

United Kingdom-China Relations in the Post-Brexit Era¹

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Abstract: As permanent members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council, the People's Republic of China (China) and United Kingdom (UK) are leading actors of global politics and central states in the current international system. While the UK was a superpower until the mid-20th century and is still one of the most developed economies and influential diplomatic centers of the world, China on the other hand is a candidate for being a new superpower thanks to its rapid economic rise in the last few decades, a serious contender to the only existing superpower, the United States (U.S.), and a rising power in all aspects despite having an authoritarian single-party system led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This study aims to analyze the relationship between China and the United Kingdom in the post-Brexit era. With this goal in mind, the paper will first analyze the recent political-diplomatic developments taking place between the two countries. Secondly, the paper will elaborate on the economic dimension of bilateral relations. The third part of the paper will focus on discussions about post-Brexit bilateral relations. Fourthly, the energy-based relations between Russia and China, and Russia and the UK, will be analyzed by focusing on noteworthy projects. This part will also cover the nuclear power plant case between Beijing and London. The research will be based on the analysis of primary and secondary sources in terms of UK-China relations in English and Turkish languages. In that sense, declarations from the two countries' leaders (Chinese Presidents and UK Prime Ministers) and top state officials (diplomatic representatives and top intelligence officers) will be used as primary

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sources, whereas books, academic articles, think-tank and academic website reports, analyses, and various news in the media will be used as secondary sources.

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1. Introduction

As permanent members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council, the People's Republic of China (China) and United Kingdom (UK) are leading actors of global politics and central states in the current international system. While the UK was a superpower until the mid-20th century and is still one of the most developed economies and influential diplomatic centers of the world, China on the other hand is a candidate for being a new superpower thanks to its rapid economic rise in the last few decades, a serious contender to the only existing superpower, the United States (U.S.), and a rising power in all aspects despite having an authoritarian single-party system led by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

This paper aims to analyze the relationship between China and the United Kingdom in the post-Brexit era. With this goal in mind, the paper will first analyze the recent political-diplomatic developments taking place between the two countries. Secondly, the paper will elaborate on the economic dimension of bilateral relations. Thirdly, the paper will focus on discussions about post-Brexit bilateral relations. Fourthly, the energy-based relations between Russia and China, and Russia and the UK, will be analyzed by focusing on noteworthy projects. This part will also cover the nuclear power plant case between Beijing and London. The research will be based on the analysis of primary and secondary sources in terms of UK-China relations in English and Turkish languages. In that sense, declarations from the two countries' leaders (Chinese Presidents and UK Prime Ministers) and top state officials (diplomatic representatives and top intelligence officers) will be used as primary sources, whereas books, academic articles, think-tank and academic website reports, analyses, and various news in the media will be used as secondary sources.

2. UK-China Relations: Recent History

The United Kingdom became the first Western country to establish diplomatic relations with China by recognizing the communist government in Beijing on January 6, 1950 during the Prime Ministry of Clement Attlee. While this particular policy took criticism from other Western capitals, according to David C. Wolf, to understand the British foreign policy of the

time, one should keep in mind former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's famous dictum: "*The reason for having diplomatic relations is not to confer a compliment, but to secure a convenience*"⁴. Accordingly, Wolf thought that although London supported the nationalists against the communists during the civil war and never approved of the communist system, in order to protect its interests and investments in China and within the region, it decided to establish formal diplomatic relations with Beijing.⁵ In that sense, Labour Party MP Wilfrid Vernon's speech criticizing the Chiang Kai-shek government on January 23, 1948 and then-British ambassador to China Ralph Stevenson's (1946-1950) reports suggesting that British interests could be better defended with a communist government became important turning points for Whitehall.⁶ Following diplomatic recognition, diplomatic relations actively started with the opening of the diplomatic residences at the level of *chargé d'affaires* on June 17, 1954.⁷ However, the two countries did not exchange ambassadors for the first time until 1972. Accordingly, Sir John Addis (1972-1974)⁸ became the first British ambassador to Beijing and Song Zhiguang (1972-1977)⁹ became the first Chinese ambassador to London. The two countries also exchanged military attachés in the same year. However, Sino-British relations could not be developed rapidly in the 1950s due to the Korean War (1950-1953) and the emergence of the Cold War which tore the two countries apart, and into different geopolitical blocs.

But with the 'Sino-Soviet split' in the 1960s, China had begun to transform into an important actor for Western countries, including the UK. Through diplomacy orchestrated by U.S. National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, President Richard Nixon and the American administration recognized China in 1971 and China replaced Taiwan in the UN Security Council. As a result, Sino-British relations also began to develop in the 1970s and the 1980s. In November 1978, during the Prime Ministry of James Callaghan, the two

⁴ David C. Wolf (1983), "'To Secure a Convenience': Britain Recognizes China – 1950", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 18, No: 2, April 1983, p. 299.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 300.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 302-303.

⁷ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United Kingdom (2003), "Backgrounder: Sino-British Relations", Date of Accession: 21.09.2021 from <http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/eng/wjzc/zygx/t27071.htm>.

⁸ After Addis, British ambassadors to Beijing are: Edward Youde (1974-1978), Percy Cradock (1978-1984), Richard Evans (1984-1988), Alan Donald (1988-1991), Robin McLaren (1991-1994), Leonard Appleyard (1994-1997), Anthony Galsworthy (1997-2002), Christopher Hum (2002-2006), William Ehrman (2006-2010), Sebastian Wood (2010-2015), and Barbara Woodward (2015-).

⁹ After Zhiguang, Chinese ambassadors to London are: Ke Hua (1978-1983), Chen Zhaoyuan (1983-1985), Ji Chaozhu (1987-1991), Hu Dingyi (1985-1987), Ma Yuzhen (1991-1995), Jiang Enzhu (1995-1997), Ma Zhengang (1997-2002), Zha Peixin (2002-2006), Fu Ying (2006-2009), Liu Xiaoming (2009-2021), and Zheng Zeguang (2021-).

countries' Foreign Ministers David Owen and Wang Chen signed the Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation and over 20 other agreements or memoranda were signed by relevant departments or institutions.¹⁰ Following this agreement, the first official state visit between the two countries took place in October 1979 when the Chinese Prime Minister Hua Guofeng visited London. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher on the other hand visited China twice in 1982 and 1984.¹¹ The second visit was particularly important since the two countries signed the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 to determine the future of Hong Kong and the conditions of its handover to China. The agreement was based on two main issues: (1) Hong Kong be delivered to China in 1997, (2) but retain the right to keep its autonomy for 50 more years. British monarch Queen Elizabeth II also visited China during this period and her 1986 visit marked an important turning point for the inclusion of China into the international system. During the 1980s, China's privileged position in the Western world persisted due to Beijing's problems with Soviet Russia, starting with the Sino-Soviet split and Western supported Chinese market reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping.¹²

But the rapprochement between London and Beijing ended sharply due to the 1989 Tiananmen Square Incident. After this event, Beijing was again singled out as a non-Western and non-democratic state and Western sanctions began to be implemented against China.¹³ Although Conservative PM John Major's visit to Beijing in 1997 refreshed bilateral relations, cold winds between the two capitals continued due to the Hong Kong issue and negative stereotypes against China, mostly caused by the Tiananmen Incident, until Labour chair Tony Blair became the new British leader.

The Tony Blair era (1997-2007) on the other hand was very positive for British-Chinese relations. The two countries peacefully solved the Hong Kong issue in 1997 and Hong Kong was delivered to Chinese sovereignty under special conditions. The last British Governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, defined British rule in the island by the notion of "*responsibility*" as opposed to "*colonialism*" during his farewell speech, and praised the developed status of

¹⁰ Jon Agar (2013), "'It's Spring Time for Science': Renewing China-UK Scientific Relations in the 1970s", *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, Vol. 67, No: 1, 20 March 2013, p. 17.

¹¹ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United Kingdom (2003), "Backgrounder: Sino-British Relations", Date of Accession: 21.09.2021 from <http://www.chinese-embassy.org.uk/eng/wjzc/zygx/t27071.htm>.

¹² Ozan Örmeci (2020), *İngiltere (Birleşik Krallık) Siyaseti*, Kitapyurdu version, İstanbul: Urzeni Yayınevi, p. 390.

¹³ Qingguo Jia (2008), "Learning to live with the hegemon: China's policy toward the U.S.A. since the end of the Cold War", in *China-U.S. Relations Transformed: Perspective and strategic interactions* (ed. Suisheng Zhao), London: Routledge, p. 46.

Hong Kong.¹⁴ In 1998, Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Zhu Rongji exchanged official visits and spoke of “*comprehensive partnership*” for the first time.¹⁵ Cultural and education-based relations progressed during the Blair period, and with China’s entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, economic relations also began to develop rapidly as China became an important center for the global economy via new market reforms.¹⁶ Thus, the Blair period -similar to the David Cameron era- represents a ‘golden age’ in terms of British-Chinese relations.

