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Regime type, domestic authority, and international risk-taking: A comparison of Russia and China

Abstract. Authoritarian states are frequently treated as a single category in international relations, despite internal differences and foreign policy differences. This article has shed light on the different types of regimes, focusing especially on the authoritarian regimes as these are generally portrayed to be homogeneous in nature despite being incredibly diverse in their approach to geopolitics, international expansions and decision making. The key aim of the research was to examine how variations in authoritarian regime type and domestic authority structures shape patterns of international risk-taking. In order to achieve this objective, a comparative analysis of Russia and China was carried out with the help of the Geddes, Wright, and Frantz (GWF) framework. In personalist systems such as Russia, decision-making authority is highly centralised around the leader, formal institutions do not hold much power in such settings. Simultaneously, such concentration of power allows the leader to take bold and high-cost foreign policy choices as domestic barriers are marginally low due to common people not having a say in such regimes. However, party-based authoritarian systems such as China functions through strong bureaucratic conditions, planning and monitoring. As a result, such institutionalised party regimes exhibit more constrained and calculated risk behaviour due to organisational oversight and collective decision structures. While foreign policies of such countries can achieve an assertive position, they are more controlled than authoritarian systems. The findings of the research are significant as it can help policymakers, analysts and security planners to better understand these regimes and their foreign policy behaviour, and improve their response to future geopolitics crisis

Keywords: authoritarian regimes; foreign policy; GWF; Xi Jinping; Vladimir Putin

Introduction

In contemporary international politics, authoritarian states have a significant role to play in global security, competition and regional conflicts. As a result, understanding the different between these authoritarian regimes is important for understanding why some regimes behave aggressively while others are more cautious with their foreign policies. Various dynamics were introduced in politics, ranging from personalisation, internationalisation, and internationalisation to increased demands for a centralised system. Political regimes differ in institutional design, accountability, and decision-making processes, which may influence foreign policy choices, L. Helms (2023) argued the two main regimes in modern geopolitics to be democratic and autocratic. The main defining feature of democratic governance is the freedom of expression and providing a fully legitimate status to political oppositions. The freedom of expression is often absent in autocratic systems, and decisions to hold elections

or tolerate opposition are calculated risks and choices in authoritarian regimes. Autocratic powers are generally consolidated by dictators, and allowing parties and legislation in the government system helps in revealing opponents. C. Bjørnskov & M. Rode (2020) have divided into three main categories, these are: parliamentary democracy, mixed democracy and presidential democracy. The non-democracies, on the other hand, can be classified as civilian autocracies, military dictatorships and royal dictatorships, which are also known as monarchies.

Although there are more democracies than autocracies in the world, autocracies cannot be neglected as they influence global events in different ways. While some of the autocratic countries are a security threat to neighbouring countries, others a threat on a global level. A.K. Das (2023) in their research considers autocracies as threats to global peace because these countries tend to be aggressive and do not abide by international rules. Autocracies are

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expansionist by nature as observed with Germany during the Second World War, China and Russia in the modern times. Democracies however are bound by the political will and sentiments of the nation and therefore maintains friendly relations and obey international laws. This argument is further supported by M. Bales & M. Mutschler (2026) as large scale military interventions are often led by autocratic regional powers. The study shows autocracies such as Saudi Arabia, Russia and Turkey investing in large scale military equipment's, while democracies avoid enhancing their military capabilities.

The lack of accountability is a major problem in autocracies, autocracies as per M. Kriner (2025) are driven by the autocrat's private gain seeking behaviour, instead of public good such as peacekeeping and peacebuilding in democratic nations. The lack of accountability also leaves the leaders in a privileged position to do whatever they want, media restrictions, banning of criticism, limited access to internet allows them to operate effectively. Dictatorships are similar in this regard, as researched by G. Ekiert & N. Dasanaike (2024), they reject established forms of national cooperation and do not believe in negotiation, arbitration or international tribunals in resolving issues. Another striking characteristic about dictatorships is the strong tendency towards familial power and dynastic succession (Woo, 2024). Similar to Romania, North Korea also has a one-party system since the 1980s that have evolved into a personal dictatorship and while this keeps them in power, it essentially leads to the decay of political institutions and lack political legitimacy and excessive dependence of physical violence.

Authoritarian regimes are frequently treated as a uniform category in international relations, despite considerable variation in leadership concentration, party organisation, and institutional constraints. The foreign policy of a nation is greatly influenced by the regime. Personalised regimes focus more on the authority of a single individual, whereas party-based authoritarian regimes focus more on the organisational hierarchies and collective leadership institutions. These internal differences between the regime are what affect the decision-making and risk-taking abilities. The purpose of the research was to show variations within the authoritarian structure products different abilities in taking and managing risks. Whether different authoritarian structures generate different approaches to international risk-taking remains an important research question. This study investigated how different authoritarian regime structures influence patterns of international risk-taking through a comparative examination of Russia and China.

Literature Review

Regime type and foreign policy behaviour. Regime type has long been regarded as a central determinant of foreign policy behaviour in international relations. As per the theory of realism in international relations, as smaller countries do not have significant military power, they are not able to formulate policies outside of their borders. A.M. Galal (2020) has stated that through proper military power, the great nations are able to develop foreign policies that are influential and effective. J. Ahmed (2020) research on foreign policies show that these policies are

often the result of interactions between decision-makers of the state and the environment in which they operate. Thus, Otto Von Bismarck regarded foreign policy as an extension of a country's domestic policy, as it is a direct reflection of the practices carried out within the country. Even though states differ based on their socio-economic background, military, and economic capabilities, the internal environments of a state influence the nature and course of foreign policies. Regime type has therefore been widely considered a key determinant of foreign policy behaviour, shaping both leaders' preferences and the constraints under which they operate.

In this context, authoritarian and democratic regimes have different methods of governance and crisis responses, which influence the international conduct of the state. The authoritarian regimes are capable of rapid mobilisation of resources and take immediate decisions, whereas democratic systems have to maintain a certain level of accountability and transparency. The democratic system runs on principles and encourages the participation of citizens in the decision-making process, which slows the decision-making process, but the decisions are inclusive and sustainable in the long run. Thus, the laws and regulations in democratic systems put a restraint on the leaders and their ability to take risks in foreign policies. Studies conducted by T. Jost (2024) have shown that democratic systems cannot take unpopular international actions, as the people tend to have a warmer attitude towards other democratic countries. Even against autocracies, some democratic leaders only see them as hostile when their behaviour does not align with perceived democratic principles. Decision-making in such systems looks for mental shortcuts to assess whether the other state is threatening. Not all autocracies are threatening, but this point of view allows the democracies to take swift decisions. Democracies are thus more cautious about initiating conflict, as they must be sensitive to their reputations both at home and globally. In contrast, authoritarian regimes are often portrayed as less constrained in foreign policy decision-making. The lack of accountability requirements and restricted public participation in national interests grant them greater opportunities for risk-taking.

