China-Russia Diplomatic and Security Relationship. A Historical Review.

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Thesis abstract

Focusing on historical developments in the course of three and a half centuries in Russia and China, this thesis examines the construction of their diplomatic ties since the first encounters. Their interaction began in the seventeenth century and had remained friendly, yet hardly close. During Sino-Soviet relationship, both sides had apparently had insurmountable suspicions of each other and suffered bilateral crises, due to their ideological differences and leaders’ personalities. The remarkable improvement and renewal of ties on all levels has started in the post-Cold War period and increasingly carries on at present. The Sino-Russian partnership helps both countries to fulfil their regional geostrategic ambitions and enables them to pursue their goals worldwide.

This work scrutinises security ties between Russia and China, by analysing the frequent border disputes and treaties that settled ongoing conflicts. Through a deep insight and analysis of the process of the Sino-Russian relationship forging, this thesis answers why their ties were important at different historical stages. By the means of historic approach and political analysis, it progresses since the 17th century onwards, reviewing each of the critical periods in their history and at present. On the other hand, it concentrates on the nature of the relation and explores the depth and limits of this important partnership that has influenced the global political scene. This thesis also delves into Asian geopolitical spaces in Chinese and Russian foreign policy to review on each of them whether two countries are allies or competitors and how they manage opposite interests.

The strengthening of Sino-Russian relations is of great interest on the global level, because it can change the balance of power in the world and set up new rules in international policy. Their preference for multilateral governance menaces the supremacy of the US in the world. Also, by coordinating their foreign policies, two governments are able to override many decisions and block Western-backed efforts. Thus, it is of enormous importance to to consider how their relationship evolves and how they understand the international system and in which way they hedge to protect their own and mutual intentions and perspectives on the current global scene.

Introduction: Why the Sino-Russian alignment matters? Common views on global power.

The relationship between Russia and China - the two largest and the most prominent powers in Asia in terms of their size, population, economic development and military spending - has become vital in the global political arena. Their closer alliance could foster historical shift in terms of the global economic structure and bring about political and strategical changes which in-turn will affect the existing power balance in Asia and Pacific.

The importance of the Sino-Russian relationship could be better understood by reviewing the aforementioned facts about each country: The Russian territory is the biggest on the planet and...
takes 17,098,242 sq km, while the Chinese spreads over 9,596,960 sq km: China is the most populous country in the world with 1,373,541,278 inhabitants (July, 2016) and Russia is the 10th, with a rising figure of 142,355,415 people in the same period.\(^1\) Their military spending has significantly increased: in 2015 Russian was at 5.4% of GDP amounting 66.4 billion dollars, while Chinese was estimated at 1.9% of GDP, with 215 billion dollars, the first behind the U.S. (3.3% GDP, 596 b. $)\(^2\). Russian GDP represents 2.14% of the world's economy; even after the shock of financial sanctions and low oil prices that brought Russia severe losses around $600 billion in the period 2014-2017, its GDP in 2016 was worth 1400.00 billion US dollars. In the same period Chinese participation in the world economy is around 18% and its GDP reached 12000 billion US dollars.\(^3\)

Both countries coming from planned economies have embraced globalization and highly profited from it: China has integrated in the global economy more successfully than other Asian countries, while Russia's open economy consists more of higher value-added production, the sale of natural resources and military and spatial industry. The world leader in global integration is China, who has been generating high economic growth rates consecutively for three decades, by fostering internationally highly and competitive industries, enabling its successful integration into the international economy.\(^4\)

Despite its shrinking economy, due to the drop in oil prices, Russia is still mighty in economic and military terms and is one of the major nuclear powers. Its new energy strategy implies the projection of its interests across the globe, by establishing nuclear power plants and control the energy production in vital strategic countries\(^5\).

Thus, the bilateral relationship between China and Russia is currently one of the landmarks of world politics. They have developed strong ties in crucial areas such as: energy questions, military and industrial cooperation, mutual defence of their borders, commerce and transit of goods, currency arrangements, free airspace usage and prevention of crime and terrorism.

Both Russia and China consider that international relations should be shaped by the central principle of sovereignty and with it the associated principle of territorial sanctity. This is similar to the US' commercial idea when they relate to the rest of the world: to constantly seek the

\(^{1}\) The World Factbook, CIA Library
preservation of total control internally and freedom of manoeuvring internationally, without letting other bodies and organisations interfere in their matters or erode their power. However, Russian and Chinese views of power are heavily centralized and the sovereignty is the core parameter of their evolving relationship with the rest of the world. These deeply entrenched sovereignty-centric values are rooted in the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), according to which states have full authority over their territories no matter the circumstances. They refuse any interventions or interference by outside players on their territories.

Adhering to this principle, Moscow and Beijing try to hedge against Washington. Being the strongest actor on the world scene, it can be seen as a threat to international order. Washington "no longer views national sovereignty and state boundaries as an obstacle for intervention when regional and international security is at stake." Furthermore, Russia and China adopted a Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the Establishment of a New International Order, advocating for the basic Westphalian sovereignty issues. They consider that their global opening has menaced centralized power, and reinforced the idea that the external support for democratization has eroded the country's sovereignty. Both countries are also menaced by possible internal disorder, so they equate separatism with terrorism and extremism. They oppose any interventions in domestic affairs or attempts at regime change or involvement in civil war. On the other hand, they show some flexibility and engage in peacekeeping missions and in some issues of humanitarian intervention, but only if they were approved by the United Nations. China and Russia are both is committed but cautious towards the Responsibility to Protect resolution, passed by the UN General Assembly in 2005. "R2P" doctrine states that the international community should respond by intervening in foreign territories to atrocities such as genocide and war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. They argue that it should be implemented with respect to sovereignty and national ownership, and "China has continued to resist what it labels 'confrontational' approaches to managing protection crises or holding state leaders accountable for atrocity crimes." Moscow and Beijing oppose the use of human rights as a pretext to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign states. However, they often interpret the full sovereignty concept at their convenience and even claim they have some

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additional regional rights. Hence, their idea of sovereignty is not as unyielding and monolithic as it is commonly asserted.

Two powers have menaced the “unipolar moment” created after the end of Cold War, which was prolonged by the US until the previous decade and are part of multiplex world as one of key actors whose relationship is defined by complex forms of interdependence. The resurgence of Russia, along with the rise of China and India as new great powers, has helped the decline of America's relative power.

Moreover, Chinese and Russian views on global governance are very similar: here diplomacy is more of a concept style, where big powers sit together and take decisions instead of now unfolding supralateralism that cuts back on sovereignty. They act internationally as regional powers and strengthen their own neighborhood and global standing by having a leading role on regional institutions. Their abhorrence of any liberal interventionism is quite strong, as we recently saw in their shared point of view on the situation in Syria and North Korea. Consequently, global governance is seen as a Western concept, created for the Western needs and with benefits for the West. Also, their approach to international institutions is seen as more instrumental and guided towards their own interests. Naturally, their common desire is to limit American power in all senses, trying not to jeopardize global stability and to balance their geopolitical with economic interests.

10 Moscow declared a “sphere of privileged interests” around its periphery. (D. Medvedev, at: https://ria.ru/politics/20080831). Chinese concept of tianxia (“all under heaven”) and discussions about its Asian-Pacific leadership.


15 The Eurasian Economic Union (2014-15): a customs union between Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (1996), a Eurasian political, economic, and military organisation between China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and later Uzbekistan.


18 de Wijk, Rob, Power Politics: how China and Russia reshape the world, Amsterdam University Press, 2015, (1st edit.).
Research Subject, Purpose and Hypotheses

As it is almost impossible to provide an in-depth review of all international relations, this study will extensively review the historical contacts between Russia and China. They started as early as in the 17th century, when both countries became neighbours. (Even if the history of their relation is longer and could be traced back to the Mongol Empire, when Russia experimented the yellow threat). Then it will analyze crucial foreign policy matters that have shaped the Sino-Russian approximation in each period (Ming, Qing dynasty, Republic Period and the PRC). It will contribute to seize the stages in the partnership up to the present time.

Therefore, the main purpose of this thesis is to shed new light on the Sino-Russian strategic partnership by revising political and military issues, in order to comprehend the real nature of the contact. By following up the historic thread of the relation-building along almost four centuries, it aims at defining and stressing the changes that have brought about their successful, present-day partnership. Yet, the historical evidence shows that until the more recent history, their fight for influence and material benefits, along with the border conflict, had, indeed, been more remarkable than the cooperation desire between two neighbours.

One of the goals of this research is to illuminate complex motivations that lay behind certain diplomacy decisions surrounding their pre-modern and postmodern history, influencing their foreign policy moves today. Also, how this diplomacy enabled them to develop institutional links between the two states and reach the current cooperation level. Our next aim is to decipher the riddle which has been prominent in the first decades of the twentieth century; whether fast growing China will rise peacefully and to which extent will weakening Moscow “show muscle” in reasserting its historic role as a real counterweight to Washington. Thirdly, throughout the analysis of Russian and Chinese current foreign policy and partnerships each of them has pursued regionally, this thesis will underline the fact that the bolstering alliance between China and Russia will surely lead to a political makeover of Eurasia. Thus, closer ties between Moscow and Beijing will definitely bring about to major changes in the international policy arena and on the global level, as their alliance is now closer to challenging the post-Cold War world order, still dominated by the US.19

The expressed goals enabled us to determine the central question referring to the Sino-Russian relationship. As political science is quite divided when defining the Sino-Russian alliance, this thesis will offer arguments to clarify the main incertitude: does it constitute a long-term strategic partnership or simply a temporary matter of convenience for both of the countries?