During the short period of Gordon Brown rule (2007-2010), the optimistic mood of the Blair period continued. The two countries even initiated the UK-China Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD) talks to add an institutional mechanism to their official relations.¹⁷

The best years in Britain-China relations began when Conservative leader David Cameron became the new British PM in 2010. The Cameron period (2010-2016) is often cited as the ‘golden age’ in bilateral relations due to developing economic relations and cultural ties, as well as the emergence of mutual political sympathy. Cameron visited China for the first time in 2013 with a large delegation of business people and offered a model of “*economic growth partnership*” to Beijing.¹⁸ Relations developed so quickly that Britain began to be considered as “*China’s best friend*” in the Western world despite the negative historical background.¹⁹ In 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping’s official visit to Britain became a sensation in international media and the four day visit led to the spread of a positive atmosphere and optimistic mood for the future of bilateral relations. With this visit, the two countries agreed on the establishment of a new nuclear plant in Hinkley Point, Somerset, and the two leaders gave very positive messages for the future of economic relations.²⁰ As part of the visit, President Xi visited Manchester City football club’s training facilities together with Cameron.

¹⁴ AP Archive (2015), “Hong Kong: Handover To China: Chris Patten Bids Farewell”, 23.07.2015, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTEe4rgx6sU>.

¹⁵ BBC (1998), “Blair heralds new ‘partnership’ with China”, 06.10.1998, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/187381.stm>.

¹⁶ Ray Barrell & Amanda Choy & Simon Kirby (2006), “Globalisation and UK Trade”, *National Institute Economic Review*, No: 195 (January 2006), p. 64.

¹⁷ Ozan Örmeci (2020), *İngiltere (Birleşik Krallık) Siyaseti*, p. 392.

¹⁸ BBC (2013), “David Cameron promises China ‘growth partnership’”, 03.12.2013, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-25176613>.

¹⁹ Philip Le Corre (2015), “A New Special Relationship: China and the United Kingdom Rekindle Their Ties”, *Foreign Affairs*, 19.10.2015, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2015-10-19/new-special-relationship>.

²⁰ Jessica Elgot (2015), “Xi Jinping UK visit roundup: red flags, red carpets and Greene King”, *The Guardian*, 23.10.2015, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/23/chinese-president-xi-jinping-uk-visit-roundup>.

Moreover, Xi's toast with the charming Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton, caused a stir in the media. In addition, in 2015, 50 billion dollars' worth of economic agreements were declared between the two capitals.²¹ Relations developed so quickly during this period that the then-British ambassador to Beijing, Sebastian Wood, stated in 2014 that "*in the last 18 months, more investments came to Britain from China compared to the earlier 30 years*".²² The 2015 visit was also important because the two countries officially declared each other as "*comprehensive strategic partner[s]*".²³ After this visit, a special fund worth 750 million pounds was set up with British PM David Cameron assuming a special role to take charge of transportation and other infrastructural investments between the two countries as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).²⁴ In addition, Chinese banks such as the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and the China Construction Bank were granted the right to open branches in Britain in the same year. Furthermore, with the efforts of the British Council, the two countries mutually declared Cultural Exchange Year in 2015 for the first time in their history.²⁵

If we have to make an analysis of the Cameron period, we can conclude that both countries acted with an economic mind during this era and ignored their political and cultural differences for the sake of economic growth and profit. This helped the Chinese public to get rid of the bad memories of their history related to the 'Century of Humiliation', and helped the British public to accept China with all its perceived peculiarities. That is why; many experts define the Cameron era as the 'golden age' of British-Chinese relations. While Cary Huang thought this term exaggerated due to persisting political disagreements between the two capitals²⁶, Kerry Brown wrote that using this term is right because China was given the

²¹ Oliver Turner (2018), "The Golden Era of UK-China Relations Meets Brexit", *The Diplomat*, 18.12.2018, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://thediplomat.com/2018/12/the-golden-era-of-uk-china-relations-meets-brexite/>.

²² Rebecca Fabrizi (2015), "China and Europe", in *Shared Destiny* (eds. Geremie R. Barmé & Linda Jaivin & Jeremy Goldkorn), ANU Press, p. 101.

²³ Gov.uk (2015), "UK-China Joint Statement 2015", 22.10.2015, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-china-joint-statement-2015>.

²⁴ Nicola Slawson (2017), "David Cameron to lead £750m UK-China investment initiative", *The Guardian*, 16.12.2017, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/dec/16/david-cameron-to-lead-750m-uk-china-investment-initiative>.

²⁵ British Council (2015), "A golden future for China and the UK?", October 2015, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/insight-articles/golden-future-china-uk>.

²⁶ Cary Huang (2018), "A 'golden era' in China-UK relations. Really, Auntie May?", *This Week in Asia*, 10.02.2018, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/2132776/golden-era-china-uk-relations-really-auntie-may>.

credit it deserved in Britain during this era²⁷. The only crisis of the Cameron period took place when the British PM met with Tibet's spiritual leader the Dalai Lama in 2012.²⁸ Moreover, after the unexpected 'leave' decision came out of the Brexit referendum in 2016, relations began to be stagnating as Britain aimed at restoring its historical ties with the U.S. and Commonwealth states in the post-Brexit era.

During Theresa May's term as Prime Minister (2016-2019), the two countries tried to keep the high status and level of bilateral relations, but political problems began to materialize. Theresa May declared her "*Global Britain*" vision after becoming the new PM and underlined the aim to develop relations with all countries.²⁹ Accordingly, the two countries successfully completed the London-Yiwu railway project in 2017.³⁰ Moreover, Chinese renminbi (RMB) was given the right to be used in the London Stock Exchange in 2016.³¹ Although the May era was in some ways the continuation of the Cameron period, according to Philip Le Corre, May was less optimistic and willing about relations with Beijing³², a view that was supported by Chow, Han, and Li as well.³³ During this period, then-Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond stated that they were ready to provide 25 billion pounds in financial support to the BRI.³⁴ Thanks to the progress made in the Cameron period, the UK became the 8th biggest trade partner of China and rose to second position among European states.³⁵ In addition, Prime Minister May visited China in early 2018 with a group of British business people and signed 9.3 billion pounds' worth of economic deals in Beijing.³⁶ In that sense, the

²⁷ Gökhan Kurtaran (2015), "İngiltere-Çin ilişkileri 'altın dönemini' yaşıyor", *Anadolu Ajansı*, 20.10.2015, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/ingiltere-cin-iliskileri-altin-donemini-yasiyor/448519>.

²⁸ Ali Murat Taşkent (2015), "Çin-İngiltere ilişkilerinin 'Altın Çağı'", *AVİM*, Comment No: 2015 / 134, 02.11.2015, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://avim.org.tr/tr/Yorum/CIN-INGiltere-ILISKILERININ-ALTIN-CAGI>.

²⁹ Brexit Central (2017), "Theresa May's Global Britain Speech (17th January 2017)", Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUONfH1B-sk>.

³⁰ Kira Godovanyuk (2019), "Contradictions of the "Golden Era" in UK-China Relations", RIAC, 19.04.2019, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/contradictions-of-the-golden-era-in-uk-china-relations/>.

³¹ Philip Le Corre (2018), "Brexit: What's Next for the China-UK Relationship?", Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 19.02.2018, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/02/19/brexit-what-s-next-for-china-uk-relationship-pub-75633>.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Wilfred M. Chow & Enze Han & Xiaojun Li (2019), "Brexit identities and British public opinion on China", *International Affairs*, Vol. 95, No: 6, November 2019, p. 1369.

³⁴ Gov.uk (2017), "Economic talks herald Golden Era in UK-China relations", 16.12.2017, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/economic-talks-herald-golden-era-in-uk-china-relations>.

³⁵ Kira Godovanyuk (2019), "Contradictions of the "Golden Era" in UK-China Relations", RIAC, 19.04.2019, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/contradictions-of-the-golden-era-in-uk-china-relations/>.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

May period was the continuation of Cameron's term in the economic domain, whereas in politics, with the 'Trump effect', Britain began to become distanced from Beijing.

The ongoing Boris Johnson era (2019-) is still unclear in terms of Britain-China relations. Although PM Johnson previously made statements showing his good will to make more business with China, his close stance to the U.S. and Britain's decision to join the recently inaugurated AUKUS shows that the current British administration politically distances itself from Beijing. Moreover, since the UK has close ties and a 'special relationship' with the U.S. and the current U.S. President Joe Biden is not very much different than previous President Donald Trump in terms of his approach to China, it might be difficult to attain the success level of the Cameron period during Johnson's leadership. One other thing to be mentioned here is the historical political stance of British conservatism against communist regimes, both as an ideological motive and a traditional political behavior.

3. Economic Dimension of Bilateral Relations

The most important aspect of British-Chinese relations is based on economic relations. Commercial relations reached a record level during David Cameron's tenure in office. However, after Cameron, due to emerging political problems, U.S. obstruction, the problematic Brexit process, and the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a slowdown in bilateral economic relations. The good thing about economic relations is that the two countries still do not identify each other as hostile or competing states. According to Yu Jie for instance, China considers the UK as an important gate for the 500 million European market and an important (devil's) advocate for China's status as a free-market country.³⁷ Although Britain has lost its advantage of being an EU country following Brexit, London's advocacy for a market-based China -with its momentous effects on global finance and international media- is still very valuable for Beijing. According to official statistics published by the Department for International Trade, as of February 2021, China was the 4th biggest trading partner of Britain after the U.S., Germany, and the Netherlands.³⁸ Although trade with China constitutes 6.1% of the total picture, considering the fact that trade with the U.S.

