Clingendael
Russia & Eastern Europe Centre

Clingendael Alert

JUNE 2024

# A Chinese Tributary? The Consequences of Moscow's Increased Dependence on Beijing

Kaspar Pucek*

Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping having tea at the garden of Zhongnanhai (2024-05-16) © Wikimedia Commons

On February 24, 2022, Russia delivered a major geopolitical shock to the European continent by launching a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, thereby starting the largest armed conflict in Europe since the Second World War. But Europe was not the only region where geopolitics shifted profoundly as a result of President Vladimir Putin's fateful decision to attack Ukraine. On the other side of the vast Eurasian landmass, in East Asia, massive Western sanctions gave rise to an unprecedented Russian dependence on China. While sanctions were meant to economically destabilize Russia and to hamper its war effort in Ukraine, they unintentionally greatly accelerated Moscow's "turn to the East" (*povorot na Vostok*) and took it much farther than the Kremlin had ever intended.

* In writing this paper, the author benefited greatly from doing interviews with Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova, Alexander Gabuev, Marcin Kaczmarski, Janis Kluge, and Alexandra Prokopenko. The paper does not, however, necessarily reflect the opinions of the interviewees. The author is also grateful to Raoul Bunskoek, Ties Dams, Sense Hofstede, Rem Korteweg, Xiaoxue Martin, and Tony van der Togt for commenting on a draft of this paper. All interpretations and any mistakes are, of course, fully the author's own responsibility.

While the Kremlin and its Chinese counterpart, Zhongnanhai, have referred to this new reality within the framework of a strategic partnership, which mere weeks before the invasion was announced to have "no limits," outside of Russia and China analysts have used less flattering descriptors of Sino-Russian relations that emphasize the substantial asymmetries between both parties. A common phrase to describe Russia's relationship with China is as a "junior partner," while some have gone further by calling Russia a Chinese "vassal"[1] or even a potential "economic colony of China."[2] But how dependent is Russia really on China and what leverage does this give Beijing over Moscow? To what extent does the Kremlin see this as a problem to address? And what implications does this have for Western policymakers?

## 1. The Ties that Bind

At the core of Russia's growing dependence on the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the deepening of economic ties, against the background of the asymmetry between both countries in terms of the size of their respective populations and economies, and the technological level of their industrial output. This development is the result of Beijing's refusal to join the West's sanctions' regime and its willingness to instead prop up the Putin regime and substantially deepen economic relations. At a deeper, more structural level, it is also rooted in the high levels of compatibility between the Russian and Chinese economies – the former being primarily a raw material and energy exporter and an importer of manufactures and capital, while the latter is a net importer of raw materials and energy and an exporter of manufactures and capital. From Russia's perspective, China can thus play a crucial role in replacing Europe as a key export market for its commodities, as well as an import market for technologies and capital that the Russian economy is sorely lacking domestically. As such, the trade compatibility between both countries reflects the diverging trajectories of the Russian and Chinese economies in recent decades, with the former becoming an increasingly de-industrialized primary commodity exporter, while the latter has been successfully moving up the technological value chain.

Sino-Russian trade has reached record heights since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Total trade turnover ballooned from a prewar record of $147 billion in 2021 to $190 billion in 2022 and then to $241 billion in 2023.[3] Moreover, this trade has rapidly become mainly yuan-based, accelerating the de-dollarization of the Russian economy that started in response to the Western sanctions imposed in 2014, following Russia's annexation of Crimea and armed support for rebels in Ukraine's Donbas region. At the same time, the relative weight of this bilateral trade is highly unequal. In 2023, the Chinese market accounted for 36.5% of Russia's imports and 30.5% of its exports, while Russia made up just over 4% of China's foreign trade.[4] In short, while China has become by far Russia's main trade partner, the same cannot be said in reverse.

Hydrocarbons, and primarily oil, dominate Russia's exports to China, accounting for about three-fourths of them. Metals and ores are but a distant second.[5] Russia's exports of crude oil to China increased from an average of 1.59 million barrels per day (mb/d) in 2021,

1 William J. Burns, "Spycraft and Statecraft: Transforming the CIA for an Age of Competition," *Foreign Affairs*, January 30, 2024; Alexander Gabuev, "China's New Vassal: How the War in Ukraine Turned Moscow Into Beijing's Junior Partner," *Foreign Affairs*, August 9, 2022; Alexander Gabuev, "Putin and Xi's Unholy Alliance: Why the West Won't Be Able to Drive a Wedge Between Russia and China," *Foreign Affairs*, April 9, 2024.