Accordingly, this thesis formally establishes the following hypothesis:

- a) The relationship between China and Russia on one side, and the United States on another one, can be considered the most important geopolitical relationship of the 21st century.

b) We can prove the magnitude of the relationship through historical events, since the beginning of the first contacts between these two states. The interaction during the last three and half centuries has established very strong ties between neighbours.

- a) The foreseeable Moscow and Beijing alliance is about to change the current balance of power in Asia, because the perceived combined strategic weight of their nexus menaces the status quo in the region, especially when it comes to security and defence. Russia’s most important ally is China and their partnership is as useful now as in the long run. That is why these two superpowers should further deepen their cooperation and alliance in attempt to steer global political events and tilt the regional balance in their favour.

- a) The Sino-Russian partnership has brought about changes regarding the global governance.

b) Both states defend the “formation of a polycentric system,” - the multipolar order. Moscow and Beijing play leading roles in establishing new multilateral structures. The partners have global interests, like the management of the world economy, trade routes, resource supply, conventional and nuclear security, and the development of international norms, ensuring their compliance with their shared principles. Multipolarity is a powerful and attractive symbol for developing countries, apart from being an instrument for challenging the dominance of the US. In their parallel action Russia and China have doted this new model of global relations with an alternative legitimacy.

- a) The strategic meaning of the resurgence of Russia and the rise of China has attained such a magnitude that they menace the supremacy of the US in almost all domains. The consequences of their closer interrelation are yet to be seen.

- b) The partners are aware that solely through complementing each other’s forces, they will be able to strategically intervene in numerous conflicts and reshape the world order, if they only wanted to. This mutual vision of limitation urges their cooperation and alliance. Militarily, Russia is still the only counterpart to the US, but lacks high economy performance, offered by China.

- a) The historical development of diplomatic ties has, in a long-run, built trust between two giant neighbours. Russia and China have been able to overcome ideological differences from the past and have established a well-working partnership. The cooperation is for the big part, marked by shared natural geostrategic environment and the conflict experience on their border, which brought them closer to each other by time.

- b) Consequently, the need to rely against the US as a unique superpower is not the only factor that will determine the extent of cooperation between Russia and China. Aside with this external pressure, both Moscow and Beijing have natural need to expand commercially and create their areas of influence in Asia and Europe.
So, even if differences among Moscow and Beijing are huge and mistrust has often been shown, they have definitely become very strong allies over time and the rest of the world should mind that fact.

Methodology, sources and thesis’ limitations

To accomplish aforementioned objectives and prove the hypothesis given, a few methods have been chosen for this thesis. The main one is an analysis of the historical context and diplomatic decisions which have been made. By the means of evaluating the key issues as well as the shortcomings of the bilateral behaviour in the last century, this study will attest the growing strength of the partnership and offer some prediction for the Sino-Russian future acting, which will possibly be crucial at the global level. Through matching the views expressed in original documents, several studies and articles, this thesis will scope on the real and hidden goals, analyse successes, compromises and frustrations of Chinese and Russian diplomacy since the beginning of the contact along their border. Therefore, this study goes beyond major events that have shaped the behaviour of these two large countries, answering the doubts why certain things have happened, by mirroring their foreign policy at the time. It will combine interdisciplinary investigation, yet heavily relying on social science, especially on history. Whenever possible, different levels of analysis of events will apply. This study is mostly descriptive and explanatory, but it also tries to be predictive, when it comes to the present time and analysis of the possible future moves of the subjects of our study, Russia and China. Here, we will deal more with external state behaviour, though it is impossible to analyse internal, domestic circumstances at large. Neither will economy theories and approaches be taken into account, because of different nature of the subject of investigation.

This study will reflect on two different depths in Chinese and Russian foreign policies: policy as design and policy as practice\textsuperscript{20}, reviewing them through historical overlook, underlying the difference between deliberately created strategies, which have become a plan of action to seize specific objectives, and the actions undertaken to meet practical problems in foreign policy when they occur, or the need to improvise and adjust to real temporary events.\textsuperscript{21} Besides, we also analysed some cultural differences of the two nations to better determine certain values that have shaped ideational differences in Sino-Russian bilateral interaction.

The narrative historical method will give us the clear vision of their shared history and the geo-strategical reasons for conflicts that mostly occurred on their 4.209,3 km long border, the sixth longest in the world. The Ming or even more the Qing frontier relations, military campaigns, logistics, and diplomatic maneuvers against the medieval Muscovite Russian empire for


domination of Central Asia have on both sides embedded certain relationship culture. This experience originated some of the modern strategic problems China and Russia face in the region. Because this work has security issues and foreign policy as its priority, by using a comparative method, it will prove that since the first territorial conquests from both sides the main reason of expansion and clashes between the two has always been the fight for premacy, thirst for commercial profit and the general national security on each territory. Actually, there are a lot of studies about the Sino-Russian historical relationship in certain periods, but rarely a work paper reaches the current period, beaming new light on it, screening the main points of the relationship through foreign policy of each country in different periods. Thus, this study aims at predicting the regional future generated by the possible closer alliance between Tiger and the Bear and its quandaries, yet taking into account a more long-term perspective, starting with the 17th century. It draws the conclusions and predictions using the historic method and the current situation analysis, applying patterns expressed in foreign policy theories. By reviewing existing ideologies in both countries, this study points out the reasons for the improvement of ties between Moscow and Beijing that came in the 20th century: at that time Chinese revolutionary turned to Russia and the Soviet Union admiring the October Revolution and accepting marxism as the path of change. By analysing their foreign policies in the last century, it could be stated that the relationship we scrutinise is full of close cooperation and also mistrust and rejection of the partner's strategy or policy. After the establishment of the Russian Federation in 1991, another significant state-to-state rapprochement between China and Russia took place\textsuperscript{22}. This thesis follows each political and social event that brought about narrowing their ties. Soon, China and Russia declared they were pursuing a “constructive partnership” (1992) and later, it evolved into “strategic partnership” in 1996. At the dawning of the 21st century in 2001, they signed a treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. Consequently, this study will try to comprehend and explain how constant innovation and improvisation affects their overall cooperation, especially in the strategic domain. This work will also encompass the brand new perspectives and menaces to the relationship, even if sometimes based on mere foreign policy analysts’ suppositions that open up after the latest presidential elections in the US, where Donald Trump was elected president.

In order to verify the aforementioned Sino-Russian alliance hypothesis, the relation will be analysed through different regards. The present work aims at finding key answers to riddles beyond the partnership, which have caused many concerns: up to which point the two policy actors are allies, or opponents? are they partners in need? where the limit of tolerance for each others’ interests and ambitions has been? how they may hedge between themselves or against the third pole, the US or other players in the world policy arena?

The importance of their leading regional competence and race for influence in Asia will also be taken into consideration when it comes to the last decade. On its relentless rise as a superpower China has consolidated partnerships in Australia, Oceania and projected interests in the Indo-Pacific region, while Russia has further drawn up ambitions to rebalance its strategic orientation towards whole Asia and wider. Hence, every move one of them makes is scrutinised by the neighbour, apart from being screened by the US and Europe.

Thus, case study research method will also be the part of procedure we use, as it excels at bringing us to very complex conclusions and enables understanding of a whole of the relationship. Thereupon it is to be underlined that up to now their narrow cooperation and alliance are much stronger than criticism of each other. As such close cooperation worries the rest of international players, another question for the future has been raised here: will the two countries continue walking hand in hand or, as some experts claim\textsuperscript{23}, there will be the possibility of a war between the two?

Referring to sources, this work relies on body of already existing extensive research on history and the nature of the relationship between two countries. To confirm the strength of the partnership a corpus of studies will serve as a support to beliefs and possible theories. To accomplish the goals mentioned above and confirm the hypotheses, this study will mostly combine Western with Russian\textsuperscript{24} and sometimes also Chinese views given in books, scholarly articles, think tanks expertise\textsuperscript{25}, and other academic works. Likewise, we will review the press in different countries [US, Europe, Russia, China] to follow up the development of the diplomatic interactions between Moscow and Beijing in the 20th century throughout news articles on interstate and security affairs. By comparing and analyzing critically all mentioned sources, with their different views and approaches, this work endeavors to give the new insight into the multifold relationship between the Rising Dragon and Wounded Bear. Consequently, through reviewing the opinions provided in sources, some logical answers to main doubts of the relationship will materialise. In the thesis conclusion some prompts and clues to the key questions and hypothesis were given: whether the two countries are equal partners or enemies and up to which grade if so; which are the premises that could bring two major nations on the Earth on the path

\textsuperscript{23} Especially Russian historians, such as: Iurii Galenovich, Oleg Glazunov, Viktor Baranec, Mikhail Timoshenko, and so on.

\textsuperscript{24} Among the most prominent scholars and diplomats who wrote about Russia-China relationship are: Iurii Galenovich, Aleksandr Shirokorad, A. V. Lukin and V. L. Larin.