³⁷ Yu Jie (2017), "After Brexit: Risks and Opportunities to EU-China Relations", *Global Policy*, Vol. 8, Issue: S4, June 2017, pp. 109-110.

³⁸ Department for International Trade (2021), "UK Trade in Numbers", February 2021, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/964119/210225_Pocketbook_UK_Trade_in_Numbers_2021_Web_Accessible.pdf, p. 6.

reaches 16.3%, economic relations with China are not yet as vital as relations with the U.S.³⁹. Moreover, Britain has a trade surplus when it comes to trade with the U.S., whereas in trade with China, London has a large trade deficit. In that sense, one can conclude that relations with the U.S. are more important for London compared to relations with China in terms of economy. However, one should keep in mind that during the 2018-2019 period, trade with the U.S. increased only 11.6%, whereas trade with China had a remarkable 24.7% rise.⁴⁰

In addition, economic relations with China are not only about trade. China has also been making large investments into Britain in recent years. In 2017, the size of these investments reached 20 billion pounds.⁴¹ Among these investments, one can list the nuclear power plant in Hinkley Point-Somerset, the Cheesegrater building that was purchased by Hong Kong-based Chinese firm CC Land, metasearch engine firm and travel agency Skyscanner that was bought by the Chinese Ctrip.com International, toy retailer Hamleys that was purchased by C Banner International Holdings, and cereal firm Weetabix that was bought by the Chinese Bright Food company. Moreover, Chinese firms and business people bought large shares of seven popular Premier League teams including Southampton FC, Reading, West Bromwich Albion, Aston Villa, Birmingham City, Wolverhampton Wanderers, and Manchester City.⁴² Other Chinese investments in Britain can be listed as the airports of Heathrow and Manchester, in addition to the Pizza Express and Sunseekers companies.⁴³ It must not be forgotten that, in recent years, Britain was the primary choice for Chinese direct investments in Europe with a total of 23 billion euros.⁴⁴ Lastly, China also made significant contributions to British universities in donations. For example, former Prime Minister Wen Jiabao's family donated 3.7 million pounds to Cambridge University in 2014 to endow a professorship for Chinese development studies.⁴⁵

According to economy expert Winnie King, when analyzing Britain-China economic relations, one has to focus on investments and the positive symbolic value of making business with

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

⁴¹ BBC (2018), "Reality Check: How does China-UK trade compare globally?", 02.02.2018, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-42821084>.

⁴² *China Daily* (2017), "Chinese investor gets 80% stake in Southampton FC", 16.08.2017, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2017-08/16/content_30668027.htm.

⁴³ Kira Godovanyuk (2019), "Contradictions of the "Golden Era" in UK-China Relations", RIAC, 19.04.2019, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/contradictions-of-the-golden-era-in-uk-china-relations/>.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ University World News (2014), "Cambridge endowment charity linked to China government", 13.06.2014, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20140612205004101>.

China in the post-Brexit age as well.⁴⁶ Another economy expert, Terry Chapendama, also thinks that Britain will be likely to make business with China in the coming years despite political problems.⁴⁷ Another strategic gain for Britain and for the Western world in developing economic relations with China is to prevent China from becoming totally sided with Russia. In recent years, China has made large deals with Russia including Power of Siberia⁴⁸, and has also made a long-term deal with Iran. In that sense, the anti-Western bloc gains strength with current developments such as Iranian membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), of which China and Russia are already members. Thus, the British anchor to keep China closer to the Western world with economic relations might also be a geopolitical asset in the medium and long term. However, with the U.S. effect, British-Chinese relations began to develop along lines of discord during Boris Johnson's term.

4. Post-Brexit Era

The UK finally completed the Brexit process in late 2020 and became a non-EU member country by 2021. The Brexit process coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic and created a difficult challenge for the Johnson government; but the Conservative government has so far been successful and showed its power and solid popular support in the 2021 local elections. In addition, since Brexit, the Johnson government has been trying to make new free trade agreements in order shape the country's future. The UK so far has made free trade deals with many countries including Japan, Australia, Turkey, Canada, Israel, South Korea, Ukraine, Vietnam, Norway, Iceland, and the EU.⁴⁹ One crucial decision that London will be making during this process will be whether or not to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) agreement, to which the government has given positive signals.⁵⁰ On the other hand, deciding whether to sign a free trade deal with

⁴⁶ *TRT World* (2021), "Roundtable: UK-China Relations", 23.02.2021, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UslP90USkgY>.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Ozan Örmeci & Sina Kısacık (2021), "Şanghay İşbirliği Örgütü'nün Enerji Güvenliği Politikaları Çerçevesinde Çin-Rusya İlişkilerini Anlamak", *İstanbul Kent Üniversitesi İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Dergisi*, Vol. 2, No: 1, p. 17.

⁴⁹ Tom Edgington (2021), "Brexit: What trade deals has the UK done so far?", *BBC*, 15.06.2021, Date of Accession: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-47213842>.

⁵⁰ Gov.uk (2020), "UK approach to joining the CPTPP trade agreement", 17.06.2020, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-approach-to-joining-the-cptpp-trade-agreement>.

China would be the other critical choice London will be doing in terms of British-Chinese relations. So far, the government has not made any positive step for making such a deal.⁵¹

Although Prime Minister Johnson so far has not made any sharp comments against China, he has been taking the U.S. side in strategic issues and relations between London and Beijing have begun to become more problematic during his term. For instance, the UK recently joined the AUKUS pact with the U.S. and Australia.⁵² Although this agreement did not specifically point out a single country, all experts underline that China is the new target of these three states.⁵³ Furthermore, relations have been evolving into more of a tension-based process day by day. For example, during the Johnson era, London removed the Chinese Huawei company from its 5G network, decided to grant citizenship to hundreds of thousands of Hong Kong citizens⁵⁴, annulled the broadcasting right of the China Global Television Network (CGTN) in Britain -as a response, China annulled the broadcasting of BBC in China⁵⁵, and sent its HMS Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier together with a fleet from the Royal Navy to the South China Sea⁵⁶. These are clear signs of the anti-China attitude of the British Conservative government. The main problems in bilateral relations are caused by the U.S. effect as well as some political disagreements and disputes including the Hong Kong issue, Uighur persecution, the Covid-19 pandemic, Huawei scandal, and reactions against the BRI.

4.1. U.S. Effect (Barrier) on UK-China Relations

The U.S. is still the only superpower in the world. With its heavy weight on the world stage, the U.S. has begun to consider China as the biggest threat to its leadership position in recent years. Washington initiated its 'Pivot to Asia' policy during Barack Obama's term (2009-2017) to counterweight China, and tried to establish the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) to engage in Asia-Pacific politics more directly. During Donald Trump's presidency (2017-2021),

⁵¹ William James (2021), "We need to talk about trade with China, UK parliament tells PM Johnson", *Reuters*, 24.02.2021, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-china-trade-idUSKBN2AO22S>.

⁵² 10 Downing Street (2021), "WATCH LIVE: Statement by PM Johnson, President Biden and PM Morrison on AUKUS", 15.09.2021, Date of Accession: 29.10.2021 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4chEI8Q5PE>.

⁵³ BBC (2021), "Aukus: UK, US and Australia launch pact to counter China", 16.09.2021, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-58564837>.

⁵⁴ Thomas des Garets Geddes (2020), "UK-China Relations: From Gold to Dust", *The Diplomat*, 02.10.2020, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://thediplomat.com/2020/10/uk-china-relations-from-gold-to-dust/>.

⁵⁵ BBC (2021), "China bans BBC World News from broadcasting", 12.02.2021, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-56030340>.

⁵⁶ *Al Jazeera* (2021), "UK to send Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier to Japan, S Korea", 27.04.2021, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/27/uks-queen-elizabeth-aircraft-carrier-to-deploy-to-japan-s-korea>.