2 Tristan Bove, "Russia could become an 'economic colony' of China, according to CIA director," *Fortune*, April 12, 2023.

3 Janis Kluge, "How Western Sanctions are Transforming Sino-Russian Economic Cooperation," ISPI, July 17, 2023; Janis Kluge, *Russia-China Economic Relations: Moscow's Road to Economic Dependence*, SWP Research Paper (May 2024), 10.

4 Kluge, *Russia-China Economic Relations*, 10.

5 Kluge, *Russia-China Economic Relations*, 10; Sergey Radchenko, "The Sino-Russian Relationship: It's Complicated," The Asan Forum, November 29, 2023.

to 1.73 mb/d in 2022, and 2.14 mb/d in 2023.[6] According to Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, around 45-50% of Russian oil exports went to China in 2023, which, together with India, accounted for about 90% of Russian crude exports.[7] Meanwhile, Russian exports of pipeline gas to China increased from around 10 billion cubic meters (bcm) in 2021 to 15.4 bcm in 2022 and 22.7 bcm in 2023, making China the largest importer of Russian pipeline gas.[8] Russian exports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to China increased by 44% in 2022 and another 23% in 2023. Due to rising prices, the value of the energy trade increased even faster than the volume.[9] Together, these hydrocarbon exports (and in particular the oil exports) are crucial to the Russian economy, accounting for about a fifth of Russian GDP, and between 30% and 50% of the Russian state budget (41.6% in 2022).[10]

In return, Russia imports key technologies from China, such as machinery, vehicles, machine tools and electronics, as well as capital.[11] These imports are crucial to the Russian economy, which is hampered by weak advanced manufacturing capabilities and shallow capital markets. In these and other sectors, Chinese enterprises and banks are filling the gaps left by Western companies. In addition to Chinese goods, Russia is also importing sanctioned Western dual-use goods through China. Although China is not the only hub through which such parallel imports are reaching Russia, it is the largest one. In fact, only North Korea is more dependent on imports from China than Russia.

In addition to goods, Russia also imports Chinese capital. As Western sanctions largely cut Russia off from Western financial markets, Chinese banks have emerged as the main foreign source of capital in the Russian economy. At the same time, worries about possible US secondary sanctions seem to be significantly hampering the ability of Chinese banks to provide more liquidity to the Russian economy. Meanwhile, in combination with the "yuanization" of Sino-Russian trade, the role of the yuan in Russia's foreign currency reserves is also increasing, although the Bank of Russia refuses to provide precise data. The downside for Russia is that the yuan is not as fully convertible nor as universally accepted as the US dollar and the euro. Moreover, the yuan's exchange rate is tightly managed by the People's Bank of China, which is also much less transparent and less politically independent than its American and European counterparts. This raises the risk of abrupt, politically decreed exchange rate devaluations that could devalue Russian yuan reserves and deposits.

It is not just the volume and make-up of trade that makes China indispensable for Russia, but also the asymmetry in alternative trade partners, which Russia is sorely lacking. Options for Russia to diversify beyond China are seriously limited, as there are no good substitutes for both China and the West in terms of export markets for Russian commodities or sources of technology and capital imports. To begin with, no other country than China has such a large market for Russia's key exports and is so geographically close and relatively well-connected to Russia. Moreover, China produces a greater range of key manufactures, as well as generally higher-quality machine tools and electronics, than other non-Western trade partners of Russia. And because China is so deeply integrated with

6 "Asian buyers of Russian oil, gas and coal," *Reuters*, April 6, 2022; Andrew Hayley, "China defies sanctions to make Russia its biggest oil supplier in 2023," *Reuters*, January 22, 2024; Henrik Wachtmeister, *Russia-China energy relations since 24 February: Consequences and options for Europe*, NKK/SCEEUS Report No.1 (June 2023), 13.

7 Vladimir Soldatkin and Olesya Astakhova, "Russia exports almost all its oil to China and India – Novak," *Reuters*, December 27, 2023.

8 "Russian pipeline gas exports to China hit new daily record: Gazprom," *S&P Global*, February 1, 2024; "Russia's Gazprom breaks daily record for gas supply to China," *Reuters*, January 3, 2024.