\textsuperscript{25} Several Think Tanks that specialise in expertise on Chinese foreign policy and defence: Council on Foreign Relations, Shanghai Institute for International Studies, Brookings and Carnegie at Tsinghua University, Center for China and Globalization, Xinhua News Agency Research Institute, Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Institute for Strategic Studies -National Defense University, Center for International and Strategic Studies.

Think Tanks expertise on Russian foreign policy and defence: Center for Strategic and International Studies, Center Politicheskogo Analiza, Chatham House, Bruegel, IFRI, IISS, Moskovskii center Karnegi, Institut Gaidar, IMEMO RAN, Rossiskii Soviet po Mezhdunarodnim Otnosheniam, foundation Russkii Mir, etc.
of the closest cooperation, or make them side with other powers hedging against each other with the aim to ascertain their power and assure the dominant position in the region and wider, often at neighbour’s expenses.

Delimitations and limitations

The potential of this work lays in the fact that it is wide in time range and ambitious in its scope, though it follows the historical and foreign policy thread since the first contact and tries to reveal its nature, which entails some problems, too. It is more based upon historical analysis of the past, thus bound to a narrative style. Delimitations of the study are imposed by the impossibility to write about all aspects of the relationship between China and Russia, so it puts the border conflict, security issues and regional foreign policy in the foreground. Nonetheless, there are some limitations out of our control. This research is hindered sourcewise: first, due to abundant literature for periods up to the 20th century and the impossibility to take it entirely into account by writing; second, for the 21st century we have to rely on a few books in foreign policy, but mostly on academic journal articles and newspapers. More written corpus is dedicated to commercial ties and energy deals between Moscow and Beijing. On the other hand, in order to avoid excessively Western point of view of the meaning of the Sino-Russian alliance, numerous studies in Russian and some in Chinese language have been mentioned as relevant here, to prove the growing strength of the partnership. However, some difficulties arose when it comes to understanding the sources in Chinese language correctly; yet the official intentions and real foreign policy moves are hidden in a specific rhetoric Chinese political establishment has used.

Theoretical framework

Apropos research strategies and theories applied in this master thesis in foreign policy (a subfield of the study of international relations), we will bear in mind the existing IR paradigms. Herewith, we will use the shortest explanation on what foreign policy actually is, given by Christopher Hill: Foreign policy is the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations to ease the understanding of the subject of study. To interpret security and border relationships between Moscow and Beijing, several definitions have been applied to comprehend them better. Starting with Arnold Wolfers’ one that states that: Security in any objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked, reflecting on Paul Williams’ definition that: Security involves gaining a degree of confidence.

about our relationships that comes through sharing certain commitments with other actors, which, in turn, provides a degree of reassurance and predictability, finishing with Barry Buzan’s idea about subjective, objective and discursive conceptions of security and five major sectors of factors that affect security of human collectivities: military security; political security; economic security; societal security; environmental security.

Analysis of events in this work rely on the term complex interdependence theory coined by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye showing the importance of great variety of complex transnational connections, seen as state-to-state interdependencies. In the global world such ties have been increasing, especially in economic terms. Also, this theoretical frame insists on the decline of military force as a powerful policy means in relationship among states and strengthening of other forms of mutual interdependence that could boost the closest cooperation among states. There are also many reasons to apply some premises of Balance of Power Theory in the relationship between Russia and China, and on the third angle of the triangle, US. Next, also Neorealism theories should apply. They identify the casual factor that never changes to be responsible for the regularity of war and conflict within international politics. This factor resides in the anarchic structure of the international realm, as there is the absence of a reigning hegemonic authority. As a result, states must provide for their own security and mistrust the others. The military power is unequally distributed and clustered into poles, where the interactions between the great powers largely determine the shape and essence of the international system. They are immersed in a permanent competition to develop capabilities and forge more alliances with the goal to ‘balance’ against each other. The Neorealism theoreticians indicated that: the unbalanced power of a unipolar international system should catalyse the emergence of new great powers and a quick return to balance-of-power politics, in order to limit the power of the preeminent state and restore the system to its “natural” state of multipolarity. In fact, balancing is not the aim per se, but a technique how to survive successfully as a state in an anarchical world system. During the historical period we will analyse, there have been quick changes in international power and status of two countries and they permanently attempted to conquer regions held by the other state and thus called for counterbalancing actions. Since the end of the Cold War the balancing process between Russia and China has helped to maintain the stability of mutual relations and to maintain peace in the region. Their alliance is considered relatively fluid, so it will provide for a very good balance of economic and military power between them.

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Hand in hand with neorealist theories, in this work is present Defensive Realism, too, as it deals with security issues. There are certain conditions in the international system that facilitate expansion. Anarchy in the international system creates situations where by the tools that one state uses to increase it security decreases the security of other states. According to Robert Jervis's writings, this security dilemma causes states to worry about one another's future intentions and relative power. It is held that Beijing and Moscow seek strategies to align their security interests, but they also inadvertently generate spirals of mutual hostility and mistrust each other, especially when it comes to the prediction of the future of their behaviour. Together they also hedge against the US, but always avoiding the final clash. Moreover, we have witnessed expansionism strategic moves on both sides, thus the two leaders believe that they could protect better their national interests, sovereignty and widen areas of influence in the region. In fact, both China and Russia adapt very flexibly to international requirements, though they want to show that, in fact, they pursue moderate strategies on their path to global security. Often, they combine military, diplomatic, and foreign economic efforts to effectively restrain their competitors. Nevertheless, in their acting we can suspect the existence of Offensive Realism theory, in which states value survival in the international system as their most important goal. Therefore, they are greatly concerned about security and forced to compete with other powers. The basic structure of international system makes them strive for maximum power and predominance. They can never be certain about the intentions of other states, though all decisions and views are made by humans and impossible to see or seize before being expressed. Here, fear acts as a balance of power. Also, when the opportunity arises, states will provide for becoming a regional hegemon: Moscow and much more Beijing during its peaceful rise nowadays strive to achieve preponderance of military, economic, and potential power in Asia and wider. Besides, in Russian-Chinese historical relations the theory of Deterrence has commonly applied. Both entered military race during the Cold War and considered that nuclear weapons were the most effective deterrent to war between the states in the international system. Also, both countries use pressure to convince their opponents that a particular action on one side would elicit an adequate response on the other side. The resulting damage could be estimated unacceptable though it would outweigh any expected benefit. Deterrence is also a dynamics of acting which calculates the cost and benefits permanently, and adjusts policies of both countries seeking for continuous feedback. On the other hand, deterrence is still strongly


connected to the nuclear capacity of a state and we will reflect on this issue in each country along this study.

Additionally, the bilateral relationship between China and Russia and growing multi-polarization of relations between states on the international political scene has allowed for the application of classical Game theory. It refers to decision-making approach based on the assumption of actor rationality in a situation of competition. States are actors who try to to increase gains or minimize losses in uncertain situations: if it is a two-state zero-sum game, what one actor wins the other loses, so the sum is zero. In a two-state non-zero or variable sum game, gains and losses are not necessarily equal; it is possible that both sides may profit, (a positive-sum game). They can also both lose to a different degree. On the international political scene we have more actors, so the game is often called n-person game. Game theory looks at complex relationships where states have to take the best or least harming decision, often under conditions of great uncertainty and with only partial information. Hence, each actor has to rank order preferences, estimate probabilities, and try to discern what the other actor is going to do.

Game theory approach especially applies when reviewing big triangular relations between China Russia and US as the most dominant factor in international relations since the cold war era up to present time. So, when it comes to Beijing and Moscow’s presence in Asia, especially in its central parts, this theory will be useful to understand their geopolitical competition. Also, when it comes to Beijing’s views on recent international conflicts involving Moscow, such as Ukraine and Syria this theory proves being helpful. In the same way Moscow’s relatively tolerant views on the Chinese expansion in the South China Sea, even if it has to hedge to not harm any of its partnerships in the region. Finally, the Game Theory applies to their shared security concerns in Central Asia, which have led them to greater cooperation in the SCO.

As a historian, we cannot neglect the important tool to study diplomacy and inter-state relations in the world, which is called Historical approach. Even if it was one of the earliest approaches adopted for the study of international relations, we consider it very useful for political history of a country in order to answer basic questions for each period: who? how? where? when? and why?

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39 Menaldo, Mark, Leadership and Transformative Ambition in International Relations, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013, (1st edit.), p. 34.
Applying this procedure will enable the reader to grasp historical events through social, economic and political or diplomatic phenomena. It can help to better analyse the thoughts and attitudes relevant for each studied period. The historical approach to policy analysis used for this study is based on credible historical sources, to enable qualitative review of the events through an instructed analysis of the sources, behaviours and actions in the means of power and the demands of interests. The aim of this method is to ease the comprehension of the resulting consequences of their acting on the world political scene, for both Russia and China. Wider historical analysis will offer insight into understanding deeper motivations of two states and how they have defined and pursued interests over time. This approach will enable better contextual understanding when it comes to conflicts and their resolution: also, by virtue of intense study of more than four centuries of diplomatic history between China and Russia we will perceive the core interests and relevant narratives at time being and will be able to measure and study main patterns of state interaction over time. This approach will help to avoid quick and sensational labeling of some phases of this important relationship as “unprecedented” and “ill-judged”, pointing at the need for certain behaviour.