However, the studies carried out on democracies and autocracies often fail to acknowledge the diversity of autocratic systems. Treating autocratic regimes as similar entities limits their internal variations, the different institutions, coalition systems and decision-making processes. The elites in autocratic systems are political actors, and their preferences and interests determine the power dynamics in these systems. S. Williamson & B. Magaloni (2020) research has shown different ministries in Russia disagree over state issues, and Putin also has disagreements with the government over the changes in criminal processing. Similarly, many state institutions in China disagree with nationally imposed education policies. Likewise, the research by C. Bakir (2023) argues that the internal assessments carried out in authoritarian systems are able to identify and address public discontent before it threatens the stability of the regime. China has local channels that feed the central government with the grievances shared by the people, improving the government's response to address policy feedback. These steps improve

the durability and legitimacy of autocracies. These differences between Russia and China show that the regimes do not have similar opportunities and constraints in dealing with their foreign policy.

Authoritarian regime variation and domestic authority. Authoritarian regimes are not uniform but vary significantly in how political authority is established and practised within the country. There are essentially three main categories of authoritarian regimes: party-based regimes, military regimes, and personalist regimes. Party-based regimes, such as China and North Korea, formally continue to have multiple parties; however, power is consolidated within a single party, and they control all branches of the government. A. Leber *et al.* (2023) has researched on how the single-party nature often stemmed from opposition parties withdrawing from races or voluntarily boycotting them. In the case of China, the Communist Party of China (CCP) has held control over leadership for nearly two decades before the oversight weakened, paving the way for President Xi Jinping to assume power. Personalist regimes differ in this aspect as decision-making in these regimes is held by the acting autocrat and their inner circle, which includes trusted political allies. These types of autocracies do not have regime-specific institutions, as they only seek the prolongation of their rule by winning elections that are neither free nor fair. The Russian president, Putin, was able to establish his power by relying on powerful elite allies. A. Leber *et al.* (2023) has also shown that during the early 2000s, when he finally came into power, he created a personalist regime that was built on an oligarchic system of loyal governors, giving the government a cult-like personality. Military regimes such as those in Myanmar and Thailand are made up of the chief military commander and top military officers. Informal power sharing between the military leaders keeps these military leaders in power. Personalist authoritarian rulers are aware that people inside the regime will not hold them accountable, and therefore, they are able to gamble through foreign policies to gain more territory even if they have a low chance of succeeding. The bureaucrats in these regimes are important because they provide the leaders with the necessary information needed to make decisions. T. Jost (2024) has argued that leaders do not attend diplomatic meetings at the domestic level nor at negotiating tables in international spheres, as they depend on these bureaucracies to implement the policies they choose.

Finally, personalist leaders who achieve domestic political goals through violence are more likely to use the same in their foreign policies and strategies. D. Passioura (2022) states that political elites in such systems prefer authoritarian powers as it allows them to maintain their domestic sovereignty. Autocratic governments also tend to control the public narratives and discourse, as this prevents foreign powers from influencing the opposition. S. Hellmeier (2021) has studied how pro-government rallies from the regime help in maintaining control and gaining domestic support for the policies that they are implementing. Personalist regimes have historically been seen to be more involved in international wars and experiencing civil conflict. Personalist regimes also maintain counterbalanced armies; keeping the army divided prevents them from coupling against the government in

periods of crisis. Getting more involved in international conflicts deepens the divisions in the military and makes the regime coup-proof. A. Escribà-Folch *et al.* (2022) has observed that fragmentation within the military helps in creating a balance between the units and structural obstacles to coordinate. Personalists build and maintain a dominant coalition between powerful individuals within the system, which creates an environment where the leaders have broad discretion and power to make policy changes.

Party-based regimes which practice institutionalised authoritarianism are generally considered much more resilient than other forms of authoritarianism, as these have organisational structures that are durable. Extensive party networks in these systems stabilise the authoritarian regime even during periods when the regime faces economic crisis. Party-based regimes also tend to have administrative centralisation, but countries such as China and Kazakhstan are notable exceptions because they favour decentralisation. This system provides the local officials with more authority and allows the central government to avoid blame. The CCP has deliberately followed this principle to place blame on the local government for general problems faced in the provinces while maintaining all the power at the top. E. Sinkkonen (2021) has found that during Xi's reign since 2012, China has been undergoing recentralisation of the administration, as it helped in launching anti-corruption campaigns, limiting financial resources available to local governments. The Chinese government also heavily invests in the use of media, Confucius institutions and exchange programmes to improve its image in both domestic and international spheres. The foreign policy of the country is thus shaped by training and sponsorship. The CCP, on the other hand, promotes the political and economic interests through their party channel, creating a positive image of China. C. Hackenesch & J. Bader (2020) states that the inter-party contact by the CCP, helps with the general diplomacy. These practices of the Chinese government allow better decision making and engagement with influential actors in foreign affairs.

International risk-taking in authoritarian foreign policy. International risk-taking is a major part of understanding the foreign policies of authoritarian regimes. Risk-taking in the international sphere generally refers to the willingness of a nation to take necessary actions that can lead to military escalation, loss or cost the reputation for meeting strategic objectives of the state. Authoritarian regimes willing to exceed their political goals strategically implement the foreign policy preferences of the elites. The support of the elites reduces any threat of accountability, making the regime more risk-acceptant in its foreign policies. Personalist leaders are well-aware that people within the regime are less likely to oppose them and thus more willing to gamble their luck and gain more territory, though the chances of them succeeding are low. T. Jost (2024) argues that both the Soviet Union and China, foreign policies were not always a requirement while choosing their leaders, as the decisions for these policies do not always directly impact the interests of the elites in society. When elites of a regime have a finite amount of power to bargain with the leader, they might prioritise domestic interests over foreign policies.

