – both common and contrasting – which inform attitudes and which are used to justify hybrid threat activities.

Both China and Russia pursue revisionist policies, seeking to strengthen their leadership's grip on power and to revise the global rules-based order, which does not chime with their vision of a "great power" future. **The main findings and conclusions are as follows:**

- Russia and China are post-totalitarian authoritarian regimes, which have never clearly broken with their totalitarian legacies. **In both states, the leadership has used the theme of national "exceptionalism" to deepen authoritarian rule and to centralize power.**
- Achievements of local/domestic civilizations are presented in stark contrast to so-called "Western" – namely universal – values, including human rights, the rule of law and democracy. National "exceptionalism" is exploited to legitimize and defend the elites' grip on power. **Regime survival, in turn, is the driving force behind aggressive foreign policy conduct.**
- **The so-called "West" is portrayed and perceived as the biggest external threat.** Notions about the West as a threat extend to the subverting/corrupting influence on culture and on a particular way of life, thus deflecting from motivations of regime survival.
- **Leadership personalities play an important role in both countries.** Even though Xi Jinping plays an ever-larger role, Beijing still stresses economic success narratives, whereas Russia's system relies entirely on the success of its charismatic leader.
- Strongmen in Moscow and Beijing alike aspire to exert control over sovereign states in their "sphere of influence". **To this end, they make use of a claim to "great power" status, and pose as sole defenders of civilizational achievements.** This fact also explains the suspicion towards Western policies of cooperation in these "spheres".
- **The shared goal and motivating factor behind Sino-Russian cooperation is to change the international system towards "multipolarity"** – by and large a code for diminished US influence. **The binding force of the common goal is still sufficient to downplay existing differences** (e.g. in the Arctic or in Central Asia), at least in the short term.

The full research report can be downloaded [here](#).