Along with historical approach, the relationship will be interpreted by providing a brief insight into the geopolitical and ideological dimensions of each sequence of bilateral interaction: from the first contacts, during the Soviet era, post-Cold War and contemporary period.

For some of predictions on future acting of Moscow and Beijing, we will refer to the scientific approach given by Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, a general theoretical on war and international conflicts. He applies social studies’ analysis to the study of the future conflict prediction and favours probabilistic approach to historical causality, past and future. His opinion is based on expected utility theory. Despite that he offers gloomy predictions for internal affairs in Russia and China, he states that in the 21st century challenges to U.S. dominance primarily will emerge from Asia, where China, India and Russia will become the backbones of a new world order.

Thesis structure

Having justified the previous aspects, the outline of the thesis proceeds as follows. In the first section we will reflect on the historical background of the relationship before the 20th century, starting with the beginning and the nature of contact between two countries, following their expansion in the North Asia and analyse the main mutual treaties resulting from their contact. To prove the relevance of the relationship since the very beginning, we will take into account first diplomacy initiatives and look into them until the end of 19th century.

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42 Connable, Ben, Campbell, Jason H., Madden, Dan, *Stretching and Exploiting Thresholds for High-Order War: How Russia, China, and Iran Are Eroding American Influence Using Time-Tested Measures Short of War*, Rand Corporation, 2016.

The second section is entirely dedicated to the Sino-Soviet relationship. It deals with early ideological influences, considers relevant events in the Cold War period, and revises security issues between Moscow and Beijing. Moreover, we analyze ongoing diplomacy and treaties between Moscow and Beijing and reflect on the development of foreign policy until Mao’s death. Finally, the study assesses benefits of the Sino-Soviet friendship in the Soviet era.

The third section deals with the Opening of China and the undertaken reforms in Deng Xiaoping’s era, the security questions between two neighbours, new foreign policy in China after Mao’s death, as well as new forms of cooperation in the post Soviet period. We will oversee the policy towards Russia under the leadership of Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao.

The fourth part is dedicated to the current president Xi Jinping and his relation with Vladimir Putin, where numerous security issues between China and Russia will be considered: big part is dedicated to the situation on the Asian continent. Also, this part underlines the growing cooperation between two states and revises their shared membership in two International Organizations, the UN and SCO. Moreover, we will reflect on their stand in global political affairs.

Finally, in the conclusion section we will assess the main hypothesis about the nature of the relationship we have discussed and offer the evaluation of the partnership or rivalry between China and Russia in the multipolar world. Herewith and based on the conclusion, we will offer some future outlooks and prospects for the further development of either partnership or rivalry or the combination of the two. Their carefully curated very close ties are increasingly having a global impact and will surely continue likewise.

1. Historical Background before the 20th century

“For Russia, China has never been a mere neighbour, but has represented a bordering giant East Asian civilization: its northern frontier, together with far east and south Siberian Russian regions, has represented contact areas for inter civilisational relation.”

1.1. First contacts and expansion of Russia and China in North Asia. Mutual treaties.

Chinese-Russian mutual contacts and with them the appearance of first diplomatic relations have existed for more than 400 years. During that long period regimes and dynasties, as well as the international environment have changed. Apart from commercial exchanges, which date back to the year 1616, when the first interchange of commodities by the merchants of two nations happened, the state-to-state encounter has often been troubled, due to their great expansion in the 17th century.

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46 The first mission to China was dispatched by Volinsky, voivode of Toms, through Mongols, in 1608, but failed. However, it obtained the earlier information about China. See Mueller, G. F., “O pervih Rossiskikh puteshestviah i posolstvah v Kitai,” [The First Russian Travellers and Embassies in China], *Ezhemieschnie Sochinyenia i Izviestia o Uchenih Delah*, Moskva, (July, 1751): 15-75.
After overthrowing Mongols in its territory, Russia managed to cross the Ural Mountains and, with the help of the Cossacks, took over Siberia. It even approached Alaska. The motives that drove Russia to expand in Asia were the territorial security, the prestige and the commercial exploration aimed at import and export of goods. A bit later, after conquering China proper from the Ming Dynasty, Manchu united tribes started expanding Chinese territory further from inner and afterwards outer Mongolia, whereas both had already been tied to China through vassal relationship. Mongols played a crucial role at the beginning of the establishment of Sino-Russian relations since 17th century and the shortest route from western Siberia to China was laid through Mongol khanates.

Back in 1650 Chinese Manchu power was already projected over the Amur region (they arrived at the Sea of Okhotsk!) and in Western Khalka, along the Russian border in the Altai, but logically, Russia was not willing to recognize it. It is to say that whole Mongolia was already loyal to China during the period of the second Manchu emperor Kangxi (1662-1723). There, Russians lost the diplomatic battle and Mongolian tribes have secured China's frontier during the centuries to come. Later on, China continued its conquests toward Kazaks in Turkestan and had had important conflicts with Russians there. So, China’s northern frontier expanded along the mountains of the Yablonoi and Stanovoi, reaching the Northern Sea (of Okhotsk). They could have gone further North, but had to strengthen the new Qing Dynasty. Consequently, the conflict between these two well-organized powers continued through centuries centred on the Amur region, rich in resources.

For Russia it was a great surprise to encounter a rival of that capacity and it became aware of the fact that after the consolidation of the Qing (Manchu) power Chinese expansion would progress northward and westward. Thus Russia was forced to defend its interests there and frequent clashes were unavoidable. However, the first embassies from Russia to China started in 1608, but until late 17th century (in 1670, Milovanoff’s mission) they proved unsuccessful. Yet, they brought about better understanding of two cultures. The surprising fact is that simultaneously with these incipient diplomatic efforts, the Russians had been raiding and battling in the Amur region. Nevertheless, these contacts were condemned to fail, though Russians could neither comprehend the exact reach of power held by the Chinese Emperor and its meaning, nor the habits that surrounded the Emperor or the court.

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47 Amur region was under Chinese control already in 15th century, but Russian took over due to the Ming weakness.
48 Aixin Jueluo Xuanye (爱新觉罗玄烨).
Finally, in 1670, with great help from the Jesuits, at least the Imperial letters could be successfully exchanged and in them, the freedom of commerce and movement along trade routes (stipulated to maximum 8 days of duty) for both sides agreed. It also helped to reduce conflicts on the border. However, in Chinese records of the mission we can read that it merely represented a tribute embassy to the Kingdom of Heavenly Peace, so they did not pretend to cleave to any of those commercial arrangements.

First treaties

The Sino-Russian war on the river Amur was a problem for both the Emperor and the Tsar. They had other unsolved problems in distant regions\(^5\) and needed peace badly. So, in 1689 they negotiated the Treaty of Nercinsk, which laid down “a frontier rather than a boundary, that is, a separation of sovereignties that was zonal rather than linear, using for delineation major geographical features such as mountain ranges rather than the precisely defined lines on maps and on the ground that modern states require.”\(^6\) It was set along the Argun, continuing along the Amur, up to the Stanovoi Mountains and up to the Udi River, where a neutral territory was declared. So, the Russians retained Trans -Baikalia between Lake Baikal and the Argun River north of Mongolia\(^7\)

The primary interest Russia had in signing the treaty was the prospect of commercial relations with China, whereas this relation was the most important foreign initiative for them. By time, after the definite establishment of the Russian trade in Peking in 1693, Moscow exerted an absolute control over China trade and supervised every caravan. However, China imposed a lot of restrictions on the trade, referring to time and periodicity of the exchange. With the new century, commercial exchange also took place along the border with Mongolia and later a new trading post was set up in the city of Kiakhta. Under Peter I the Great (1682-1725) Russia expanded its Tsardom through successful wars into a very large empire that became a major European power, which pushed for the obtaining of more trading possibilities. They often made local agreements with khanates on the Russian -Mongolian border and Manchu Chinese feared possible Russian support to disloyal tribes there. The area was also frequented by Siberian Cossack tribes who came to plunder and harass caravans circulating in both directions. Thus, emperor Kangxi decided to restrict and almost cancel caravan routes in the area until the settlement of the border issues on the Mongolian part of the frontier with Russia. Peter the Great

\(^5\) Russia led a war in Baltic and the Manchus were pacifying the South China.


\(^7\) The text of the Treaty: [http://www.chinaforeignrelations.net/node/200](http://www.chinaforeignrelations.net/node/200), accessed December 21, 2016
was able to reach the agreement short before his death, thanks to his very skilled ambassador Sava Vladislavich Ragusin (a Serb in his service).

After the Treaty of Burinsk (1726) and Treaty of Kyakhta the border questions were regulated, as well as the fleeing and refugee issues. So, “the Russian expansionist movement had expanded the border westward from the Argun river to Altai mountains in north-western Mongolia.” Both commercial posts were also confirmed (Nerchinsk and Khiakhta). On the other hand, a very important Russian spiritual mission was settled in Beijing: its tasks were of diplomatic and commercial representative nature. The meaning of this mission was spectacular: it produced the first two sinologists of Slavic European origin apart from the Jesuits, already serving the Emperor.