Controlling the flow of information is also crucial for foreign policies in authoritarian regimes, as they can amplify their appeals to national sentiments and gather support for their international ventures. During periods of international conflict, while the opposition blames the government, the control over the media allows the regime to place the blame on foreign intervention. Therefore, regimes that have control over the media are able to position themselves in a favourable light. International pressure also creates new opportunities for authoritarian regimes and allows them to get street support for their cause. S. Hellmeier (2021) states that authoritarian regimes sometimes also adopt risky foreign policy to facilitate their domestic support. Through international confrontation, the regime externalises their domestic problems; international factors are thus important for pro-government mobilisation. Acts of foreign threats and imposed sanctions lead to more support for the government. When the foreign policy interests affect the interests of the elites, they are keener on showing active interests in foreign policy decision-making. The study by T. Jost (2024) shows that certain authoritarian regimes invest significantly in understanding the state's attitude towards foreign policies, as dissatisfied citizens can move to organised protests. Authoritarian systems thus differ significantly in the concentration of their authority, understanding the variations in risk-taking of the different authoritarian regimes, which requires moving from regime types to specific countries and their domestic authority structures.

Theoretical underpinning and literature gap. This study is grounded in the authoritarian institutions theory, better known as the GWF typology, as it was developed by Barbara Geddes, Joseph Wright, and Erica Frantz. The reason for choosing this theory for the research is that it overcomes the limitations of the previous paradigms and adopts a deductive, dictatorship-oriented perspective aimed at identifying the differences between the different authoritarian regimes. Rather than treating authoritarianism as a homogeneous phenomenon, the framework observes the regimes as distinct institutional arrangements (Van den Bosch, 2025). As per the theory, a regime is considered democratic if it comes to power through some form of election that is fair and competitive. The non-democratic regimes, as per the theory, were initially divided into three main categories. These are single-party regimes, military regimes and personalist rule. During the initial phase, monarchies were also treated as personalist rule, but later became their own category. The classification of authoritarian regimes is one of the major contributions of the theory, as it separates personalist regimes from single-party systems. In personalist regimes, political authority is concentrated in an individual leader. The party system is significantly different, as ruling parties boost the survivability of authoritarian regimes. These regimes provide the elites of the society with jobs and other perks; in return, the elites ensure order is maintained among the ordinary citizens (Frantz & Higashijima, 2025). The ruling party help the regime by monitoring citizens and gathering information about their preferences. The theory also highlights that certain aspects of these authoritarian regimes often overlap and do not fit neatly into the three pure types of authoritarian regimes as presented by the

GWF typology. The theory shows that personalist leaders often emerge from military or single-party regimes, but instead of eliminating the institutions, they keep them to consolidate power after winning. The theory, however, provides systematic criteria through which dictatorships can be analysed and their coalition structures. The use of this theory in understanding the authoritarian regimes helps in shedding light on the behaviour and performance of the regimes (Van den Bosch, 2025). By grounding the research in this GWF typology, the study has been able to integrate causal mechanisms that are linked to political organisations and their strategic choices for their foreign policies. This theoretical foundation allows for a systematic comparison of authoritarian regimes, their domestic practices and how it shapes their international risk-taking abilities.

The past studies that have been studied within the literature review section have shed light on the role which regimes types play in influencing foreign policies and the differences within the internal authority structures of the regime. The focus has been placed on understanding personalist and party-based regimes, the role of elites and the difference in decision-making practices. The research work carried out on authoritarian regimes also reveals the important role which information control and elite support play in keeping the regime in power. However, there are significant gaps in the literature, as much of the past literature has treated authoritarian regimes as homogeneous. Research on the connection between the domestic and international risk-taking ability of authoritarian regimes has been severely limited. Despite Russia and China being frequently analysed in authoritarian regime studies, only a handful of studies mention both together or have carried out a comparative analysis. This gap is significant because Russia and China represent distinct authoritarian institutions with divergent decision-making dynamics and external risk propensities.

Materials and Methods

This study investigated how domestic authority structures within authoritarian regimes shape patterns of international risk-taking. This study adopted a qualitative descriptive design, allowing for a deeper understanding of the international expansion and foreign investment of Russia and China. The use of a comparative approach further helped in highlighting the difference in the regime and the preferences. A secondary qualitative approach made the study more descriptive. Additionally, the GWF framework on authoritarianism was also used in the article as the theory clearly defined the different regimes and their characteristics (Van den Bosch, 2025). The GWF typology provided the theoretical foundation of the study by distinguishing between the different authoritarian regimes according to their internal institutional arrangements instead of treating all authoritarian regimes as a single category. This method was particularly useful for the research as it explored the organisational structure, position of elites in the system and the role of leadership in influencing external decision-making. By differentiating between the personalist system of Russia and the party-based system of China, the framework provided a grounded lens for analysing variation in the international risk-taking behaviour of both countries.

As the study used secondary data for the research, the material used for this study consisted of peer-reviewed academic publications, book chapters, and policy-oriented scholarly sources (Lewis, 2020; Lee, 2021; Rutland, 2022). The data was sourced from Google Scholar, different journals on political ideologies, politics and international relations. The collected data was analysed with the help of a thematic analysis. The thematic analysis was adopted for detailing on the government structures of Russia and China before comparing them against each other. The reason for choosing Russia and China for this comparative analysis was that both these countries represented the archetypal subtypes within the GWF framework, with Russia being a personalist regime and China a single-party regime. The temporal focus of the research was essentially been on the post-Cold War period and the development in both these countries practices since the 2000s, corresponding to Putin's rule in Russia, institutionalism of the CCP and Xi Jinping coming to power. The comparative analysis that was provided in the study revolved around dimensions such as authority structure and concentration of power, centralisation and decision-making within the regime, foreign policies, strategic tools possessed by both the regimes and the constraints that held them back.

Results and Discussion

The results within this section have been presented through five comparative variables that were derived from the GWF typology: (1) the authority structure and concentration of power; (2) the level of centralisation and decision making; (3) foreign policies; (4) the role of institutions and other strategic tools; (5) the constraints both countries face in exercising their power and taking risks. Russia has been analysed as a case of personalist authoritarianism, while China is treated as a single-party institutionalised regime. The difference in the ideals between both countries have been the primary reason for choosing Russia and China. Each of the subsections discusses the authority structure within the nation, the foreign policy decisions and their international risk-taking. The comparative analysis section has compared all of these different dimensions individually.