Washington began to blame China for its regional activism. The Trump era was also distinguished by the White House's choice of hostile language towards Beijing. With his typically unconventional style, Trump blamed China for the spread of the Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic and started trade wars with Beijing. The Joe Biden term (2021-) on the other hand started with similar tactics and equal demonization of China. Thus, earlier contacts and negotiations between the two states remained unproductive.⁵⁷ Nowadays, many American experts also question whether Washington has been acting too tough on China⁵⁸ and they underline that the choice of a military-first approach could be risky.⁵⁹

Studies on China became a popular academic interest in the U.S. in the 2000s before being politicized. We can roughly categorize two distinct groups in Western academia in terms of relations with China.⁶⁰ The 'liberal optimists' are the ones who sincerely believe that relations with China should not be conducted as a zero-sum game, and that cooperation with Beijing is necessary in many fields including climate change and North Korea. Famous political scientists such as Joseph Nye and Graham Allison could be considered as part of the liberal optimist group. Nye pointed out that although China will soon replace the U.S. as the largest economy in the world, it does not mean that China will be more powerful than the U.S., and advised rational policies to both sides by underlining the fact that China is not a challenger to the U.S.⁶¹ Allison on the other hand, in his popular book *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?*⁶², reminds us that 12 out of 16 great power struggles in the last millennium resulted in war and both sides should act cautiously to avoid a disaster.⁶³ 'Alarmist realists' on the other hand refers to hawkish thinkers who believe that a confrontation with China is inevitable and the U.S. should take a tough stance starting from today. The term 'Blue Team' is also used to describe the alarmist realists. The Blue Team is composed of people such as Richard Fisher, Gary Bauer, William Triplett, William Kristol,

⁵⁷ See; BBC (2021), "US and China trade angry words at high-level Alaska talks", 19.03.2021, Date of Accession: 29.10.2021 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-56452471>.

⁵⁸ *Foreign Affairs* (2021), "Is U.S. Foreign Policy Too Hostile to China? Foreign Affairs Asks the Experts", 19.10.2021, Date of Accession: 24.10.2021 from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ask-the-experts/2021-10-19/us-foreign-policy-too-hostile-china>.

⁵⁹ Van Jackson (2021), "America Is Turning Asia Into a Powder Keg: The Perils of a Military-First Approach", *Foreign Affairs*, 22.10.2021, Date of Accession: 24.10.2021 from <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2021-10-22/america-turning-asia-powder-keg>.

⁶⁰ Ozan Örmeci (2018), *Ejder'in Ayak Sesleri: Dünya Siyasetinde Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti*, İstanbul: Cinius Yayınları, pp. 71-72.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-62.

⁶² See; Graham Allison (2017), *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?*, New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.

⁶³ Ozan Örmeci (2018), *Ejder'in Ayak Sesleri: Dünya Siyasetinde Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti*, pp. 63-69.

Robert Kagan, Bill Gertz, Ross H. Munro, David Blumenthal, Peter Navarro, and John Mearsheimer.⁶⁴ Especially John Mearsheimer -with his “*Offensive Realism*” approach- became an influential opinion leader in recent years with his close stance to the U.S. Army and hawkish views on China policy.⁶⁵

The U.S. is very much influential over British politics and foreign policy. With its 16.3% share, Washington is the most important trade partner of the UK. There is no doubt that London will always choose Washington if it has to make a choice. The recent British decision to join the AUKUS pact could be perceived as proof of this position. However, it is also highly questionable whether London will be very willing to make a choice. While the Brexit era has created some existential and identity-based crises, it is obvious that Britain under the rule of Boris Johnson has been acting in closer cooperation with its historical allies such as the U.S. and Australia. However, due to the benefits of doing business with China, economic and diplomatic relations continue between Beijing and London. So, the first and greatest difficulty in British-Chinese relations in the future will be the U.S. effect over bilateral relations. However, this could turn into an advantage for British-Chinese relations in the medium and long run as well if Washington acts too carelessly in dictating its terms to its historical ally.

4.2. Hong Kong Issue

Hong Kong was a British colony for almost 150 years between 1841 and 1997 (except for the 1941-1945 period). With the 1984 Sino-British Declaration, Hong Kong’s handover to China was decided in advance between London and Beijing. Accordingly, Hong Kong was given the right to keep its autonomy for 50 more years after its handover to China in 1997. This system is known as the ‘one country, two systems’ model. However, in recent years, pro-democratic voices in Hong Kong have claimed that China does not meet the requirements of the deal. The reactions started first in 2014 with the social protests known as the “*Umbrella Movement*”.⁶⁶ According to members of the movement, the new security law passed by

⁶⁴ Robert G. Kaiser & Steven Mufson (2000), “‘Blue Team’ Draws a Hard Line on Beijing: Action on Hill Reflects Informal Group’s Clout”, *The Washington Post*, 22.02.2000, Date of Accession: 24.10.2021 from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/WPcap/2000-02/22/004r-022200-idx.html>.

⁶⁵ Ozan Örmeci (2018), *Ejder’in Ayak Sesleri: Dünya Siyasetinde Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti*, pp. 52-58.

⁶⁶ BBC (2019), “Hong Kong protests: What is the ‘Umbrella Movement’?”, 28.09.2019, Date of Accession: 29.10.2021 from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/49862757>.

Beijing makes it easier to punish protesters and reduces the city's autonomy.⁶⁷ Thus, severe protests have been taking place in recent months in Hong Kong, and London gives open support to the protesters. Moreover, the British government has decided to grant citizenship right to Hong Kong citizens due to this new security law and related practices.⁶⁸ This policy pursued by Britain takes criticism from Beijing and spoils bilateral relations.

4.3. Uighurs Problem

The most severe issue between the two countries in the last few years is the situation of the Uighurs. Uighurs (or Uyghurs) are a Turkic Muslim minority living in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region (known as East Turkestan in Turkey), one of China's 55 officially recognized ethnic minorities. British media institution the *BBC* has frequently reported human rights violations related to the education camps established by the Chinese State to rehabilitate Uighurs in recent years.⁶⁹ Then-British Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, Dominic Raab, became one of the harshest China critics due to these education camps, and accused Beijing of forcefully implementing sterilization policies against Uighurs.⁷⁰ Although no one can ever be one hundred per cent sure of the true intention of these camps, it is a fact that the Chinese State does not deny the presence of these camps anymore; rather, Beijing focuses on the positive intentions and outcomes of the camps where almost a million people are rehabilitated. However, British Parliament recently passed a law to identify the activities of these camps as "*genocide*".⁷¹ Alongside Raab, Conservative Party MP Tom Tugendhat, who recently established the China Research Group (CRG)⁷², also draws attention with his anti-China activities. *CRITürk* radio executive editor Kamil Erdoğan on the other hand claims that Western media institutions deliberately spread false and

⁶⁷ *BBC* (2020), "Hong Kong security law: What is it and is it worrying?", 30.06.2020, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-52765838>.

⁶⁸ *BBC* (2020), "Hong Kong: UK makes citizenship offer to residents", 01.07.2020, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-53246899>.

⁶⁹ Some examples from *BBC's* coverage of the camps: *BBC News* (2019), "Inside China's 'thought transformation' camps - BBC News", 18.06.2019, Date of Accession: 27.10.2021 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wmld2ZP3h0c>; John Sudworth (2019), "Searching for truth in China's Uighur 're-education' camps", *BBC*, 21.06.2019, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-china-blog-48700786>; *BBC* (2019), "Data leak reveals how China 'brainwashes' Uighurs in prison camps", 24.11.2019, Date of Accession: 28.10.2019 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-50511063>; *BBC News* (2019), "China's secret 'brainwashing' camps - BBC News", 25.11.2019, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDGD896WOPc>.

⁷⁰ *BBC* (2019), "UK accuses China of 'gross' human rights abuses against Uighurs", 19.07.2020, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-53463403>.

⁷¹ *Reuters* (2021), "UK parliament declares genocide in China's Xinjiang; Beijing condemns move", 22.04.2021, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-parliament-declares-genocide-chinas-xinjiang-raises-pressure-johnson-2021-04-22/>.

⁷² For the website of the institution, see; <https://chinaresearchgroup.org/>.

exaggerated news about China.⁷³ This problem increases tensions and leads to many other problems. For instance, the British government recently expelled three Chinese journalists from Britain due to spying allegations⁷⁴ and cancelled the broadcasting license of the *China Global Television Network (CGTN)* in Britain. As a response, China cancelled the broadcasting right of the *BBC* in China.⁷⁵ Some experts, including Andy Mok for instance, underlined that the “golden age has turned into ice age” in British-Chinese relations recently and a “new Cold War” was started.⁷⁶ Jonathan Marcus on the other hand used this term for U.S.-China relations.⁷⁷

4.4. Covid-19 Pandemic

The Covid-19 or coronavirus pandemic also negatively affected British-Chinese relations as well as China’s relations with many Western countries. Since the pandemic was first detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan and the then-U.S. President Donald Trump demonized Beijing, many Western governments have begun to accuse China of holding responsibility for the spread of virus. For instance, former British intelligence (MI6) chief John Sawers claimed that China deliberately hid the virus and has a responsibility for its spread.⁷⁸ Then-Chinese ambassador to London, Liu Xiaoming, on the other hand, during his speech at Chatham House in March 2020, underlined that China has shown a great capacity in dealing with the pandemic, and the World Health Organization (WHO) also praised Beijing for its efforts.⁷⁹ Some Western politicians even asserted that China should pay reparations for the damage caused by Covid-19. This issue turned out to be another troubling problem between London and Beijing.

4.5. Huawei Scandal

⁷³ Kamil Erdoğan (2021), *Bilmediğimiz Çin*, İstanbul: Kırmızı Kedi Yayınevi, pp. 35-56.