1.2. Weakening of the Qing power in China and conflicts with Russia

During 19th century Qing had had internal problems and faced uprisings and later serious rebellions, which helped Russians to attack the territory along Amur river and intimidate Chinese with new steamboats. The Manchu governor felt terrified, fearing the use of force and finally signed the Treaty of Aigun in 1858, which allowed the building of a new commercial post at the town of Khabarovsk, situated on two main rivers in the region, Amur and Ussuri. In this short treaty only three articles spoke about demarcation. The Russo-Chinese boundary was finally set along the Amur, from the Argun River in the west to the Sea of Okhotsk in the east. So, the left bank of Amur belonged to Russia and right to China. The land between Ussuri and Okhotsk sea was for common use. Russia obtained navigation rights on the main rivers: Amur, Ussuri, and Sungari, the same as China. All third countries were excluded from this right, because both powers were afraid of Western penetration of their territories.

From then on mutual trade was now permitted along entire length of the border. China believed that the Treaty was only a temporary concession to its powerful Slavic neighbour, but St. Petersburg understood it as definite success of its interests in Asia. It largely helped the rise of Russia as an Asia-Pacific power onwards.

Other minor treaties such as the Treaty of Kulja in 1851, largely favoured the Russians and permitted merchant settlements in in Turkestan, in Jungar and Tarim basin. It was anomaly and contrary to the Chinese policy with foreigners. Along with other Western powers, Russia signed the very humiliating Tianjin treaty in 1858, prejudicing China. By it, Russia was allowed to establish the highest level of contacts and send envoys to Beijing at its convenience, without following the Chinese protocol anymore. Neither were there limits for its trade and merchants in

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55 Ilarion Rossohin, Aleksei Leontiev.
56 During the reign of the young Xiangfeng emperor, (1850-61).
57 At that time China arrived at the northern Caspian sea and the Russian expansion stopped at Irtysh.
open Chinese ports. Russian vessels had allowance to trade in the main ports: Shanghai, Ningbo, Fuzhou, Amoy, Canton, Taiwan-fu (on the Isle of Formosa), Qiongzhou (on the Isle of Hainan). The treaty also provided for Russian Christian missionary work.

On the other side, Russian conquests continued in the south-west and arrived at today’s Kazakhstan and Turkestan. Within few years Russian influence spread south of Irtyssh river and they were steadily penetrating Qing territories: lake Balkash and Ili river. Once there, they established the fort Verny, today the city of Alma-Ata. Again, there was the need to define and adjust the border west of the northern chain of Tianshan. The loss of Qing influence in that area was confirmed in two treaties: the Beijing Treaty (1860) and the Protocol of Chuguchak, also named of Tarbagatai (1864).

In the period of severe competition with foreign powers inside China and loss of Opium Wars, Russia had been consolidating its power along the border with declining Middle Kingdom. Throughout the document known as the Russo-Chinese Convention from 1860, in which the Treaty of Aigun was confirmed, Russia obtained Amuria and Ussuria and founded its Maritime Province (Primorskii Krai). It built Vladivostok and thus reached the Far East. With it, it spread out its commercial activity even further in Asia. It got direct access to the Sea of Japan and was able to sail the Pacific Ocean. Throughout it, Russia started being a Pacific power, too.

Russia was also largely favoured by the territorial limitation in Central Asia. China strongly feared Russian attacks and conferred them rights to open Russian consulates in Mongolia and Xinjiang. The entire border was opened to free trade between the two empires. With this Treaty China also lost influence in West Turkestan. This deal helped Russian merchants to access the trading posts in Sinkiang and reach the trade with India, the fact which confirmed Russia to be the most influential country in Asia at the time.

1.3. The Sino-Russian alliance against Japan. Another Russian conquest.

The Sino-Russian Secret Treaty was signed in 1896, by foreign minister Lobanov-Rostovsky and governor general Li Hongzhang. It was the first official Chinese-Russian alliance. They concluded a defensive alliance against Japan, offering mutual support in case of a Japanese aggression in the coming fifteen years. It was the Russian initiative to make further intrusions to China and have a big stake against Japan in Asian-Pacific and Far East trade. In that period China trusted Russia to back its interests against Japan, after losing territories in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95).

The alliance was completely fake and it wiped out the illusions on the Chinese side. Russia forced Qing government to lease Port Arthur and used Boxer rebellion as a pretext to occupy

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59 The Opium Wars of 1839-42 and 1856-60 between Qing-dynasty China and Great Britain.
60 In Urga and Kashgar, in addition to Kulja.
Manchuria, which virtually became a Russian protectorate. It was involved in bombing Beijing, too. It agreed with Japan on the loss of Korea for Chinese and recognized Japanese economic interest there (1898). Furthermore, during the Russo-Japanese war (1904) northern China was the main battlefield and the Chinese stayed neutral in the conflict.

The treaty also allowed Russia to increase its presence in that part of Middle Kingdom as its representatives and police enjoyed extraterritorial jurisdiction. Another vital consent was the construction of the China Eastern Railway (CER), nowadays a part of the Trans-Siberian Railway. Russia wanted to preempt the British in that great deed. Finally, Russia controlled the entire project and was allowed to move its military potential inside China to help it if needed. The land the train line traversed, was considered Russian property with full sovereignty over it. The project was funded by the Russo-Asiatic Bank, in which China neither had voice, nor could influence any future decisions around the railway. Moreover, all Russian transport was exempted from taxation and Russia gained lower tariff rates than other powers dealing commercially in China.

Accordingly, Russian power went beyond the treaty provisions, resulting in controlling the whole Northern Manchuria and further Chinese weakening.61 Through railway building project, China also lost its Liaodong Peninsula62 by Russian gunboat diplomacy. As the part of the "Triple Alliance" (Russia, France and Germany) Russia was responsible for this new new imperialism over China63 and had brought about its decline.

All in all it increased the anti-foreign feeling among Chinese masses, which exploded in the Boxer rebellion in 190064. When the unrest reached Manchuria, rebels took revenge against Russia damaging the railway, which provoked Russia to send its troops. Japan felt threatened by Russia and forced them to retreat. Then another Russo-Chinese Agreement was signed in spring 1902, as a reaction to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance65. However, Russian troops did not retreat completely and harassed North Korea and clashed with Japan again, where they obtained great commercial concessions (timber). China and Japan felt menaced and were convinced that St. Petersburg was trying to infiltrate in Korea and continue its avalanche in North Asia.66

Finally, instead of leaving Manchuria, Russia beared down on China refusing the troops’ withdrawal and dictated additional conditions to the evacuation, known as Seven Articles. They

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62 For the detailed explanation see: Cohen, Ariel, Russian Imperialism: Development and Crisis, Greenwood Publishing Group, (Revised editi, 1998), p. 60.
63 Germany annexed Qingdao, while Russia obtained Port Arthur and Dairen, France, Guangzhouwan, as well as Britain obtained Weihaiwei to counteract Russia.
64 Shao, Binhong, (editor), China under Xi Jinping: Its Economic Challenges and Foreign Policy Initiatives, BRILL, 2015, pp. 221-222.
demanded “the non-alienation of Manchuria and the closing of Manchuria against the economic enterprises of any other nation but Russia”.  

Obviously in that lapse of time Chinese history was completely dominated by foreign powers and Russia took its portion in it: since the Li-Lobanov Treaty and the Russo-Japanese War, the northern neighbour dominated the Chinese Northeast territories in almost all aspects. It had actively participated in what is known among the Chinese as “a hundred years of humiliation” of their country by Western powers.

All this expansion mostly on Chinese expense, has changed the cultural concepts on both sides, Western and Chinese, and provided for the questioning of border security, that had been relatively unimportant to the Chinese side. “Before the arrival of Western imperialist powers, territorial boundaries along China’s frontiers had little significance under the tributary system”.

So, the first period has shown that at the very beginning of the neighbouring relationship there was a complete absence of conflict, due to almost inexisten contact between China and Russia. Back then, Muscovites had no awareness of the existence of a great empire, extending from the Urals, a natural limit of the well-known word for Russia at the time. However, when the little medieval Muscovite state started to stabilise, it aimed its curiosity and the great thrust of expansion across the Urals and continued to sow the Siberian rivers. This territory spreading brought them to the Pacific coast and later also towards the south. So the conflict between two great civilizations was imminent. Trading relations also played a great role: tea and furs were two important staples interchanged between the two empires. What is more, they both wanted to extend their spheres of interest and increase their already big territories. The border conflict between two countries spread all over Pacific Asia.

Assuredly, Russia was the first Western power which signed a formal treaty with China in 17th century. Its engagement with the Middle Kingdom became a topic in historiography and literature. Anyhow Russian little knowledge on China was supported by European sources because there were few diplomatic contacts that proved to be successful.