Authority structure of Russia and concentration of power. The contemporary Russian political system is widely characterised as a highly personalist authoritarian regime in which political authority is concentrated in the president and an informal loyalty network. Post-Soviet Russia found itself in a peculiar ideological void as it had to move away from the Soviet era political system and the collapse of communism and failed transition to liberalism and democracy (Blackburn, 2024). The disappearance of the communist party resulted in greater fluidity in the political system of the nation. Boris Yeltsin was personally involved in dismantling the USSR and thus became the founding father of the nation, but there remained divisions within the Russian society, as many viewed the communist system with a positive light. Yeltsin's tenure was turbulent as he sought to control Russia through the implementation of his policies and gaining support. Yeltsin attempted to pursue a foreign policy that was accommodating the West, and political critics only saw this as pandering to the West (Gill, 2025). Yeltsin's idiosyncratic

style of leadership isolated the oligarchs; it worsened during his second tenure, when, due to his ill health and alcohol problems, he was not able to provide effective leadership. The concern about his ability to rule eventually drove the elites to support Vladimir Putin and replace Yeltsin in 2000 (Gill, 2025). Therefore, Yeltsin's policies and practices led to Putin absorbing more power and eventually rising as the head of the state.

Putin's rise in power was initially welcomed by the Russian people during the early 2000s following the war in Chechnya. He positioned himself to be engaged, decisive and in control. Unlike his predecessors, Putin was much more pragmatic, believed in centralising power and was technocratic. The centralisation of power transferred power from the different oligarchs, non-state actors and regional heads to the Kremlin (Blackburn, 2024). Putin's public criticism of the officials and oligarchs was part of his performative populism during a time when policies often only favoured the elites and the rich. The new laws that were introduced in the 2000s stripped the governors of their power and automatic seats that they previously possessed in the Federation Council and the upper legislative council, and replaced them with regional legislators. Putin also acquired the authority to fire and hire regional heads, meaning the governors did not have authority over the regional police anymore, either. The oligarchs and elites that brought Putin to power during the 2000s were gradually erased out of the government. Their declining power in state politics meant they were not able to resist Putin turning into an authoritarian government (Balta *et al.*, 2025). With Putin coming to power, the regime aligned the media to paint a positive and strong leadership persona of Putin. Putin's crackdown on the insurgency in Chechnya and terrorist attacks in Moscow portrayed him as a crude and decisive leader, helping him win the election in the 2000s (Lewis, 2020). Under Putin, Russia thus became a political system where power resided with a single individual without any legal limitations. During his first term, Putin invested in dismantling the democratic experiment followed in Russia and replaced it with an authoritarian regime.

Putin's return to power in 2012 intensified the shift to the creation of a full authoritarian regime, allowing more assertive power to the president, such as the military interventions in Ukraine in 2014 (Lewis, 2020). Putin's strong economic performance during his first two terms also significantly helped in bringing him back to power, but this was less evident during his third term. Putin's power in Russia rests on his ability to allocate resources to the key sectors. Putin is also known for following a loyalty-based elite system, as his original St Petersburg friends and security service have dissolved, though he still maintains a trusted group of insiders. The authority of the government officials in Russia is derived from both their formal office positions and their closeness to Putin (Sakawa, 2020). The Russian government maintains informal networks throughout the country; these networks allow the government to understand the public perception of the interaction and the power of decisions of the Kremlin. Putin also carried out constitutional amendments in 2020, heavily favouring the 2021 elections. The 2020 amendments emphasise his own institutions to protect the

constitutional order (Syrovátka, 2023). By resetting presidential term limits, Putin made it possible to stay in power longer than intended. These amendments also reinforced the president to have absolute authority over the hierarchy of the state. The evolution of the Putin presidency has directly implication on the foreign policy and authority.

Decision-making process and foreign policy. The foreign policy decision-making process in contemporary Russia reflects the personalist authority established by Putin. The foreign policy of Putin during his first two terms was pragmatic, but during the third, it became more conservative. Since his third term in power, Putin annually addressed the nation on its foreign policies. Putin places the issues of sovereignty, regional influence of Russia in Eastern Europe and the Russian identity at the centre of his foreign policies (Frear & Mazepus, 2021). The presidential administration of Russia, with its central administrative organisation and the department of internal politics play a critical role in supervising the available intellectual resources (Bakir, 2023). Therefore, although Russia has institutions, they merely serve as implementation bodies, as the leadership choices are reserved for the president. The decision-making for international relations in Russia differs significantly from that of other Western nations because geopolitically the country is situated between European and non-European countries. The historical and cultural settings of Russia set it apart from the other Western powers. Putin also possesses an anti-Western and nationalistic perspective, where the main goal is the development of Russia in both domestic and international spheres. The sanctions placed on Russia following the annexation of Crimea and Western support for Ukraine pushed Russia further from Western markets.

Putin maintains his domestic control over the people of Russia through propaganda that promotes the Russian vision of the country being a culturally distinct power committed to defending its nationalistic values from Western imperialism. The foreign policies of Russia, therefore, reflect an anti-American and anti-Western tone. Putin seeks to build a Eurasian Economic Union, improving their standing in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation while further expanding into Asia for more economic and political power. The foreign policy actions of Russia show the country using hard power in Ukraine, while being softer in its treatment of Belarus during the invasion. Studies have thus argued that the Kremlin uses hard power against unfriendly governments while being soft towards its allies (Chapman, 2021). The sovereignty of Russia was threatened by NATO in its pursuit of hybrid warfare against the country; thus, power in Russia is consolidated between the president and his tight inner circle. Many of the people in Putin's inner circle are from his former days as a spy in the Committee for State Security. Sergei Chemezov, who served with Putin in the Committee for State Security, is the CEO of Rostec, while Yury Kovalchuk, chair of Rossiya Bank, is also one of Putin's closest friends from the "Ozero dacha" cooperative in St. Petersburg. Other notable members of the circle include Arkady Rotenberg, Dmitry Medvedev, Sergei Sobyenin, and Anton Vaino (Lewis, 2020). Putin maintains informal methods of consultation and decision-making to avoid formal and informal constraints of power.

In his 22 years of power, Putin has consolidated power at both the domestic and international levels. However, the two key groups in Russia are the siloviki, the people who run the security agencies and the new capitalist class or the oligarchs. After his ascent to power, Putin, with the help of the siloviki reined over the 89 regions of Russia and removed the oligarchs from power. After Putin's control over the state was established, his inner circle and the siloviki expanded their power and took control over the economic assets of Russia (Rutland, 2022). The foreign policies of Russia also help with its domestic stability, as Putin's ambition of establishing a Eurasian Union and the annexation of Crimea led to his approval rating within the country jumping from 65% to 80%. The high domestic enthusiasm for Putin's geopolitical ventures is reflective of the general attitude of the people towards Russian nationalism. After the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the domestic policies of Russia influenced the government to take further aggressive steps in their international policy-making (Lawrence, 2022). The studies have shown how internal decision-making in Russia shape their international attitude and policies.