⁷⁴ Dan Sabbagh & Patrick Wintour (2021), “UK quietly expelled Chinese spies who posed as journalists”, *The Guardian*, 05.02.2021, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/05/uk-quietly-expelled-chinese-spies-who-posed-as-journalists>.

⁷⁵ *BBC* (2021), “China bans BBC World News from broadcasting”, 12.02.2021, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-56030340>.

⁷⁶ *TRT World* (2021), “Roundtable: UK-China Relations”, 23.02.2021, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UslP90USkgY>.

⁷⁷ Jonathan Marcus (2021), “ABD ve Çin arasında yeni bir 'Soğuk Savaş' mı başlıyor?”, *BBC Türkçe*, 17.03.2021, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-56427609>.

⁷⁸ *Milliyet* (2020), “İngiltere, Çin'den corona virüs tazminatı istiyor!”, 20.04.2020, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/dunya/ingiltere-cinden-corona-virus-tazminat-istiyor-6193325>.

⁷⁹ *Chatham House* (2020), “China’s Foreign Policy”, 02.03.2020, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from <https://www.chathamhouse.org/events/all/members-event/chinas-foreign-policy>.

Another problem emerged between China and Britain recently due to Huawei, a Chinese technology giant. Under U.S. pressure, London recently removed the Huawei Company from its 5G network. Then-Chinese ambassador to London, Liu Xiaoming, criticized this decision and said that it could negatively affect economic relations and Chinese investments in Britain.⁸⁰ Western hesitation over Huawei is related to the company's relations with the Chinese State. Former British diplomat Charles Parton's report for RUSI (Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies), which basically asserted that giving 5G technology infrastructure to Huawei is naive and irresponsible behavior, also changed the perception of the company in Britain.⁸¹

4.6. Reactions against the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Chinese President Xi Jinping introduced his ambitious Belt and Road Initiative in 2013 during his visit to Kazakhstan. To be completed in 2049, the project -also known as the "One Belt, One Road" or the OBOR in short- is a global infrastructure development strategy encompassing 70 countries.⁸² This project is vital for Chinese plans for the future and the development of global trade in the 21st century. Even the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) in 2015 is related to this project according to some experts. London, during the Prime Ministry of David Cameron, became a founding member of AIIB⁸³ and has always made supportive comments for the BRI until recently⁸⁴. However, some Western states, and primarily the U.S., are critical of this initiative. According to their view, this project will increase Chinese influence over other states and will pose a great risk for the future of democratic regimes. Indian scholar Brahma Chellaney for instance introduced the concept of "debt trap diplomacy" to explain Chinese behavior in economic diplomacy.⁸⁵ However, Chatham House analysts Lee Jones and Shahar Hameiri concluded that the project does not have specific geopolitical goals and it is rather based on an

⁸⁰ BirGün (2020), "Çin'den İngiltere'ye uyarı: Huawei'yi yasaklamak size pahalıya mal olacak", 15.07.2020, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from <https://www.birgun.net/haber/cin-den-ingiltere-ye-uyari-huawei-yi-yasaklamak-size-pahaliya-mal-olacak-308461>.

⁸¹ Charles Parton (2019), "China–UK Relations: Where to Draw the Border Between Influence and Interference?", RUSI – Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, February 2019, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/20190220_chinese_interference_parton_web.pdf, p. 26.

⁸² Ozan Örmeci (2018), *Ejder'in Ayak Sesleri: Dünya Siyasetinde Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti*, İstanbul: Cinius Yayınları, pp. 194-195.

⁸³ BBC Türkçe (2015), "Çin'den Dünya Bankası'na rakip: Asya Altyapı Yatırım Bankası", 29.06.2015, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from https://www.bbc.com/turkce/ekonomi/2015/06/150629_asya_altyapi_bankasi.

⁸⁴ Brenda Goh, "Britain calls China's Belt and Road Initiative a 'vision'", *Reuters*, 26 Nisan 2019, Erişim Adresi: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-silkroad-britain-idUKKCN1S20NZ> (Erişim Tarihi: 21 Temmuz 2021).

⁸⁵ Brahma Chellaney (2017), "China's Debt Trap Diplomacy", Project Syndicate, 23.01.2017, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/china-one-belt-one-road-loans-debt-by-brahma-chellaney-2017-01>.

economic mentality.⁸⁶ While Western countries such as Italy and Turkey supported the project, G7 countries recently decided to develop an alternative project to the BRI.⁸⁷ Thus, the BRI poses another obstacle to British-Chinese relations, although so far British PM Boris Johnson has refrained from making negative statements about the project.

4.3. Energy Security Dimension in Bilateral Relations

In this part of the paper, China and the United Kingdom's relations with the Russian Federation will be examined through several energy projects within the perspective of the energy security dimension of bilateral relations. First of all, the Russian-Chinese energy relationships will be analyzed. Secondly, energy projects between Russia and the United Kingdom will be studied. Thirdly, the nuclear energy issue between Beijing and London will be detailed as a specific case study.

4.3.1. Fundamental Energy Transportation Projects between Russia and China

According to the *Oil and Gas Journal*, China has 3 trillion cubic meters (tcm) of proven gas reserves. But China National Petroleum Company (CNPC), a state company, marks that the country holds 6 tcm of proven gas reserves. According to the International Energy Agency, China inevitably ensures itself as a defining element in the global energy market. IEA envisages that, from 2035, China will be consuming more energy than the U.S. From the Russian stance, Western European markets are positioned 6,000 kilometers distant, while the Chinese market remains placed 2,000-3,000 kilometers away from Moscow's resources in Eastern Siberia. To the Kremlin, energy sales to China must keep on being consolidated. Russia thinks that the fresh markets have come to be much more indispensable owing to the structure and challenging state of affairs of the European market. This embraces Europe's initiatives for lessening the quantity originating from Russia within the framework of energy security. When looked at from China's perspective, the country's energy demands in its

⁸⁶ Lee Jones & Shahar Hameiri (2020), "Debunking the Myth of 'Debt-trap Diplomacy'", Chatham House, 19.08.2020, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2020/08/debunking-myth-debt-trap-diplomacy/6-conclusion-and-policy-recommendations>.

⁸⁷ Patrick Wintour (2021), "G7 backs Biden infrastructure plan to rival China's belt and road initiative", *The Guardian*, 12.06.2021, Date of Accession: 28.10.2021 from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/12/g7-global-infrastructure-plan-to-rival-chinas-belt-and-road-initiative>.

emergent economy increase day by day. To China, the major provider will remain Russia in terms of this increase in demand for energy.⁸⁸

Russian energy policy has focused on implementing long term and unbroken energy exports, accompanied by continuation of the future of the world energy market at the globalization and regionalization phases. Following the 'shale gas reform' in the U.S., Qatar has turned out to be a contender for Moscow in the European market. Therefore, Moscow has launched an 'Eastern oriented policy' so as to improve its market and downscale its threats. "*The Russian Energy Policy until 2020*" circulated in 2003 and "*The Russian Energy Policy until 2030*" in 2009. These two papers included alterations within this context. These modifications were concentrated on the alliance of Russia with Asia-Pacific countries in terms of energy trade. As a result, Moscow has begun to progress regional energy partnerships. Beijing (China), Tokyo (Japan), Seoul (South Korea), and New Delhi (India) are noted by Moscow as central allies within the energy industry. Accordingly, the Kremlin aspires to counterbalance its dependence on the European market. Within this framework, it has been setting forth eastern energy policies. Moscow intends to export energy to the region by developing oil and gas refinement and a transportation and supply mechanism between Eastern Siberia and Far East countries. Russia's Eastern Energy Policy supports the foreign direct investments of Chinese state energy firms. Chinese and Russian energy strategies ease these two countries' energy cooperation.⁸⁹

As of May 21, 2014, Gazprom and CNPC had completed the contract regarding the construction of a pipeline that will transfer 38 bcm of Russian gas per annum to China. The prominence of this pact was evaluated by Alexei Miller, the President of Board of Directors of Gazprom, as, "*This deal is the greatest deal in the history of Russian Federation and Gazprom. During the 25 year-period of this deal, more than 1 trillion cubic meters of natural gas will be exported. The Russian gas will have been transported to a completely new market. Only within the Russian Federation, an investment of \$55 billion will be made ranging from production to transportation.*" Contrariwise, China's usage of a high percentage of coal in its energy mix, 67.5%, endeavors to balance this condition with the increasing use of gas, and also to reduce dependency on coal. In the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

⁸⁸ Mesut Hakkı Çaşın & Sina Kısacık (2021), "Understanding the New Russian Energy Policy after the Crimean Crisis: A Case Study on TurkStream, Power of Siberia, and Nord Stream 2 Natural Gas Projects", *UPA Strategic Affairs*, Vol. 2, No: 1, pp. 232-233.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 233-234.