Culturally, expanding Russia began to comprehend the real nature of the Chinese Empire, but instead of admiring their powerful neighbour, the bellicose Slavs engaged in incursions and further military conquests of China to make its great potential serve their own interests. By time, general Russian perception of its neighbour was ambivalent: they wanted to emulate the positive European evaluation of Chinese civilization, but at the same time they operated on the practical level and hedged militarily against concerns that grew out of increased geopolitical and commercial contact. After spreading the territory during Peter I the Great, the ambitious

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67 Idem 64.
Empress Catherine\(^70\) was enthroned. She acted as an enlightened monarch and at the same time led imperial expansion against its southern rival, the Middle Kingdom. The poet Gavril Derzhavin literally cited her words: "I shall not die until I have ejected the Turks from Europe, suppressed the pride of China, and have established trade with India."\(^71\)

1.4. Towards the end of the Empires. Situation before the Revolution.

Through aforementioned treaties the vast Russian Empire was granted new territories in eastern Siberia at the expense of steadily declining Qing China. Entering the 19th century, the peace was dominant tendency between the neighbours. But in 1840s, after a century of a relatively stable period in relations with China, Russia renewed the threats and continued to expand eastward under the leadership of three men: Nikolai Muraviev, the governor-general of Eastern Siberia, Count E. V. Putiatin and General Nikolai Ignatiev. Muraviev insisted on conducting an aggressive policy with China despite strong resistance from St. Petersburg officials, who feared a breakup in relations between the two countries. They were diplomatic envoys that had to pursue a vision of Russia as a Pacific power, but had done everything to reaffirm its supremacy in the Russian Far East and in Pacific Asia. This was feasible because by the middle of the nineteenth century world conditions had radically changed China’s position. It had been affected internally by weakening of the Emperor’s power. The system was breaking down after two thousand years of feudalism and the presence of warlords divided China into their spheres of influence. The overwrought state could not resist in front of the invading presence of powerful Western imperialist countries and Japan. In that context it was an easy task for the northern neighbour under Romanov dynasty to expand the borders of the Russian empire. In the quest for safety and securing own trading interests, Russia advanced itself to other Western countries and, together, they turned the Great Middle Kingdom of Qing into a weak, dying victim. “The Tsar turned his eyes eastward and decided to join the condominium of bullies carving up China,”\(^72\), tormented by domestic turmoil and foreign imperialistic enmeshment. China experienced successive traumas of dynastic collapse, civil wars, and loss of territories, which were the kickoff of the revolution.

All in all, on the Russian side, the management of the relations with the Great China has naturally always been the present core issue in its foreign policy. However, with the new century at dawning, both Empires were at their last and the historical changes were about to happen. After involving in the WWI, where almost four million Russians were killed, Nicholai II abdicated following the February Revolution of 1917. His military

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\(^{70}\) The Empress of Russia from 1762-96.


decisions, along with other disastrous policies led to the fall of the Romanov dynasty and the October Revolution.

On the other side of the border, the Qing fall was a complex interplay between internal and external factors. By 1900, all Western powers already had their "spheres of influence" along Chinese coast. They controlled the trade and the military, even if China still was nominally ruled by the Qing. They started rapidly losing sovereignty on their own territory, so the empire was about to crumble from within. The Qing were blamed as well as the Manchus, for all disaster China suffered. In spite of many reforms they undertook, it was impossible to dominate the regional warlord power, so finally, they had lost “the Mandate of Heaven”.

2. The development of the Sino-Soviet Relationship

2.1. Ideological influence of October 1917 on Chinese Revolutionary Ideas. The founding of the CCP.

The October Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 had a great and prolonged influence on Chinese-Russian relations. The Qing dynasty was dethroned in 1911, and the country was split in regions. China was in a complete chaos and the civil war broke out later. Some revolutionary intellectuals, disillusioned with the ideas of liberal democracy popular in the West, embraced Russian Bolshevism as the right force for further political actions. Prediction on capitalism’s ultimate destruction (Voitinski), resolutely marked Chinese intellectual thought (great influence on Chen Duxiu). At the same time, the May 4th movement arose in China with the strong desire to reinvigorate the country and, furthermore, to promote revolutionary social transformation.

Within all this turmoil, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was founded in 1921, based upon Bolshevik ideas. The most renowned founder member was Mao Zedong, who set up a branch of the party in Hunan. In Russia, Lenin, Zinoviev and Maring shared the strategic perspective that Asian communists must build a united front between nascent proletarian forces and nationalist parties, which speak for the local bourgeoisies victimised by imperialism. CCP soon joined the Comintern (1922). This organ suggested that the CCP had to ally with the Chinese Nationalists (KMT guomindang), led by Sun Yat-sen. A lot of prominent communists and military and political advisers were sent to China early in 1920s by the official Moscow. The aim of the help was to pursue the victory of the Chinese revolutionary movement. During the alliance and Soviet help they had defeated the warlords who controlled much of northern China.

75 Idem 73, p.147-151.
But the two parties were completely different in their political nature and in 1927 Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT leader and Sun Yat-sen's successor, launched an anti-communist purge. He ordered the slaughter of tens of thousands of communists, and expelled all the Soviet advisers. The great Chinese revolutionary project was in ruins. In order to save the rest of the Party and continue the ongoing revolution, Mao mobilized the Chinese countryside with a lot of farmers and slowly retreated to south-east China. The movement was menaced by Chiang Kai-shek again in 1934.

So, being surrounded by the KMT, Mao set forth on the 'Long March' of 6.000 mile long journey. He gathered his followers and led them to northwest China to establish a new base and avoid the destruction of communist forces. After some time the two parties allied again shortly during Sino-Japanese War, from 1937 to 1945. When the WWII finished, the civil war broke out between the old enemies, the CCP and the KMT. After long fights for years, the Communists were victors.

On the 1st October in 1949, Mao proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The surviving KMT forces, guided by Chiang Kai-shek, fled to Taiwan and found another state, the Republic of China (ROC).

2.2. The Soviets supremacy over weak China.

After the establishment of the Soviet Union (USSR) in 1922, the contacts between it and China had increased. The cooperation arrived at the level of shared communist ideology and mutual friendship, but at the same time, there were frictions between the two new leaders, Mao Zedong and Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin.

Even before the creation of two communist states, the old, unequal treaties that had harmed Chinese interests were annulled. The document is known as the Karakhan Manifesto of 1919. However, it still included additional rights for the Russians on Chinese territory: the extraterritoriality, further economic concessions, and Russia's share of the Boxer rebellion indemnity. It could not be implemented because of the civil war. It contained two versions, the one in Russian that does not mention the need to return the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) to the Republic of China, but the Chinese version does. In the same period, Bolsheviks claimed the possession of the entire Amur river and were not willing to depart from the area. Later in 1924, the same representative of the Soviet government, Karakhan, prepared a serial of negotiation of important issues between two countries that had to result in a new Sino-Soviet Treaty. But secretly, he extracted a very confusing border arrangement: all existing treaties from Tsarist Russia will be valid until the conference, where new agreements will be negotiated. It was very unfair to China. Consequently, later on the conference held in 1925, Moscow claimed that the old treaties had to be respected, because they greatly favoured them and again, entailed the humiliation for the ROC. Stalin even entered Manchuria, where he favoured the local warlord.
Moreover in 1930s the Soviet Union occupied some of the Chinese islands and set pretext for further border clashes that became very violent, later in 1969.

Successively, Stalin also took possession of ex-Japanese conquests in Asia, so Russians controlled Sakhalin, all Kurile Islands, two important ports Dalian and Lushun (Port Arthur) and also the CER. He advocated for the recognition of The People’s Republic of Mongolia as an independent country. All these questions were discussed with the Chinese nationalists (KMT) leading the ROC, who finally accepted all Stalin’s demands. He believed they were necessary to protect the newly created Soviet Republic from imperialistic Japan. After, when Mao declared the PRC, he pretended to reunify Mongolia, but his demand was rejected, arguing that it had already been negotiated. Manchuria and Xinjiang also represented the area under Russian influence; they dictated rules of the game there, declaring them their buffer zone. All in all, they continued abusing on China and controlling their vast territories.


Following the course of the Sino-Soviet relations, the USSR organized an important diplomatic move: the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, signed in 1945. Its aim was to solve pending questions between the Old China and the Soviet Union. It established the new guiding principles and legal basis for mutual protection and cooperation so that they could effectively hedge against third countries.

Later, at the occasion of Mao’s visit to Moscow in 1949, he and the premier Zhou Enlai suggested the new treaty to replace the one engaging the Old Chinese state. So, in 1950, the new treaty was issued. Altogether, the last treaty provided long craved security for both countries and it brought about for maintaining peace in the Far East. It warranted the promotion of the socialism and new human values on both sides.

Comprehensively, the People’s Republic of China, formed in 1949, was first recognized by the USSR. Despite the fact that Mao was considering how to try to balance the Sino-Soviet relations with ties to Washington, by 1949 he declared that China had no choice but to “lean to one side” - the Soviet one. Immediately China benefited from enormous material help from its communist neighbour. At that time China initially conceded the Soviet global leadership within the communist movement, a fact which relegated it to the back stage position in international affairs. The alliance helped China enormously, especially after the UN-sponsored trade embargo against it. From that point on, it is difficult to clearly separate different levels of interaction between the two countries; however, I will put more emphasis on their security policies, trying to comprehend internal and external causes of their foreign policy moves.

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2.4. Security issues in the Soviet period. The Cold War.

From the very beginning of the PRC, Beijing has enjoyed military assistance from Moscow at large scale. People's Liberation Army of China (PLA) has received substantial shipments of Soviet weapons and military equipment starting with the Korean War in 1950. On the other hand, Stalin's fear of a direct confrontation with the United States on the foreign soil limited the Soviet involvement and assistance in Korea. Consequently, apart from Mao's wrong estimation of the situation, Stalin decided to push China to participate directly in the first Cold War conflict that lasted 3 years. Although China bore major responsibility for fighting, it had to count on Soviet assistance and adhere to Soviet decisions. It proved to be decisive for its foreign and domestic policy onwards. Thus the Sino-Soviet alliance appeared to unite Moscow and Beijing, and China became more closely associated with and dependent on a foreign power than ever before. However, Soviet limited support in the Korean War raised Beijing's suspicions of the reliability of such a relationship with the Soviet Union for China's security interests. In fact, at the time China sacrificed its national self-interest. Beijing chose to follow the "cooperation strategy" and applied it consistently, lapsing into the "escalation strategy" only in the case of the dispute with Vietnam to assert hegemony over it.