Evidence of international risk-taking and constraints. Russia's foreign policy has shown consistent patterns of risk-taking ever since Putin took power in the country. Risk-taking in the international sphere generally refers to the willingness of the state to take military action for national interests. In 2008, the Russo-Georgian War took place, during which Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Georgia to stop NATO from taking Georgia and Ukraine (Rezvani, 2020). The Russo-Georgian War is often seen as a rehearsal for the Ukraine invasion in 2014 and the full-scale Russo-Ukraine War of 2022. Russia, however, claimed that the official reason for starting the war was to stop the genocide in the South Ossetia region of Georgia. With the ceasefire agreements, Moscow sought the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and maintained diplomatic relationships with both. Russia suffered backlash from the West for this exercise of power. After the war, Russia learned that the US had been equipping Georgia with modern army weapons. The US and the EU imposed a few weak economic sanctions on Russia after the invasion, but it was clear that the West was trying to appease Russia and to make it stop its military conquest (Tarasov *et al.*, 2023). A peace treaty was signed between both countries, with Italy under the leadership of Berlusconi; the soft reaction contradicted US stances for the imposition of more sanctions. Overall, the Russo-Georgian War had minor impacts on Russia.

The 2014 annexation of Crimea further demonstrated a willingness of Russia to incur international sanctions, condemnation, and isolation to gain new territories. Russia annexed Crimea and created a separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine in 2014. The possession of Ukraine would help the Kremlin rise as one of the great global powers once more (Makio & Fuccille, 2023). Ukraine is an attractive extension for Russia because of the country being geographically resourceful; the Russian invasion of Crimea, thus, is reflective of the Kremlin's geopolitical interests. Crimea has territories near the Russian border and is separated by the Kerch Strait, which connects the Black and Azov Seas. Possession of Crimea is therefore purely

strategic as it provides Russia with access to both seas. Putin started to disengage from the Western world following these invasions, both politically and economically. After the annexation, the West again condemned Crimea, but was again reluctant to impose sanctions on the country, as they saw Russia as a strategic partner. The lack of foreign intervention in Crimea was due to the low intensity of the fight and because it could not be considered an armed conflict (Tarasov *et al.*, 2023). Countries such as Italy refused to take action against Russia due to the absence of full-scale invasion.

The latest risk-taking initiative of Russia can be seen in the Russo-Ukrainian War of 2022. For this type of large-scale conflict, domestic support is highly needed, and therefore, the Russian government resorted to a wide range of propaganda and disinformation both within and outside Russia. The expansion of NATO to the east was seen as a major violation of the escalation; Russia was not content with the West extending its support for Ukraine and allowing it to join. Furthermore, the imposition of sanctions by the US and the EU further proved that the West are not willing to consider Russia's own interests in the region (Nitoiu, 2024). Unlike the previous times when the EU was reluctant to take strong actions against Russia, strong condemnation was seen by the EU member states, and harsh sanctions were imposed. Study shows that the developments of the Russo-Ukrainian war have damaged the economic stability of Russia, with heavy sanctions being placed on the country. All of the Western companies also chose to leave Russia, crashing the currency. The US also banned the imports of Russian oil, natural gas and oil products. The new trade deals with Israel and Egypt for natural gas to Europe further ruined Russia's position. Thus, the risk-taking behaviour of Russia harms its global positioning and leads to more sanctions from the west.

Therefore, as per the GWF framework and the findings from the research, Russia appears as a personalist regime. The authority of the regime is centralised in Putin and his informal loyalty network and the formal institutions of the state being reduced to implementation bodies of the rules set out by Putin's government. The elite constraints in Russia are low as Putin has carefully systematically stripped the powers of regional governors and oligarchs. The decisions of foreign policy are heavily centralised and unilateral, driven by the interest of the presidents and his inner circle. Institutional positions in the country do not dictate power in the nation but rather the loyalty towards the leader. The risk-taking behaviour of the country is incredibly high as found in the research, with major military interventions in Georgia, Crimea, Ukraine in the 21st century, showing the regime is willing to absorb any potential losses incurred in the process. These findings are consistent with the GWF framework, personalist regimes face lesser obstacles in their foreign risk-taking behaviour.

Authority structure of China and concentration of power. China's political system is characterised by single-party authoritarianism, with the authority being kept by the CCP instead of a single individual leader. Unlike personalist regimes, where decision-making is dependent on the leader, the success of the Chinese system is rooted in the breadth and depth of rules. The membership and functions of the CCP are regulated, and

therefore, while Xi Jinping is the figurative head of the party, he can dismiss members if they have broken the rules of the party (Smith, 2021). The CCP rose to power during the Sino-Japanese War with Mao Zedong as the dominant leader of the party. The invasion of the Japanese led to rapid guerrilla warfare and the CCP gaining success at the grassroots levels of China. The party was founded by Chen Duxiu and Li Dachao during the 1920s. The party, combined with the KMT, influenced a communist revolution (Chen & Kung, 2024). Though the pre-war social and economic programmes helped significantly to improve their reputation, it was ultimately the local influences which allowed the party to get more support. The CCP has many different institutions which help in maintaining its power; the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) is one of the most essential institutions. While other roles, such as the General Office, the Organisation Department, the Propaganda Department, the Political and Legal Affairs Commission, the ministries of State Security and Public Security, are also essential tools that help in keeping the regime in power (Fewsmith, 2021). Controlling all of these positions allows the power within the government system to remain centralised.

The PSC is responsible for centralised leadership within the CCP as they are able to systematically perform their plans and resolutions. As the PSC adjusts the memberships of the committee, they are able to mobilise the local political institutions and execute the policies and plans set up by the central government. In the post-Mao era, the leadership within the CCP continues to be the same, with the directive and priorities being shifted to provincial leadership by changing the focus to PSC members. The PSC has introduced three major strategies, which include changing the ineffective and outdated leadership systems within the CCP. The PSC determines the number of officials for provincial government, and thirdly, emphasises the professional role of particular departments and designates a member of the PSC (Lee, 2021). Institutionalism of collective leadership is another key quality of the regime, as in the post-Mao era, the regime has invested in preventing the concentration of power. The establishment of term limits, on the other hand, helped with strengthening the commitment between the incumbent and the other political leaders. Additionally, age limits and generational turnover were also set in the CCP to make leadership transitions more stable. However, after coming into power, Xi Jinping overturned the term limits in 2018 to make himself the president of the PRC for the third term and potentially for life (Ang, 2022). Under the rule of Xi, the CCP has extended its reach into economic and social policies.