9 "Russian LNG exports to China rise by 23% in 2023 — Chinese customs," *TASS*, January 20, 2024; Wachtmeister, *Russia-China energy relations*, 20.

10 Filip Rudnik, "Partial success: Russia's oil sector adapts to sanctions," Centre for Eastern Studies, August 9, 2023; Vitaly Yermakov, *Follow the Money: Understanding Russia's oil and gas revenues*, The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies (March 2024).

11 The bulk of Russia's imports from China consists of machinery (23% in 2023), vehicles (21%), and electronics (15%). See Kluge, *Russia-China Economic Relations*, 10.

Western supply chains, a lot of Western products and components that Russia badly needs are readily available there.

## 2. China's Levers of Influence

The combination of Russia's substantially increased economic dependence on China, the authoritarian nature of the Chinese political system, and the deep societal reach of the Chinese Party-state provides Zhongnanhai with some big levers over the Kremlin. After all, Beijing could, if it wanted to, limit exports of key technologies and capital upon which the Russian economy strongly depends. It could also limit imports of Russian energy and raw materials, in particular oil and gas, thereby dealing a serious blow to Russian state revenues. And it could obstruct Russian attempts to sell off its yuan reserves or engineer the exchange rate of its currency in favor of its own balance of trade. In all these cases, Moscow would be hard-pressed to find alternatives to cushion the blow. However, using these levers to influence the Kremlin's behavior is more complicated.

Thus far there are few signs that Beijing has been trying to use this leverage to pressure the Kremlin into adopting policies that are particularly favorable to China at Moscow's expense. While analysts have speculated that Beijing could, among other things, force Moscow to accept a Chinese military presence in the Russian Arctic and/or Central Asia, to come out strongly in support of Beijing's claim over territories in the South China Sea, or to limit its relations with India and/or Vietnam, none of these things have happened so far.

The reason behind Beijing's reluctance to convert its substantial commercial leverage into political influence lies in Russia's outsized strategic importance to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime as a result of the rising tensions between the PRC and the United States in recent years. While the official rhetoric of an unlimited partnership is clearly exaggerated, it nonetheless points to certain geopolitical realities. By seeking to strengthen its influence in post-Soviet Eurasia, the Middle East, and Africa, while deepening its ties with China, Russia has increasingly become a key partner to Beijing in challenging America's global power, distracting the US away from the Pacific, and preventing it from effectively containing China's rise. Within this context, Russia is also an important resource and energy supplier to the PRC, with the added benefit that these supply lines lie beyond the reach of the US Navy. A close, personal friendship between Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping has further solidified these ties.

This means that Beijing has a clear stake in the stability of the Putin regime, and in particular in preventing a pro-Western regime change in Moscow. In addition, the specter of large-scale regional instability following a potential Russian collapse seems to worry Chinese policymakers, especially in the wake of the Prigozhin mutiny of June 2023. Given the fact that Zhongnanhai is preparing for a protracted geopolitical competition with the US, it cannot allow itself to be distracted by a hostile or unstable Russia to its north, with which it shares a border that is more than 4,000 kilometers long. Moreover, Beijing presumably wants the sanctions against Russia to fail and thus for economic sanctions to be discredited as a policy tool in the eyes of Western policymakers and publics, out of fear of one day having to face such punitive measures itself.

Even if Beijing wanted to subjugate Moscow, it is far from clear that it would succeed. For all the asymmetries, Russia is not China's Belarus. The power imbalance between Beijing and Moscow is not as dramatic as between Moscow and Minsk. Equally important is the fact that Russian political elites, as well as the population at large, widely consider their country to be a sovereign great power equal to – or at least playing in the same league as – China and the United States. Russia's great power status is not so much a policy option as a broadly shared, core aspect of its national identity. As the unfolding of the conflict between Russia and the West in recent years has already shown, Moscow is not prone to back down when it considers its status as a sovereign, strategically autonomous great power to be threatened, even when this comes at substantial costs.