Summit in Beijing in November 2014, several reciprocal agreements were signed among member states. The most central among these pacts remains the Russian-Chinese agreement and the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) specifying the 30 bcm-gas export to China.⁹⁰

On December 2, 2019, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin instated a huge cross-border natural gas pipeline project named 'Power of Siberia'. Within this opening ceremony, both Putin and Jinping highlighted the significance of this pipeline project and termed the Power of Siberia as an "*insignia of their coalition*". The Power of Siberia project will consist of a gas pipeline beginning in the Chayandinskoye and Kovyktinskoye fields in eastern Russia, crossing more than 3,000 kilometres (1,864 miles) to Liaoning in north-eastern China. President Putin has entitled it "*the world's largest construction project*" and it is forecast to last for 30 years. The project remains projected to inject \$400 billion (€363 billion) into Russia's economy. Kremlin officials predict that the pipeline will transport 38 bcm of gas each year when it is finalized in 2025. President Putin has judged the official inaugural ceremony of the Power of Siberia Natural Pipeline as "*a genuinely historical event*" and said that "*this step takes Russo-Chinese strategic cooperation in energy to a qualitative new level and brings us closer to fulfilling the task, set together with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, of taking bilateral trade to \$200 billion (€181 billion) by 2024.*" Chinese President Xi Jinping has similarly averred that "*China-Russia relations are entering into a new era*" and that the pipeline is an "*example of deep integration and mutually beneficial cooperation*". On January 27, 2021, Gazprom completed 98 km of one natural gas pipeline (meaning 12%) that will link the Kovyktinskoye and Chayandinskoye fields in Yakutia. When finished, the 803-km pipeline will form an extension of Gazprom's Power of Siberia system, which currently transfers gas from Chayandinskoye to China. The focus for Gazprom constitutes keeping the 1.8 tcm Kovyktinskoye field functions on schedule: mounting by drilling new wells, upholding active well clusters, and constructing two fresh gas usage facilities. Gazprom anticipates beginning the distribution of gas from the field by means of Power of Siberia from the end of 2022.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Mesut Hakkı Çaşın & Sina Kısacık (2021), "Understanding the New Russian Energy Policy after the Crimean Crisis: A Case Study on TurkStream, Power of Siberia, and Nord Stream 2 Natural Gas Projects", pp. 234-235.

⁹¹ Sina Kısacık (2021), "1990'lardan Günümüze Rusya-Çin Enerji Ortaklığı Uluslararası Konjonktürel Şartların Zorlamasıyla Oluşan Stratejik Bir Mantık Evliliği midir?", in *Avrasya Denkleminde Rusya-Çin Rekabeti* (eds. Murat Yorulmaz & Serdar Yılmaz), Ankara: Astana Yayınları, p. 63.



Figure I: Power of Siberia gas trunk pipeline⁹²

The U.S., Russia, and the EU are not the only energy consumers in the world. The rapid expansion of China and India demands consideration given that they have been experiencing high energy demands in recent years. Russia has emerged as one of the energy giants as a result of the effect of growing energy needs in developing countries. In this setting, Rosneft and Gazprom came to an agreement with CNPC during President Putin's visit to Beijing on March 21, 2006. This project covers two stages. Through it, Moscow aspires to achieve a running energy policy in the Asia-Pacific region.⁹³ Over the last 10 years, Russia has extended a significant oil pipeline to China, which at present ships 600,000 barrels per day (bpd), and has installed the new Kozmino port on the Pacific, transporting more than 600,000 bpd. Russia is also transferring 200,000 bpd to China via a pipeline passing through Kazakhstan. Russia projects that the enlargement of the pipeline connecting its east and west Siberian fields with China, Kozmino and local refineries -recognized as the East Siberia-Pacific Ocean (ESPO)- will reach 100,000 bpd. The linking will at that point allow for the overall scheduled volume of 1.6 million bpd. Over more than 10 years, China has turned out to be the

⁹² IHS Markit (2019), "The era of Russian pipeline gas supply to China begins", 02.12.2019, Date of Accession: 19.10.2021 from <https://ihsmarkit.com/research-analysis/the-era-of-russian-pipeline-gas-supply-to-china-begins.html>.

⁹³ Sina Kısacık (2017), "The Ukraine Policy of the Russian Federation and The Paradigms in European Energy Security", Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, Yeditepe University Social Sciences Institute Department of English Political Science and International Relations, pp. 341-342.

foremost consumer of Russian oil via diverse ways, preserving 800,000 bpd of supplies by pipelines and getting huge volumes from Kozmino. The expansion of the ESPO link should boost Moscow’s situation in terms of being Beijing’s topmost supplier, ahead of competitors such as Riyadh and Washington.⁹⁴

Gazprom Neft has made a dedicated oil-transport system for bringing oil from Gazprom’s Chayandinskoye field in Yakutia into the ESPO pipeline: conclusion of field infrastructure will let the company transport up to 1.5 million tons of oil annually by the ESPO. An oil pipeline stands today linking the Chayandinskoye field’s oil treatment plant with the Gazprom pipeline network through which oil continues to be transported to the ESPO. Contracting this 70 km pipeline has enhanced speed and effectiveness in conveying hydrocarbons, which remained formerly conveyed by road.⁹⁵



Figure II: East Siberian-Pacific Ocean (ESPO) Pipeline⁹⁶

China and Russia took on a collaboration contract in 2018 and agreed to cooperatively construct units 7 and 8 of the Tianwan Nuclear Power Plant and units 3 and 4 of the Xudapu Nuclear Power Plant. The Tianwan Nuclear Power Plant stands positioned in the city of

⁹⁴ Sina Kısacık (2021), “1990’lardan Günümüze Rusya-Çin Enerji Ortaklığı Uluslararası Konjonktürel Şartların Zorlamasıyla Oluşan Stratejik Bir Mantık Evliliği midir?”, pp. 65-69.

⁹⁵ Gazprom Neft (2021), “Gazprom Neft increases supplies from its Chayandinskoye field into the East Siberia–Pacific Ocean (ESPO) pipeline”, 06.04.2021, Date of Accession: 10.10.2021 from <https://www.gazprom-neft.com/press-center/news/gazprom-neft-increases-supplies-from-its-chayandinskoye-field-into-the-east-siberia-pacific-ocean-es/>.

⁹⁶ Marc to Market (2010), “Re-Orientaion: Russia Looks East”, Date of Accession: 19.10.2021 from <http://www.marctomarket.com/2010/01/re-orientation-russia-looks-east.html>.

Lianyungang in Jiangsu province. The Xudapu Nuclear Power plant is located in Xingcheng in Liaoning province. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian has underlined that *"this has remained the largest China-Russia nuclear energy collaboration project up until now and represents the highest level of practical cooperation between the two sides"*. According to Lijian, *"The successful beginning of the construction of the four units demonstrates the major cooperation outcomes in high-end equipment manufacturing and science and technology innovation and will boost the upgrading of practical cooperation between the two countries."* In the meantime, nuclear energy remains a worthwhile and effective investment for the future, and the four units, once completed, will successfully cut carbon dioxide emissions. The two countries have stabilized their close bonds, but at the same time they have encountered increasing antagonism from Washington and Brussels regarding the West's current agenda.⁹⁷

Here, it should be mentioned that the nuclear project supplements two reactors each to Tianwan Nuclear Power Plant in Jiangsu Province and Xudapu Nuclear Plant in Liaoning Province. Within the context of the deal, work is scheduled to commence between 2026 and 2028. The construction cost is currently projected at \$1.7 billion at each site. The reactors will be driven by third generation water reactor technology delivered by Russian Rosatom. For the Japan Atomic Industrial Forum, China currently runs 49 operational nuclear reactors. The country holds third place globally in nuclear reactors following the U.S. and France. Additionally, 16 reactors are being built in China and another 39 reactors are at the planning phase. It is worth remembering that China has hitherto embraced nuclear technology mostly from the U.S. and France; nevertheless, it has been expanding its connections with Russia.⁹⁸

4.3.2. Fundamental Energy Projects between Russian and British Companies

Due to the continual growth of natural gas demand across the whole world, along with the lessening of LNG's production and transference costs, approximately 35-50% in 10 years, Russia works on the provision and running of a few major projects with the aim of transporting LNG to markets across the world. Shtokman Project has a sui generis place in

⁹⁷ *The Economic Times* (2021), "Russia, China to kick-off their biggest nuclear power project on Wednesday", 18.05.2021, Date of Accession: 11.10.2021 from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/russia-china-to-kick-off-their-biggest-nuclear-power-project-on-wednesday/articleshow/82741817.cms?from=mdr>.