Xi's rule in China has significantly weakened the dimensions of institutionalisation, which once held the CCP together. Despite his authoritarian turn, Xi has kept some of the key aspects of the CCP regime, such as adaptive methods of governance and policy experimentation. However, unlike his predecessors, Xi is more repressive and has tightened the ideological controls on society and the bureaucracy. He has punished different activists and critics of the regime and choked the freedom which existed in society before 2012. The hostile behaviour of the US against China has further created more opportunities for Xi to rally the CCP and the nation behind him. While Xi's

regime has been successful in fighting corruption within the system, it also reintroduces the risk of succession battles (Ang, 2022). China also follows a strict central and local divide in its policies; the central government is responsible for setting the tasks and goals, while the local government is responsible for implementing these goals into the system. This sometimes leads to the visions and interests between the central and local governments to collude (Chen *et al.*, 2024). The CCP also maintains its control over the People's Liberation Army (PLA) through the Central Military Commission (CMC) (Julienne & Lagrault, 2022). The CMC is also chaired by Xi, which allows him to have direct control over the military while tightening the political and disciplinary controls.

Decision-making process and foreign policy. China's foreign policy decision-making system is directly reflective of the institutional capabilities of the CCP. The foreign policies of China can be seen as a direct extension of its domestic strategies and stability in the political realm of the country. The key aspect of the foreign policy has been to uphold the authority of the CPC and strengthen the centralisation of power and leadership in international relations (Zhang, 2023). The second aspect of the foreign policy has been to adhere to the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and promote diplomacy with Chinese characteristics. The institutional reforms that Xi follows for his foreign and security policy decision-making thus showcase his awareness of the growing security risks in the country and the need to better address international powers. The foreign policies of Xi are much more assertive than the previous ones of the CCP leaders. Projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative show China's dedication to establish themselves as an influential global power. On the other hand, the creation of the National Security Commission (NSC) has helped in dealing with international responsibilities (Cabestan, 2021). The NSC is involved with solving the cross-border issues, such as terrorism and separatist activities in the Xinjiang and Tibet regions of China.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has mostly remained the same under the rule of Xi, bestowed with the responsibility of aligning foreign aid objectives with the foreign policy goals of China. Under Xi, think tanks have been introduced whose purpose is to evaluate the foreign and security policies; they help in adjusting the diplomacy of China. The foreign policy of China works not just through their ministers but also through diplomats, merchants and soldiers, as all of them are instructed by the CCP to spread the global narrative of the CCP (Cabestan, 2021). Even though the regime has become more centralised in recent years, the foreign policies of the nation continue to be shaped through the collective leadership structure. The Central Foreign Affairs Commission (CFAC) in China is another significant institution which is responsible for understanding and evaluating the foreign affairs (Acosta, 2024). The PSC is highest decision-making body in China and deals with international issues and crises that are urgent. However, the presence of so many different institutions in foreign decision-making often leads to the foreign policies of China being fragmented and slow in the decision-making process. The foreign policies of China are shaped through competition and

negotiation between the central government agencies and the provincial government.

The foreign policy of China has become a multi-action consultation process as it involves so many different actors. Although the key directions of the foreign policy are taken by the PSC, leaders of the regime play a key role in shaping them. Xi has improved the top-down planning of the policies. Xi's policies have included more people in the decision-making aspect while still keeping the ultimate authority of making changes. As the power of the state bureaucracy declined under Xi's rule, his personal visions became more decisive in foreign policy. The adoption of active foreign policies has made China more globalised in the international sphere. Xi, through his foreign policies, wishes to create an international order that is suitable for his country while creating US alternatives and establishing a balance between the European Union and the US through trade and cultural agreements (Akdağ, 2024). However, reforms in the foreign policy that were introduced during the Deng era make it harder to introduce new changes and limit Xi's powers. Thus, Xi's control over foreign policy is preponderant instead of being absolute; he also has to take into account the views of his senior leaders despite his popularity and widespread influence globally.

Evidence of international risk-taking and constraints. China has shown restraint when it comes to risk-taking. While the nation has fiercely defended its territorial claims and expanded its global influence, it has avoided direct conflict, escalation and actions that are likely to trigger large-scale wars. Territorial disputes of China can often be seen in the South China Sea, as there have been disputes regarding small islets, rocks and reefs (Fravel & Glaser, 2022). Since 2008, China has started adopting more assertive policies by taking control over the Scarborough Shoal, building artificial islands in the Spratly Islands and developing military bases to strengthen its claim over the South China Sea. Vietnamese and Malaysian vessels that have passed through the exclusive economic zone have been harassed and intimidated by the Chinese forces (Zhang, 2022). These activities show China's intentions of establishing full control over the sea. The control over the sea is purely tactical, as China has built airports in several of these small islets. In order to pursue the claims and avoid armed conflict, China has adopted grey zones in the South China Sea, such as CCG and maritime militia. The United States is highly against China's dominion over the South China Sea and has stated conflicts in the sea will be seen as international issues (Zhang, 2022). With joint collaborative efforts with other Indo-Pacific countries, the US has created QUAD to counter the growing influence of China in these oceans.

Similarly, in border disputes with neighbouring states, China and India have been involved in multiple border disputes since the 1960s. The territorial disputes have led to a brief war in 1962, with recurring problems in the decades that followed. During the summer of 2020, the Indian and Chinese troops were again involved in combat due to Chinese incursions into Indian Territory, resulting in casualties. The domestic policies within China are considered to be influential behind these incursions (Greene *et al.*, 2021). The border issues between the two countries affect their ability to trade and maintain bilateral ties. A

second indicator of constrained risk is that China's long-term international risk-taking can be seen through China not getting involved in direct wars since the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese border war. In February 1979, the Chinese leader Deng ordered 200,000 Chinese troops to invade Vietnam (Grossheim, 2022). Militarily, Vietnam prevailed, and China had to head back; both sides suffered heavy casualties. Since then, China has maintained its neutrality and has chosen deterrence instead of direct conflict.

The foreign policy of China has also relied heavily on exerting its external influence, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a global infrastructure development strategy that boosts connectivity and improves trade partnerships across nations. BRI can be seen as a clear intention of China to maximise its influence on a global scale. BRI allows China to be more involved in world affairs, while the initiative reshapes global trade and commerce, creating parallel financial institutions. BRI is also being led by China to set their global agenda and make sure its values, ideas and norms are respected across the culture. China shapes its foreign policy based on changing domestic and international realities. It is believed that through BRI, China has been solving internal problems with overcapacity and sustainable growth that the country has been facing (Parepa, 2020). The broader international strategy of China offers developmental opportunities with its many Asian, African and Latin American countries. The country is known for leveraging economic and trade projects to increase its presence in the diverse markets of the world. The global strategy of the China helps in improving the reputation of the nation while also engaging in trade and commerce (Kim & Dong, 2025). The relationship which China builds with Latin America and other parts of the world is built on sustainable and equitable development.