But while Russia will not become a Chinese satellite state any time soon, Beijing will likely find ways to exploit the leverage it holds vis-à-vis Moscow without directly undermining their strategic partnership. Rather than making very dramatic and risky moves, Zhongnanhai is more likely to incrementally and in a limited way push its demands onto the Kremlin. This type of leverage is currently mostly visible in the commercial sphere. Thus, despite its willingness to increase imports of Russian energy and other raw materials, China has been more than happy to import Russian oil at steep discounts. Such behavior has not been without precedent. Already back in 2011, Beijing used Russia's lack of alternative buyers of the oil coming out of the new Eastern Siberia–Pacific Ocean oil pipeline to browbeat the Russians into giving a discount on these crude supplies.

A similar story has been unfolding in the natural gas trade. In the wake of the 2014 "Ukraine crisis," Beijing agreed to sign a long-term contract for a new gas pipeline from eastern Siberia to northeastern China called Power of Siberia. The project has enabled Russia to alleviate its dependence on the European gas market. At the same time, Beijing imposed a price formula on the exports through the pipeline that called into question the profitability of the project for the Russian side. More recently, Beijing has refused to sign a long-term contract for a second Power of Siberia pipeline through Mongolia, which would substantially expand Russia's gas export capabilities to China by adding another 50 bcm to the first Power of Siberia's projected annual capacity of 38 bcm. Opinions have been divided on whether Beijing is stalling because it wants a better deal, because it does not want to further harm its commercial relations with Europe, or because it does not want the pipeline at all: it may not need the additional gas or may not want to make itself overly dependent on Russia as a supplier. Recently, it has been reported that the project is not moving forward because of what Moscow sees as Beijing's unreasonable demands, as China allegedly only wants to commit to buying a fraction of the pipeline's annual supply capacity at prices approximating Russia's heavily subsidized domestic rates.[12]

Russian concessions to Chinese demands are likely to accumulate over time as Sino-Russian ties deepen within this framework of profound asymmetry. Moreover, Beijing's demands could easily spill over beyond the commercial sphere as well. Many analysts believe, for instance, that growing Chinese pressure played a role in Moscow's decision to sell advanced military technology to Beijing following Russia's 2014 intervention in Ukraine, after having long been unwilling to do so. The sales included a warning system for ballistic missiles, S-400 air defense systems, and SU-35 fighter planes. Moscow's recent official statements regarding Taiwan seem to similarly indicate that the Kremlin increasingly feels the need to pay tribute to Zhongnanhai. In the joint communique from Putin's May 2024 visit to Beijing, Russia not only reaffirmed its adherence to the one-China principle, but also stated that it "firmly supports the actions of the Chinese side to protect its own sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as to unify the country."[13]

## 3. Russia's Misgivings and Potential Sources of Tension

So far, neither President Putin nor the people around him have said much about Russia's increased dependence on China following its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. But that does not mean that the Kremlin does not understand what is happening or that it simply does not care. In November 2023, Putin quite clearly justified Russia's level of dependence

12 Max Seddon, Anastasia Stognei, Henry Foy, and Joe Leahy, "Russia-China gas pipeline deal stalls over Beijing's price demands," *Financial Times*, June 2, 2024.

13 President of Russia, "Sovmestnoe zaiavlenie Rossiiskoi Federatsii i Kitaiskoi Narodnoi Respubliki ob uglublenii otnoshenii vseob"emliushchego partnerstva i strategicheskogo vzaimodeistviia, vstupaiushchikh v novuiu epokhu, v kontekste 75-letiia ustanovleniia diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii mezhdu dvumia stranami," May 16, 2024. See also Arran Hope, "Shifting Discourse Between Xi and Putin on Ukraine," *China Brief*, Jamestown Foundation, May 24, 2024.

on China through the historical analogy of the medieval Russian prince Alexander Nevksy, who accepted vassalage to the Mongol Khan in order to defeat the Teutonic Knights. Similarly, Putin implied, Russia was now withstanding a new Western assault by putting itself in a subordinate position to the modern-day Eastern power, China.[14] Moreover, although fears of Chinese mass migration to the Russian Far East have subsided, prior to the war there were still many voices inside the Russian political system cautioning against excessive dependence on China or otherwise concerned about China's growing clout and assertiveness. Such worries, although now silenced, can be presumed to have increased since February 24, 2022. Indeed, these concerns are still being voiced by the Russian foreign-policy expert and think tank communities and even inside at least some of the central governing institutions in Moscow.[15]

Rather than a lack of understanding of, or apprehension about, the new realities, the Kremlin's relative silence regarding Russia's growing dependence on China reflects the regime's priority in facing what it sees as the Western threat, coupled with its lack of alternatives in the short run and the tolerability of Beijing's demands so far. Nonetheless, the Putin regime's apparent complacency with its increased dependence on Beijing hides at least two important potential sources of tension that could surface again in the longer run. The first and foremost one is Russia's self-perception as a sovereign great power that should have strategic autonomy in global affairs. Putin has made it abundantly clear throughout the years that he does not want to be anyone's junior partner, and that attitude is shared widely among the Russian political establishment. Rather than playing second fiddle to either Beijing or Washington, Moscow wants to be part of a concert of powers alongside the United States and China.