At that time China was creating its air and naval force and laying foundations of modern military industry. The total amount of Soviet military aid to China arouses 1.3 billion dollars. The Soviets considered supporting and arming China part of their "international obligation". During all the decade of 1950s the relation between two communist powers showed a lot of difficulties from the very beginning, yet they still affirmed their deep friendship and collaboration. The neighbours had not openly talked about border problems; however each of them interpreted the existing ambiguous treaties in their own favour. Since 1957 Zhou Enlai had tried to clear up issues on the border, but the Russian side had constantly refused the negotiation. Further tensions occurred in 1960s (analysed later here) and in 1964 came the arrangement. It served as a basis for the definite demarcation lines accorded in 1991.

That period in the URSS is known as the Khrushchev era (1954-64) and accounted for the "peaceful coexistence". Then in the late 1950s, when Mao asked to share Soviet nuclear technology and help China create its own nuclear weapons, an important conflict occurred. The Chinese side thought they had "won" the right to use that technology by helping the Soviets diplomatically in international communist arena, suffocating the uprisings and protests: in East

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77 Zhang, Xiaoming, China, the Soviet Union, and the Korean War: From an Abortive Air War Plan to a Wartime Relationship, The Journal of Conflict Studies, vol. XXII, no. 1, (Spring 2002).
78 Idem 53.
80 For further details, see footnote 24, p.p. 28-29.
Germany (1953), Hungary (1956) and Poland (1956). But Moscow viewed China as a part of its own world, a younger brother that was obliged to contribute to a “common communist cause” and thought of no debts or special favours, so it prompted it take a more active role in defence of the common cause. By time the Soviet leadership estimated that China had largely benefitted from their aid and thus suggested that Chinese military forces were to be put under Soviet command, imitating the other countries model in the Warsaw Pact. On the other hand, China understood it had already paid for the massive monetary, military and humanitarian aid by playing an active role in the Korean War.

Furthermore, Khrushchev was deeply worried about Mao's vision of the world. Especially when it came to his views on the American nuclear power, which when bluffing, he considered the “paper tiger.” Many in the Soviet Union supposed that Mao would have willingly plunged the world into a nuclear war out of his sheer ignorance and quick political irrational moves. In any case it seems that, lacking such arms himself, Mao had a lot of reasons to let the rest of the world think that he was not afraid of the nuclear bomb, no matter what his private thoughts might have been. Apart from feeling open antipathy for Mao, Khrushchev tried hard to avoid the split up. Thus in 1957, he offered assistance to China by founding the research centre for nuclear weapons. On 15th October 1957, the USSR and China signed an agreement on new defence technology, (nuclear energy, space technology and rocket building) in which Moscow agreed to supply a “sample of an atomic bomb” and technical data from which Beijing could manufacture a nuclear weapon. Also, there was a common need to build modern naval fleet including a lot of submarines to protect the Chinese coast. So, the final straw came when Khrushchev had proposed its creation. Mao interpreted it as blackmailing: he felt he was being forced to accept the URSS bases on his territory in exchange for material and military help, and he briskly refused. In his views, it was another act of humiliation China had long suffered. This time was even worse, because they had to cede the territorial control to a “friendly” communist brother-state, which constantly exercised pressure, showing its supremacy. Besides, the Russians threatened China with the cut off all further technical support and also played around the ban in trade with the Soviet Union and with other Soviet controlled communist countries. Indeed, the breach of relations between Moscow and Beijing became inevitable.

82 Mao Zedong, Selected Works: vol IV, 1941-45, International Publishers, 1956, (1st edit.), pp. 98-99: “I have said that all the reputedly powerful reactionaries are merely paper tigers. The reason is that they are divorced from the people. Look! Was not Hitler a paper tiger? Was Hitler not overthrown? I also said that the tsar of Russia, the emperor of China and Japanese imperialism were all paper tigers. As we know, they were all overthrown. U.S. imperialism has not yet been overthrown and it has the atom bomb. I believe it also will be overthrown. It, too, is a paper tiger.”
Nevertheless, the Chinese leadership decided to maintain its complete independence, even if they had to cut all remaining ties with the rest of the world. Mutual criticism among historians on both sides resulted in the Sino-Soviet Debate, which is looking for the guilty part on each side of the border: in Russian historiography the Chinese communist were declared rebels and ungrateful partners; in China’s writings the freedom of choice and independence are preeminent and the Soviet Union is still seen as a harasser and bully, showing dictatorial power. In this conflict, the Chinese side must have been right.

In other words, the CPC had never been very fond of Moscow directives and enmeshment in their internal affairs. Neither Soviet politicians were better: even if they admired some Mao’s moves, such as the Long March, when Mao Zedong took over the command of the Red Army in 1935, they privately despised Mao and feared his possible war games. Therefore, it was natural for the Chairman to wish to break away from the Russian embrace, since he had already experimented the Soviet support for the KMT during the civil war. But he had to accept “the living” under Russian protection as a surviving measure, with the clear aim to rebuild his heavily devastated country. Then, contrary to some historiography works Mao and most of Chinese leaders did not enjoy kind-hearted relationship with Moscow and Stalin or with his faction. They could sense the danger coming from that side; time proved that Moscow’s interventions were mostly harmful for China. The Russian side often abused and ill-treated them, considering the CCP to be nothing but an expendable pawn for their international needs.

2.5. Sino-Soviet split and its meaning. The rivalry in the Communist World.

The beginning of the split

Nonetheless, in August 1958, when PRC felt strong enough it began harassing islands under the control of its old enemy, Chiang Kai-shek. Their intervention on Kinmen and Matsu islands caused an acute crisis in the Taiwan Strait. What was worse, China did not pursue any definite military goal, but wanted to show to the world its political and strategic independence of the Soviet Union. Mao was also irritated by the Soviet behaviour during the 1959 tension and 1962 war incidents on the 3.850 km long Sino-Indian border. Opposing the widespread belief that the Soviet Union kept its neutrality all through the Indo-China border conflict, the new founding argues that the Soviet position on the issue evolved from neutrality to a short tilt towards China and then switched to openly support Indian side. Also, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was felt as a calamitous event, thus China blamed the Soviet Union for rising "social

86 It was more than the mere border conflict: it involved questioning of global System, the relation with two superpowers, etc. The war in 1962 The 1962 Sino-Indian War was fought in two areas: Jamu-Kashmir and Ladakh (part of Xinjiang), on the Tibet-Xinjiang road.
imperialism." At the same time "China began to compete for influence in the Third World and to prod the USSR into taking more aggressive and risky policies against the United States and its allies." By this means China revealed to everyone that its alliance with the USSR now lacked meaning and that it was ready to form an independent part in the "great triangle" of the world politics. With Mao's Great Leap Forward, in 1958 and during the Cultural Revolution the relations grew wholly apart. China's radicalism and increased xenophobia deepened the long-existing misunderstanding. Beyond shadow of doubt, the rift between the Soviet Union and China had become so great that the Soviet Union discontinued all assistance to China and cut off all aid in 1960.

However, the nuclear weapon technology had already been transferred to China. It successfully tested its first atomic bomb in October 1964, and later China tested its first thermonuclear device and long-range ballistic missiles in 1966-67.

Hence the alliance between Moscow and Beijing proved to be short-lived and soon turned into ideological and political-military conflict. The world's longest border became the scene of bloody battles, provoking a wider conflict. At the turn of the 70s, the two socialist countries were on the edge of nuclear war.

The meaning of the rivalry

The rivalry which turned into adversity between the two most powerful states in the Socialist international system, namely the Soviet Union and China, had reached a state of the peak of Cold War conflict and was very significant for the world's peace at the time. Jonathan D. Pollack, analyst at RAND thinks that "the Sino-Soviet rivalry ranks among the most enduring conflicts of the post war era." As a result of the aforementioned tensions, "Kremlin [in its wrong appreciation] resorted to economic sanctions in a miscalculated attempt to protect relations with Beijing from further deterioration." The conflict had grown irremediable, but started from Beijing's initial disagreements with the Russians over a great number of international affairs. Actually, China has also been blamed for its half-hearted efforts to restore cooperative relations with the Soviets. Again, the American factor was relevant, too. The scenario of the Vietnam War (1954-75) with the US supporting the government of South Vietnam was a manifestation of the worst Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies.

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91 Idem 86, p. 301.


Another failure to restore friendly neighbouring relations with China was caused by Brezhnev and its minister Kosygin leadership and their inadequate political appreciations. There is a variety of reasons to mention for the split, however "ideological disagreements, conflictive issues over sovereignty and national security, economic dispute, or the personality clash between Mao and Khrushchev could prove the most relevant"\textsuperscript{94}. Actually scholars believe that Chinese and Soviet leaders' domestic and diplomatic agendas were driven by ideological concerns and thus they could not easily retreat and betray their political thoughts.