The GWF summary of China across the five comparative variables reveal that the authority in the country is held by the CCP through strict bureaucratic and party institutions. Although Xi has consolidated more power than previous CCP leaders during his tenure, he is still constrained by the party institutions from making any decisions by himself. The elite constraints in China remains high as positions within the party hierarchy are handled based on tenure and party disciplines and not loyalty towards the leader like Russia. Foreign policy in China is a consultative process involving different national sectors such as the PSC, CFAC, CMC, and MOFA, which results in slower and grounded decisions. Public institutions in China continues to hold significant power as access to the positions is linked to party rank. Finally, risk-taking behaviour in China is significantly constrained and incremental as China has successfully avoided direct military conflict since 1979. Instead, the country resorts to intimidation, with their constant use of grey-zones and multilateral engagement instead of escalatory force. These findings from the research also aligns with the GWF framework as single-party regimes face strong organisational constraints on their leadership, leading to more cautious and calculated foreign policy behaviour.

Comparative analysis of authoritarian regimes of Russia and China. The comparison between Russia and China in the research demonstrates the difference in authoritarian regimes. Russia has been found to follow a

personalist regime, whereas China follows a single-party regime; the institutions, avenues of decision-making and power constraints differ significantly. Under Vladimir Putin, Russia has evolved into a highly personalist authoritarian regime marked by authority, weakened institutional oversight and reduced involvement of the elites or the oligarchs. Past literature on Russian politics post-USSR shows that the previous governments have attempted to transition into liberalism and democracy from communism, though the political climate enabled the growth of personalist leadership in the nation. In this personalised regime, decision-making for foreign policies also moved from the group of elites to the leader and his trusted group of insiders (Blackburn, 2024). These types of authoritarian regimes experience lower institutional constraints and greater autonomy in their policies (Leber *et al.*, 2023). China, on the other hand, follows a single-party regime controlled by the CCP, and therefore, while Xi Jinping is at the centre of decision-making, he often has to communicate with other members of the party to make any major decision. Unlike personalist regimes with unconstrained power, the CCP is resilient and follows structured authority relations (Chen & Kung, 2024). Authoritarian party systems provide more power to the elites of the society, as they control the masses and ensure the regime stays stable.

In the GWF typology, personalist regimes are characterised by weak institutions and the rulers having absolute power; Russia fits these characteristics neatly. The political authority is highly personalised, positions within the trust group are dependent on the loyalty towards the president, while the institutions function largely on the executive will of the president. The dominance of the inner circle consisting of Putin's acquaintances and the siloviki concentrates the power and reduces the veto capacity of the elites (Rutland, 2022). Putin's reforms to extend presidential tenure and reduce the power of the oligarchs have significantly helped in solidifying his position as the head of state. China reflects the single-party model from the GWF framework, as the authority to make decisions resides with the CCP and not a single individual leader. However, since Xi came into power, he has made changes to the organisational structure of the CCP, giving himself more power, but there are still key institutions that control power within the regime. Politburo Standing Committee, Central Military Commission, and party bureaucracies continue to be the central institutional channels. Unlike Russia, where elite positions are dependent on loyalty to the president, in China, hierarchical positions within the party determine the position of elites. Thus, compared to Russia, China possess stronger institutional constraints and better leadership as the members within the party are not chosen through personal bias.

The GWF theory has also emphasised that the type of authoritarian institutions shapes the information and decision-making processes. Russia's foreign policy displays higher risk-taking behaviour. Russia has repeatedly undertaken military interventions that are high-cost and escalatory in nature. The wars in Georgia (2008), Crimea (2014), and the full-scale invasion (2022) represent the willingness of the country to incur losses, sanctions, and diplomatic isolation, to expand and protect the autonomy of the nation (Rezvani, 2020). From a GWF perspective,

these actions reflect personalist incentive and ambition as military occupations tend to improve domestic stability. P. Lawrence (2022) have shown that when Crimea was invaded and annexed, Putin's approval rating rose to 80%. As observed with the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, personalist leaders sometimes have to escalate the situation as retreat would threaten the credibility of the regime. China's foreign policy shows a completely different attitude, as, despite being assertive, China has been successful in avoiding large-scale wars since 1979. China pursues territorial claims and strategic expansions to the South China Sea through grey-zone tactics and incremental coercion, instead of full-scale war (Zhang, 2022). China has been trying to take control of the South China Sea through island-building and maritime militia operations. Border standoffs with India also demonstrate these characteristics and China's efforts to intimidate (Greene *et al.*, 2021). China's foreign strategy is built on economic statecraft and institutional engagement, efforts such as the Belt and Road Initiative, establishes the geopolitical influence of China globally.

The contrast between the regimes is also visible in their efforts to deal with international pressure. Following the invasion of Ukraine, Russia has accepted the economic isolation that it faces and the loss of Western markets. China, despite tensions with the United States and Indo-Pacific rivals, continues to prioritise participation in global trade and the supply chain. The GWF framework states that, as personalist regimes lack credible international checks, the leaders in these settings are more liable to take risks. Single-party-based regimes such as China

are unable to do this because their leadership is shaped by organisational hierarchies and risk assessments; therefore, China avoids international confrontations that can disrupt its economic interdependence. Authoritarian regimes also differ in establishing control; personalist regimes rely on their loyal elites or siloviki. The research by A. Escribà-Folch *et al.* (2022) also showcases how Russia maintains division within the military and keeps them fragmented to prevent them from coupling against the government. The PLA in China is rooted within the CCP and therefore allows it to make collective decision-making. The ideological and strategic orientation of both nations is also different, as the foreign policy of Russia focuses on sovereignty and identity (Frear & Mazepus, 2021). This type of narratives helps in gathering public support. Likewise, China's strategy is more focused on status enhancement and establishing itself globally through diplomacy for long-term economic influence (Hackenesch & Bader, 2020). This supports the CCP's goals of expanding through development and stability. Overall, the comparison demonstrates a consistent relationship between domestic authority structure and international risk-taking. The Russia and China contrast in the research, therefore, supports the core theoretical understanding of the GWF framework. Regimes that are heavily personalised have weaker institutional constraints but possess higher international risk-taking. Similarly, institutionalised party regimes are more grounded and strategic in their external behaviour. A detailed Table 1 is provided below comparing the two authoritarian regimes and their different qualities.