In line with this, Russia's Eastern pivot was always meant to balance against the West, not to replace it. Initially, in the wake of the global financial crisis of 2008-9, this was primarily a matter of limiting exposure to Western economic and financial turbulence, while benefiting from China's rapid and unobstructed rise. After 2014, the logic became more one of counterbalancing against an increasingly hostile West. Once the war in Ukraine ends or winds down, concern with Russia's dependence on China is likely to become more pronounced inside the Kremlin. Even if the CCP regime continues to play its cards cautiously, Russia's current level of dependence on China creates serious risks for Moscow, more so than Russia's dependence on the West did before 2014. First of all, the West is not a single country, and Russia has repeatedly tried to team up with European countries like Germany and France to balance against US power. Secondly, Western liberal democracies cannot easily turn policy around on a political leader's whim. And thirdly, Russian gas pipelines to Europe created mutual (though never fully symmetric) dependencies, which are much weaker in the case of China, even if a second Power of Siberia pipeline will be built.

A second potential source of tension is the limited prospect for economic development that Russia has, being cut off from the West and dependent on China. Apart from making it harder to placate key elites and the general population, Russia's current lack of economic and technological development will ultimately undermine or even endanger its great power status. Even though the Russian economy has weathered Western sanctions better than many expected, its current growth, fueled by military expenditures, is unsustainable. And while the key reasons behind Russia's economic stagnation over the past 10-15 years lie in the country's domestic institutional deficiencies that put breaks on investment and innovation, lost economic ties with the West have created additional obstacles for economic modernization that Russia's pivot to China will not be able to overcome. It was no

14 President of Russia, "Meeting with members of the Civic Chamber," November 3, 2024.

15 Roderick Kefferpütz and Yurii Poita, "Not all sunshine and roses – how Russian experts view China," MERICS, September 15, 2022; Alberto Nardelli, "Russian Memo Said War Leaves Moscow Too Reliant on Chinese Tech," *Bloomberg*, April 19, 2023.

coincidence that economic relations with the West, and Europe in particular, remained far more important for Russia than those with China before 2022, even after the fallout of 2014 and the subsequent imposition of Western sanctions.

China is a highly imperfect replacement for Russia's lost economic ties to the West. To begin with, expansion of trade relations with China is hindered by relatively high transportation costs, given that Russia's main economic hubs are in the western part of the country, close to Europe, as well as by a lack of infrastructure, which is most noticeable in the gas trade. Even with a second Power of Siberia pipeline Russia will not be able to compensate for the loss of the European gas market by either export volumes or profitability (Russian gas exports to Europe peaked at around 175-180 bcm in 2018-19, delivered overwhelmingly by pipeline),[16] not to mention that it would take many years to build the pipeline. The uncertain growth of China's economy in years to come adds further risks to Russia's dependence.

Perhaps even more problematic for Russia, however, are shortcomings in the imports of technology and capital from China, two key bottlenecks in the Russian economy given its lack of domestic innovation and shallow capital markets. China is incapable of producing certain technologies (or at least of the same quality) that Russia previously imported from the West, as is shown by Russia's continued reliance on parallel imports of products from the West. The extent of Chinese technological convergence with the West in the coming years and decades will partly determine the extent to which this problem can be mitigated. At the same time, the high level of integration of many Chinese firms into Western supply chains and markets has cautioned many Chinese firms from supplying sanctioned technologies to Russia.

Furthermore, Chinese investments in Russia are sorely lacking.[17] Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, no large investment project has been greenlit. Due to corruption and predation, the business climate in Russia is as unappealing as before, if not more so. And now that the Russian market, already small by Chinese standards, holds even less promise and with the risk of secondary sanctions on the Chinese financial sector increasing, capital inflows from China may remain limited. The retreat of Western companies and lack of Chinese investors, in turn, accelerates the erosion of Russia's civilian manufacturing industries and further strengthens the country's dependence on primary commodity exports – a trend that has been worrying the Kremlin for many years already.