⁹⁸ Tsukasa Hadano & Yohei Ishikawa (2021), "China breaks ground on Russian-designed nuclear reactors", *Nikkei Asia: Energy*, 20.05.2021, Date of Accession: 11.10.2021 from <https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Energy/China-breaks-ground-on-Russian-designed-nuclear-reactors>.

that regard. Owing to this project, it stands to transport LNG from Shtokman Basin encompassing 3 tcm of natural gas to Europe, the Mexican Strait, and the southern shores of America. From this project, the output volume is projected as 67.5 bcm per annum. When the Russian government provides an export tax exemption to the Yamal and Far East LNG export projects with a view to encourage LNG production and export, it correspondingly delivers direct financing and technical support. The main LNG projects still ongoing in Russia can be counted as;

- ❖ **Yamal LNG:** Novatek: 60%, Total: 20%, CNODC, a subsidiary of CNPC: 20 %,
- ❖ **Gydan Peninsula LNG:** Novatek,
- ❖ **Sakhalin 1 LNG:** Rosneft, ExxonMobil,
- ❖ **Vladivostok LNG:** Gazprom, INPEX, Itochu, Japan Petroleum Exploration Co., Ltd., Marubeni Corporation,⁹⁹
- ❖ **Sakhalin – 2 Third Unit:** Gazprom and Shell.¹⁰⁰

Gazprom and Shell have come to an Agreement of Strategic Cooperation for a 5 year period. This recently contracted document enlarges collaboration between the two firms. Specific consideration will be granted to such fields as research of energy markets, execution of projects alongside the whole value chain, teamwork in digitalization of technologies, and decrease of greenhouse gas emissions. Last year, a record-high volume of liquefied natural gas –over 11.6 million tons– was manufactured and transported to customers within the context of the project. Sui generis attention was attached for decarbonization of the European energy sector. It has been stated that natural gas, owing to its eco-friendliness, can perform a noteworthy role in the meeting of Europe’s climate goals. Alexey Miller has stressed that *“Today, we have made a new step in the development of our cooperation. The very signing of the Agreement proves that our joint work has brought good results and that we establish ambitious goals for both the short term and the long term. Without any doubt, the experience we have accumulated guarantees us new future achievements.”*¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Global Energy Network Wiki (2021), “Vladivostok LNG Terminal”, 17.06.2021, Date of Accession: 29.10.2021 from https://www.gem.wiki/Vladivostok_LNG_Terminal.

¹⁰⁰ Sina Kisacak (2017), “The Ukraine Policy of the Russian Federation and The Paradigms in European Energy Security”, pp. 329-331.

¹⁰¹ Gazprom (2021), “Gazprom and Shell expanding cooperation”, 16.03.2021, Date of Accession: 12.10.2021 from <https://www.gazprom.com/press/news/2021/march/article525229/>.

Chairman of the Gazprom Management Committee Alexey Miller and Chief Executive Officer of Royal Dutch Shell Ben van Beurden have deliberated the condition on the European gas market, along with the process of the Sakhalin 2 project. The related parties have appraised recent subjects relating to their mutual activities, containing the Sakhalin 2 project and the initiatives being carried out by the two firms to decrease their carbon footprint through the natural gas value chain. Miller and van Beurden also discussed the condition on the European gas market.¹⁰² Europe has been dealing with tremendously low gas reserves in its underground accommodations this autumn, which when combined with other causes have pressed the prices for gas up to record highs. Predominantly, the price of gas futures at the TTF hub in the Netherlands has approached \$970 per 1,000 cubic meters in the middle of September; nevertheless, it eventually waned. Sakhalin-2 has been on-going since 2009 and stands as Russia's first LNG facility. The first two processing lines permit for the production of approximately 11.6 million tons of LNG annually. The operator of the project remains Sakhalin Energy, with Gazprom possessing a 50% plus one share stake, Shell obtaining a 27.5% minus one share, and Mitsui & Co. Ltd having a 12.5% stake. Furthermore, Mitsubishi Corporation also has 10% shares.¹⁰³

The first and most important focus area of BP's business in Russia is a 19.75% share of Rosneft. BP nominates two representatives to Rosneft's Board of Directors: BP CEO Bernard Looney and former BP CEO Robert Dudley. Secondly, BP is making investments in definite possessions via joint ventures with Rosneft. And BP has been experiencing important adjustments over the last six years – including those in which BP and Rosneft have now begun implementing plans that encompass prevailing oil production, exploration for oil and gas, and gas production.¹⁰⁴

The Taas-Yuryakh JV in Eastern Siberia, wherein BP holds a 20% equity stake, remains presently producing more than 70,000 bbls/day. The contract to obtain a share in Taas was concluded in November 2015. The output is anticipated to stretch to 100,000 bbls/day as of

¹⁰² For a detailed and useful analysis on this issue please see, Mike Fulwood & Jack Sharples (2021), "Quarterly Gas Review: Short- and Medium-Term Outlook for Gas Markets", The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, *Quarterly Gas Review*, Issue: 15, October 2021, Date of Accession: 20.10.2021 from <https://www.oxfordenergy.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Gas-Quarterly-Review-Issue-15.pdf>.

¹⁰³ TASS-Russian News Agency (2021), "Heads of Gazprom, Shell discuss situation on European gas market", 22.09.2021, Date of Accession: 11.10.2021 from <https://tass.com/economy/1341269>; Sanja Pekic (2021), *Offshore Energy* (2021), "Gazprom and Shell talk Sakhalin II project and more", 22.09.2021, Date of Accession: 12.10.2021 from <https://www.offshore-energy.biz/gazprom-and-shell-talk-sakhalin-ii-project-and-more/>.

¹⁰⁴ BP Russia, "Partnership with Rosneft", Date of Accession: 13.10.2021 from https://www.bp.com/en_ru/russia/home/who-we-are/partnership.html.

2021. A 49% share in Yermak Neftegaz LLC, made in 2016, continues to steer onshore exploration within the West Siberian and Yenisey-Khatanga basins. The contract to practice a fresh JV for the Kharampur project has concluded, wherein BP holds a 49% stake. This stands as a foremost gas development project in regards to prevailing mature oil production. The Cenomanian development will permit generation of 10+ bcm. There remains the prospect for additional advancement of extra resources following the Cenomanian development containing the Turonian, which may well more than double the whole field output. Within the 21st St. Petersburg International Economic Forum held in 2017, Rosneft and BP have declared 'strategic gas partnership'. The parties have settled on advanced incorporated collaboration in terms of gas, and intend to conjointly realize natural gas projects within both Russia and abroad, concentrating on gas exploration and production, LNG production, supply and marketing.¹⁰⁵ The third concentration field for BP is still technical and technological partnership with Rosneft, in which the two companies might exchange knowledge from each other or cooperatively advance innovative technologies. For instance, BP and Rosneft are presently working together regarding health, safety and environmental issues with the purpose of sharing best practice. In September 2016 at the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) in Vladivostok Rosneft, BP and Schlumberger declared their deals for cooperation in terms of advancing ground-breaking cableless onshore seismic acquisition technology.¹⁰⁶

Rosneft Oil Company and BP have signed a Strategic Collaboration Agreement which focuses on supporting carbon management and the sustainability activities of both companies. The agreement builds on years of partnership between the two companies and formalizes key elements of their collaboration on sustainability, while also working to identify carbon reduction activities and low carbon opportunities.¹⁰⁷ Remarking on the contract, Rosneft chief executive officer Igor Sechin has underlined the following issues: "*Rosneft and BP are*

¹⁰⁵ *Europetrole* (2017), "BP and Rosneft agree strategic cooperation in gas business", 02.06.2017, Date of Accession: 18.10.2021 from <https://www.euro-petrole.com/bp-and-rosneft-agree-strategic-cooperation-in-gas-business-n-i-14923>; *Hydrocarbons Technology* (2017), "BP and Rosneft sign agreement to supply natural gas to Europe", 04.07.2017, Date of Accession: 18.10.2021 from <https://www.hydrocarbons-technology.com/news/newsbp-rosneft-sign-agreement-to-supply-natural-gas-to-europe-5833310/>.

¹⁰⁶ BP Russia, "Partnership with Rosneft", Date of Accession: 13.10.2021 from https://www.bp.com/en_ru/russia/home/who-we-are/partnership.html.

¹⁰⁷ British Petroleum – BP (2021), "Rosneft and BP agree to cooperate on carbon management and sustainability", 04.02.2021, Date of Accession: 13.10.2021 from <https://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/news-and-insights/press-releases/rosneft-and-bp-agree-to-cooperate-on-carbon-management-and-sustainability.html>. Also see; Vladimir Afanasiev (2021), "BP and Rosneft team up in greener energy drive", *Upstream Online*, 04.02.2021, Date of Accession: 18.10.2021 from <https://www.upstreamonline.com/energy-transition/bp-and-rosneft-team-up-in-greener-energy-drive/2-1-957289>.