Table 1. Comparison of authoritarian regimes in Russia and China

Dimension	Russia (personalist regime)	China (single-party regime)
Authority structure	Power in personalist regimes are concentrated around the leader, Putin and his loyal inner circle is thus responsible for all decisions, leading to institutions having less power and inability to take action against the leader.	Authority is held by the CCP through the party institutions and bureaucratic hierarchy within the party. Institutions in China do have power, however, they are operated by the CCP.
Decision-making	Centralised and personalised system, as a result, the decision-making is much faster.	Collective and consultative process involving PSC, CFAC, CMC and party bodies, leading to slower decision-making.
Foreign policy	Higher tolerance for costly military risk as observed through the Crimea and Ukraine wars.	Restrained and incremental strategy, has avoided direct conflict with any country since 1979.
Strategic tools	Military intervention and nationalism.	Grey-zone tactics, Belt and Road initiative and nationalism.
Constraints	Credibility of the leader and survival of the regime.	Economic stability and global trade interests.

Source: compiled by the author based on D.G. Lewis (2020), M. Frear & H. Mazepus (2021), J. Lee (2021), P. Rutland (2022), Y.Y. Ang (2022), M. Grossheim (2022), S. Zhang (2022), D. Makio & A. Fuccille (2023), V.S. Acosta (2024)

In summary, the comparative analysis that has been provided in Table 1 illustrates the difference between Russia and China and the diverse nature of the respective regimes as defined by the GWK framework. The personalist nature of the Russian regime has concentrated the authority, while the decision-making remains restricted to the Putin and his close circle. The regime is seen to have a high tolerance for international risk-taking. China, on the other hand, has a preference for incremental and grounded foreign policy. The CCP brings in institutionalised checks and therefore Xi is not able to make decisions as freely as Putin. These constraints and difference in operational tactics reveal that authoritarian regimes cannot be treated as a uniform category. The following discussion section further builds on these findings and discuss the broader theoretical and policy implications.

The findings of the present research align with the past literature on authoritarian regime variation and foreign policy behaviour, that have been assessed within the literature review section. T. Jost (2024) has argued that authoritarian regimes often insulate the leader from domestic accountability and this allows them to be more risk-tolerant and make international risk-taking more freely. This has been consistent in the findings of the present research as the personalist regime of Putin has allowed costly military interventions in Georgia, Crimea and Ukraine. The lack of institutions to constraint Putin's power is primarily responsible for this. However, the same framework is not applicable for China as the institutionalised party structure leads to more risk evaluation before taking any action. A. Leber *et al.* (2023) have demonstrated personalist regimes such as Putin's have a cult like personality, the lack of internal oversight allowing the

leader to act unilaterally. The results also confirm this as Putin's systematic dismantling of oligarchs and regional power bases corresponds to the conditions A. Leber *et al.* (2023) have discussed. However, the literature essentially focuses on internal mechanisms rather than foreign policy and therefore these internal conditions cannot be connected to the nation's risk-taking behaviour. S. Hellmeier (2021) has researched on how authoritarian regimes exploit foreign pressure to gather more domestic support. P. Lawrence (2022) confirms this as Putin's approval ratings jumped from 65% to 80% after annexation of Crimea. P. Rutland (2022) examined the domestic aspect of Russia's foreign policy, arguing siloviki and oligarchic network to be integral for understanding the Russian government. The findings confirm this as well with the GWF typology as siloviki-based loyalty structure is a defining feature of Russia's personalist regime.

The study conducted by A. Escribà-Folch *et al.* (2022) has stated personalist regimes to maintain fragmented military structure to prevent coups and this leads to deeper involvement during periods of international conflicts, reinforcing the conflict further. The present research confirms that the inner circle of Putin is primarily responsible for military decision-making. On the contrary, China's operations work under collective CCP oversight through the CMC and therefore is more structured. C. Hackenesch & J. Bader (2020) argued that the CCP make use of inter-party contact for diplomacy and advancing their international interests. The findings of the present research have elaborated on the Belt and Road initiative as well as the grey zone tactics in the South China Sea, confirming the assertive nature of China. D. Passioura (2022) argued investment as a method of foreign policy tool in personalist regimes and while the findings of the present research as shown Russia to use economic leverage, military interventions are the primary form of risk-taking. China rather has an investment-focused lens when it comes to foreign policy. Finally, S. Williamson & B. Magaloni (2020) has shown authoritarian regimes often have disagreements within themselves when it comes to decision-making despite the autocratic nature of the regimes. The findings of the present research does not confirm this as in Russia although there are disagreements, these have been suppressed under Putin's centralised power. In China however, these remain embedded within the CCP and therefore decision-making is a much harder process. These distinctions are important to understand the behaviour of the two authoritarian regimes, foreign policy and risk-taking behaviour.

Conclusions

As concluding remarks, the article examines different regime types and domestic authority through risk-taking in authoritarian countries. Even though authoritarian regimes are generally treated as similar concepts, they differ significantly from one another, particularly personalist and single-party regimes. The use of the authoritarian institutions framework developed by Geddes, Wright, and Frantz has also helped in comparing the political systems and foreign policies of Russia and China. The findings for both of the countries have shown that domestic authority have significant impact on the risk tolerance and influence of the foreign policy on the people and other states. Russia is known for following a personalist system in which decision-making is reserved for the head of state. Power within the society is maintained through an informal elite network, and while this reduces institutional constraints that China faces, it also faces high-cost external actions. Quite oppositely, China follows a single-party regime; the authority in this system is embedded directly in the CCP. Despite Xi Jinping being in power, foreign policy decisions are never solely taken by him; there are multiple state institutions and bureaucratic powers that need to be consulted to gain their perspectives before pushing any policy changes. The comparison between both of the regimes thus shows that personalist regimes are more tolerable of international risks, while party-based regimes have to be careful of people's perception and how they are viewed. The Russia-China comparison shows that authoritarian states cannot be analysed as strategically homogeneous actors despite similar regime type and great-power status. The article has therefore proved that studying regime type alone is insufficient and that domestic authority needs to be evaluated for determining foreign policy behaviour. Future research can expand the comparative scope of the research by examining the other authoritarian forms of government in different parts of the world. Further studies may also explore how economic crises, leadership succession, and public opinion on domestic authority also shapes foreign policy behaviour.

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