These structural problems in Russia's dependence on China could prompt a search for détente with the West to rebalance its overreliance on China and to facilitate much-needed economic development. Of course, this could only happen once tensions between Russia and the West over Ukraine decrease. Putin, after all, did not intend that his full-scale invasion of Ukraine would lead to a breakdown in economic relations with the West; nor did he anticipate the scale of that breakdown. Already last year, Russia's 2023 "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation" laid out the aspiration to normalize relations with Europe.[18] To what extent the Kremlin will pursue such a course of seeking détente, however, will likely depend on various factors, such as the concessions it would have to make to the West, the intensity with which Beijing will push its own interests in Moscow, as well as the opportunities for trade expansion and technology transfer that China will offer in years to come.

16 "Russian pipeline gas exports to Europe down 56% in 2023 - Reuters calculations," *Reuters*, January 2, 2024; "Russia's Gazprom breaks daily record for gas supply to China," *Reuters*, January 3, 2024.

17 Kluge, *Russia-China Economic Relations*, 14-18.

18 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Kontseptsiia vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (utverzhdena Prezidentom Rossiiskoi Federatsii V.V.Putinym 31 marta 2023 g.)," March 23, 2023.

## 4. Implications for Western Policymakers

In response to the growing rapprochement between Russia and China, a lot of ink has recently been spilt on the need for the West to drive a wedge between the two. Given that Beijing has good strategic reasons to keep Russia close, while Moscow has no alternative to China in the short run, this, however, is beyond the capacity of the United States, EU, or G7 to achieve. The West can indeed try to make it more difficult for Moscow and Beijing to cooperate economically by threatening Chinese banks and enterprises with secondary sanctions, but even a thorough détente and normalization of diplomatic and economic relations between Russia and the West will not drive Zhongnanhai and the Kremlin apart. In the latter scenario, Moscow should be expected to aim to balance economically between China and the West, rather than abandoning China for the West – similar to how in the wake of the 2014 Ukraine crisis Russia aimed to use China to balance against, rather than abandon, the West. This would diminish Beijing's leverage, but not fully undo the ties that Russia and China have recently built. Moreover, it is questionable to what extent and how fast economic relations between Russia and the West could be restored, even once sanctions are lifted, since the lack of trust in Russia as a business partner and place to invest would linger on.

What the West *can* do, however, is diminish Russia's dependence on China through sanctions relief. After all, Western sanctions created that dependence to begin with, and Moscow, as argued above, has a clear interest in normalizing economic relations with Europe in particular. Rather than focusing on the unreachable goal of driving Moscow and Beijing apart, the policy debate should therefore pivot to the question what the strategic costs and benefits would be of normalizing economic relations with Russia, especially compared to a policy of protracted containment, once the war in Ukraine ends or winds down. In other words, under what conditions should the West focus on obstructing Russia's military regeneration and economic development through long-term sanctions? And when (if at all) should it aim to leverage sanctions relief into advancing cooperation on key issues of mutual interest and into limiting Beijing's power over Moscow? And what kind of concessions could and should the West be seeking to extract from Moscow in, for instance, designing a new, postwar European security architecture in which Russia would be a key stakeholder? None of these questions are easy to answer, but they are the right questions to ask.

**About the Clingendael Institute**
Clingendael – the Netherlands Institute of International Relations – is a leading think tank and academy on international affairs. Through our analyses, training and public debate we aim to inspire and equip governments, businesses, and civil society in order to contribute to a secure, sustainable and just world.


www.clingendael.org
info@clingendael.org
+31 70 324 53 84

@clingendaelorg
The Clingendael Institute
The Clingendael Institute
clingendael_institute
Clingendael Institute
Newsletter


## About the author

**Kaspar Pucek** is a Research Fellow within the Security Unit and the Russia & Eastern Europe Centre (CREEC) at the Clingendael Institute. His research focuses on the politics, political economy, and geopolitics of Russia, as well as the wider Eurasian and Eastern European regions. He holds a Ph.D. in contemporary Russian, Eurasian, and Eastern European history from Princeton University.