*united not only through the longstanding successful partnership in various areas but also in the intention to leverage this experience in future prospective projects outlined in this agreement. Joint efforts of our two companies, as the world energy industry leaders, will not only strengthen our corporate aims in sustainable development, but will also provide a significant contribution to overcoming the challenges the industry and the society face in the climate action and the satisfaction of growing global economy demand for energy resources. This is necessary for balanced social and economic development and life quality improvement.”*¹⁰⁸ In this context, BP chief executive officer Bernard Looney has underlined that: *“We’ve been partners with Rosneft for many years now and we learn a great deal from each other. That’s important, and I believe that this agreement can be an important catalyst for progress. We both believe in the power of partnership and look forward to bringing together the best of Rosneft and BP to develop low carbon solutions and drive down emissions.”*¹⁰⁹

4.3.3. Case Study on Nuclear Energy Cooperation between the United Kingdom and China

In October 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping and then-British Prime Minister David Cameron contracted a civil nuclear pact¹¹⁰, which according to DECC *“enables”* for Chinese firms to make investments to Hinkley Point C - EDF Energy's project to construct two 1.6 GW EPR at Hinkley Point on the northern Somerset coast. For the joint statement, Xi and Cameron have mentioned that *“China and the UK stand ready to work together to ensure the success of Hinkley Point as soon as possible”*. DECC and EDF Group, EDF Energy’s parent company, have declared in October 2015 that they had settled the key money-making terms of an investment contract for Hinkley Point C, permitting the state-owned French company to protect partners to sponsor the project. The portion of equity remains projected to be shared between EDF with 45-50%, China General Nuclear (CGN) and China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) with 30-40%, Areva with 10%, and *“interested parties”* with up to 15%. DECC has stated that the cooperative civil nuclear agreement engaged in targets at *“better cooperation in the wider nuclear fuel supply chain cycle by working together to develop and*

¹⁰⁸ British Petroleum – BP (2021), “Rosneft and BP agree to cooperate on carbon management and sustainability”, 04.02.2021, Date of Accession: 13.10.2021 from <https://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/news-and-insights/press-releases/rosneft-and-bp-agree-to-cooperate-on-carbon-management-and-sustainability.html>.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Ozan Örmeci (2021), *İngiltere (Birleşik Krallık) Siyaseti*, p. 446.

export innovative solutions in areas such as waste treatment and decommissioning which could be worth hundreds of millions of pounds to British companies over several years". The contract builds on a memorandum of understanding the UK contracted with China last October, which set forth an outline of collaboration in civil nuclear energy. The second and separate contract stands as a four-way memorandum of understanding between DECC, CNNC, China Atomic Energy Authority, and International Nuclear Services - the commercial arm of the UK's Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. DECC has deliberated that this "*landmark agreement*" would facilitate Chinese companies to possess and run a Chinese-designed nuclear power plant in the UK, on condition that they comply with UK regulatory requirements. Rolls-Royce, the British engineering company, has declared individually that it had contracted similar memoranda of understanding with Chinese nuclear reactor vendors State Nuclear Power Technology Corporation and China General Nuclear Power Co. The memoranda aims to establish conceivable alliances in spaces such as engineering support, provision of components and systems, supply chain management and instrumentation & control technology.¹¹¹

Britain is approaching the conclusion of a contract which will eliminate China's state-owned nuclear energy company China General Nuclear Power Group (CGN) from participation in construction of a new power plant. According to *The Guardian* newspaper, Britain was considering acquiring shares in the 20 billion pound (\$27.4 billion) project to construct the Sizewell C nuclear power station in Suffolk, eastern England, together with France's EDF. That will result in CGN, which presently holds 20% shares in Sizewell, being detached from the project, adding that the plans might be publicized immediately next month. CGN and EDF declined to comment to *The Guardian*. In line with this, a British government spokesperson has stated that "*nuclear power has a key role to play as we work to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels and exposure to volatile global gas prices*". CGN remains a stakeholder in Sizewell C, awaiting the government's Final Investment Decision. Talks continue and no final decision has been made. In July 2021, the *Financial Times* reported that Britain was searching for techniques to eradicate CGN from all fresh forthcoming power projects. EDF

¹¹¹ *World Nuclear News* (2014), "UK government paves way for Chinese nuclear plant", 18.06.2014, Date of Accession: 13.10.2021 from <https://www.world-nuclear-news.org/NP-UK-government-paves-way-for-Chinese-nuclear-plant-18061401.html>; Nicholas Watt (2014), "China wins stake in British nuclear power and high-speed rail", *The Guardian*, 17.06.2014, Date of Accession: 13.10.2021 from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/17/china-stake-british-nuclear-power-li-keqiang-hinkley-beijing>.

has called in June for the British government to bring in regulation essential to buttress the project, stating that it was still a crucial consideration. Recently, the London-based *Times* newspaper has mentioned that Britain has remained in discussions with U.S. nuclear reactor company Westinghouse on constructing a fresh atomic power plant on Anglesey in Wales, as the government seeks out a lesser dependence on fossil fuels and reliance on unstable gas prices.¹¹²

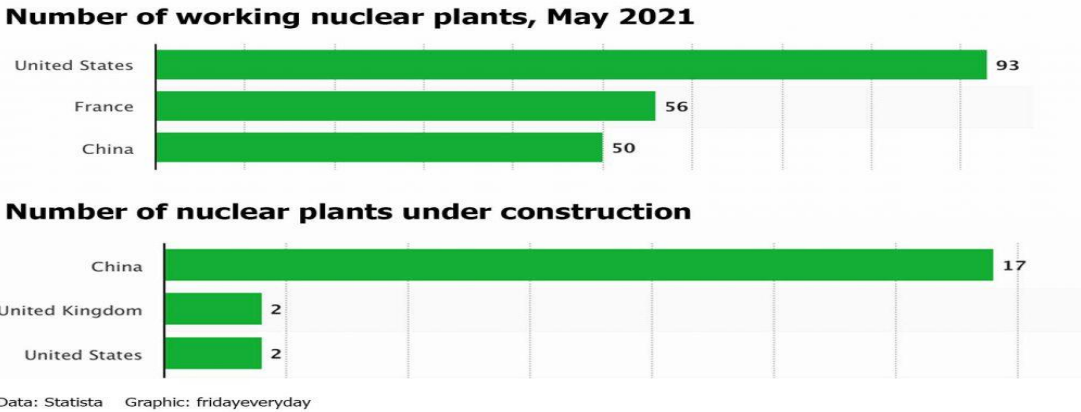


Figure III: *Number of working nuclear plants and nuclear plants under construction in US, France, China & UK (May 2021)*¹¹³

4.3.4. Analysis of the Effects of Energy-Based Relations on British-Chinese Relations

This complex picture of energy-based relations tells us that, in its foreign policy behavior, the highest priority for China is the diversification of energy resources as well as its commercial interests. Looking from London’s perspective on the other hand, the main motive in developing relations with China has been to increase British efficacy in global politics as well as to reap economic benefits for British companies. But due to the recently changing climate in Beijing-London relations, mainly caused by the U.S. barrier and political problems stated in the text, the latter has changed its stance on the construction of a nuclear plant by China and has been investigating alternatives on this issue. This can also be read as the direct consequence of Western criticism towards China related to these political problems. Thus, British-Chinese political and economic relations, similar to the earlier agreed nuclear power

¹¹² Reuters (2021), “UK looking at deal to remove China from nuclear project- report”, 25.09.2021, Date of Accession: 13.10.2021 from <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-looking-deal-remove-china-nuclear-project-report-2021-09-25/>.
¹¹³ Nury Vittachi (2021), “Chinese race to build nuclear plants, while westerners are shutting theirs”, *Friday Everyday*, 06.09.2021, Date of Accession: 19.10.2021 from <https://www.fridayeveryday.com/2021/09/06/chinese-race-to-build-nuclear-plants-while-westerners-are-shutting-theirs/>.

plant project, seem to have entered a more problematic period. However, it should be kept in mind that both China and the UK have been prioritizing their commercial interests abroad, accompanied by energy security concerns, through the development of widespread collaborations with the Russian Federation. Especially for China, Russia is a main supplier of energy and a trusted partner. Thus, Russia is also a major player in global politics and Russian influence over China might have some consequences for British-Chinese relations in a similar manner to the U.S. effect. Although the UK's relations with Russia are rather limited, some British energy companies collaborate with Russian Gazprom and other important firms on projects. Thus, Russia's circle of influence includes Britain as well.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, this research points out some important facts. First of all, it summarizes the recent historical progress of British-Chinese relations and especially focuses on the Tony Blair and David Cameron periods as golden ages in bilateral relations. Secondly, it endeavors to explain bilateral economic relations by using statistics and numbers to prove the developed status of British-Chinese economic relations although they remain insignificant compared to British-American economic relations. Thirdly, it aims to explain newly emerging problems in bilateral relations during the post-Brexit era and identifies the U.S. effect (barrier), Hong Kong issue, Uighur problem, Covid-19 pandemic, Huawei scandal, and reactions against the BRI as main problems in bilateral relations. Fourthly, the paper focuses on the energy-based relations between Russia and China as well as Russian and British companies, and makes a case study on the British-Chinese nuclear power plant at Hinkley Point. This part of the paper reaches the conclusion that both the UK and China have been focusing on their commercial interests as well as their energy security concerns, while developing comprehensive relations regarding this issue with the Russian Federation. Not only London, but also Beijing is currently taking into consideration Western sanctioning policies toward Moscow that have existed since 2014. Finally, as British intelligence MI6 Chief Richard Moore stated in a rare radio interview¹¹⁴, British-Chinese relations will continue in a balanced way despite their different values and diverging interests, and one should not expect Britain to avoid engaging in relations with China, a nation that will become the world's biggest economy in the near future.

¹¹⁴ *Times Radio* (2021), "[EXCLUSIVE] Chief of MI6 Richard Moore Speaks to G&T on Times Radio", 25.04.2021, Date of Accession: 29.10.2021 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKpA7YyBf10>.

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