On the other hand, the dispute was later intensified by increased competition between Beijing and Moscow for their influence and pre-eminence in the Third World. The world’s communist movement leadership was in question. China frequently accused the Soviet Union of colluding with imperialism revolution, while Beijing had tried hard to stay loyal to the previous Marxist ideals.

Finally, China became increasingly dangerous as it aimed at the extreme change in the world, calling for the globe proletarian revolution, even if it lacked the resources to help others, or to provide large amounts of economic or military aid. Apart from purely ideological reasons, there were some other relevant elements which determined the course of the dispute: the geographic factor (the long border and disputed areas) and the ethnic element (with a profound anti-Chinese feeling on the part of the Russians). Finally the Soviet threat drove China more or less into the arms of the United States.\textsuperscript{95} The US quickly capitalized on this split. In 1972, the Nixon administration visited Beijing and together with Mao issued the \textit{Shanghai Communique}. It traced the two countries’ foreign policy objectives and compromised to establish full diplomatic relations. This happened in 1979. It immediately changed the outlook of the Cold War, as the USSR lost its strongest ally and international support deriving from Moscow-Beijing ties. At that time, trade between China and the US grew around 25% every year. The Soviets started pursuing a policy of détente with the United States, yet they feared the complete loss of their international influence.

Since then, the US could easily "play the China card" against the USSR.

The Chinese Communist Party broke definitely off all ties with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1966, and their relationship had not been recovered until the year 1987. Finally, that is to be noticed that China was almost left completely forsaken on the international policy arena. Apart from a few remaining moral friendships with Egypt, Indonesia, and Albania\textsuperscript{96} it had no friendly ties, and it had already been threatened by the Western countries, led by the USA. Hence, through refusal to compromise its national sovereignty with the US and the Soviets, it


\textsuperscript{96} Even if China maintained good relations with Romania, it could not ever her anything because of the Warsaw Pact commitments. Good relations with India turned later in the border conflict.
was condemned to choose the path of isolation again. The PRC was not represented at the UN until 1971.

In anyway it is undeniable that both countries benefited from the mutual friendship. The USSR could strengthen security belt towards recently defeated Japan. Furthermore, it had gradually enforced its superpower position and enabled to prepare for the global confrontation with the US and its allies; the friendship helped to create the vision of the world united socialist system under the guidance of the USSR.; it also sowed seeds for establishing peace on the longest border in the world between two powerful neighbours.97


The territory dispute followed the ideological one and culminated in 1969. China explicitly accused the Soviets to largely profit from "unequal treaties" which caused it great territory loss in front of Tsarist Russia. Bloody armed clashes had occurred along the demarcation line and had not been successfully settled until the beginning of the new decade. Determinately, Beijing’s concerns to settle most of their border issues with neighbouring countries had been closely related to the country sovereignty. It is to say that the greatest progress in all border matters was made with the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia, which shares a total of 4300 km of the border with the PRC. The Manchurian section is the longest, it goes along 4245 km and the rest is between Kazakhstan and Mongolia. It was easier for the Chinese to arrange these disputes because there isn’t much Han population living there.

The first definite border agreement was reached in 1991 with the Soviet Union on the Manchurian part of the border. Next was the Altai region agreement in 1994, between Mongolia and Kazakhstan. In 1997 both sides signed the compromise to solve all other disputes in the shortest time, so they set up a demarcation commission that has solved the most part of the dispute on two rivers, Ussuri and Amur. But still, there are three large islands that Russia has not turned back to China.98

Getting back on the benefits of the friendship - China's interest in the alliance was largely based on the need to develop in all senses: to assure internal peace, to strengthen the regime's position, to build up its ruined economy and to turn itself into a significant military power in Asia. - It was only possible thanks to the copious Soviet financial and technical aid. The careful scrutiny of the Sino-Soviet relations offers a detailed scope into premises that determined Chinese foreign policy; as the country was extremely weak after the civil war it had to assure its existence and was obliged to decide where to seek for protection. The external factors influenced Mao's choices: the forming of the bipolar world, the need to hedge with Russia against Japan, the Taiwan question, the Truman administration's refusal of recognition of the PRC and the strong

97 Idem 86, p. 223.
98 Idem 69, p. 266.
American presence in the Pacific Ocean. Altogether, combined with Mao's personal beliefs and the ideology of solidarity between communist countries had shaped Chinese low profile activity and forced its foreign policy in a single direction – better to abide under Soviet tutelage than to stay isolated. Thereupon Mao saw the distancing from the USSR a necessary element of his changing foreign policy: while he had been showing Chinese independence in decision-making, he had been keen on restoring the country's national identity after a hundred and fifty years of humiliation. Since then, Mao's China "started standing out as the world’s leading revolutionary state, threatening not only Western democracy, but also Moscow’s claim to a leadership role within the Socialist bloc." Although Mao engaged in the U.S.-China-Soviet triangular diplomacy during the last period of the Cold War, he never trusted any of his rivals: in fact, he persistently pursued his main goal: to make China be the credible model for the "liberation" of all the oppressed nations and peoples of the world.

Security and foreign policy until Mao's death

Referring to Chinese security interest in the Mao Zedong era as a whole, that is to say that since its Cultural Revolution, China has started seeking enhanced security in its relations with the world: the long-term competition with the Soviets, the domestic development tasks (the four modernizations), and the task of becoming modern in the area of national defence. As a part of their continuing military modernization, they leaped from the Soviet technology, adopted the strategy "xi wei zhong yong", (making foreign things serve China), and were finally able to acquire Western military-related technology. The Chinese side has learned how to balance between two "hegemonic" powers, Moscow and Washington. So, in the 1970s Beijing started shifting its policy towards moderate, but steady approach to Western powers, to Europe and the USA at the same time.

Also apart from the aforementioned border agreement, Moscow wanted to correct its Sino-Soviet mistakes by issuing conciliatory messages, thus the situation slightly improved in 1976 after Mao's death. But, Beijing raised its voice against the hegemonic superpowers and called for a struggle in international affairs. Accompanying those statements, it especially targeted the Soviet Union, their ex-friend. They accused them to be the slyest enemy and "the most dangerous source of war."

A bit later, (at the end of the 70s) the Soviet military expansion in East Asia increased the antagonism. International treaties vis-à-vis China between the USSR and Vietnam and later

Afghanistan menaced China directly. It had the sensation of Russian encirclement. China had
asked for the formal derogation of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual
Assistance, even if later they engaged in mutual talks (especially in 80s). However, they raised a
lot of security issues as pre-conditions for the talks, especially the ones referring to its direct and
relative neighbourhood: Afghanistan, Vietnam, Cambodia and Mongolia. At that point China’s
approach toward the relationship with the Soviet Union experimented sudden changes: the
northern neighbour was still perceived as a threat, but a long-term one.
The renewed cooperation opened a wide range of possibilities for both countries. It happened
gradually, aligned with the creation of Chinese independent foreign policy, preceded by the
opening up economic policy. Sino-Soviet consultations about the relationship were held twice
yearly since 1982.

3. From the Chinese opening Reforms at the end of 70s until present.

3.1. Sino-Soviet security issues in Deng Xiao Ping’s era

Deng continued Mao’s goal to strive for China’s equality and restore China’s universal glory in
still bi-polar world. Personally, he was the creator of China’s foreign policy from 1978 until the
early 1990s and adjusted it in accordance with new economic policies. He had domestic stability
and growth in the highest esteem. Neither needed he the Soviet union to legitimate radical
domestic measures. All on the contrary, he tended to improve the Sino-Soviet relationship, so at
the time being, the ideological conflict disappeared. China declared it was more “revisionist” than
the USSR.

However, Beijing had flexible and changing policy towards Moscow, which could be explained by
the strategic triangle approach. The relationship they had in 1980s has clear division in two
periods: 1979-86, when the two countries were like “two estranged porcupines courting each
other in measured steps for a renewed liaison”103, but also showing muscle strongly, even
avoiding the conflict; from 1986, the relationship moved forward with Mikhail Gorbachev. In the
first period, a lot of Chinese statements again announced a struggle against the hegemony of
both superpowers, but they were especially directed against the Soviet Union. In Beijing’s eyes,
Moscow along with Washington represented “the superpower [which is] the biggest international
exploiter and oppressor of today. Both are the source of a new world war.”104 Soviet military
threat in East Asia and constant build up of its forces worried China. In the late 70s, USSR

103 Ross, Robert S., China, the United States and the Soviet Union: Tripolarity and Policy Making in the
104 Speech By Chairman of the Delegation of the People’s Republic of China, Teng Hsiao-Ping, At the
Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly, April 10th, 1974, Deng Xiaoping Internet Archive,
2017.
signed friendship treaties with Afghanistan and Vietnam\textsuperscript{105}, what gave China the sensation of Soviet encirclement.

To achieve peaceful environment for its internal growth, Beijing consecutively decides not to renew the Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance in 1979. But China raised some primary preconditions for the normalization of relations: the decline in number of Soviet troops along the common border\textsuperscript{106}, withdrawal of Soviet troops from Mongolia, an end to Soviet aid in Vietnam, and a Vietnamese military withdrawal from Cambodia.\textsuperscript{107} Suddenly, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, China cut off the talks immediately. Their main requirement was the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan. Also, there were some minor border incidents and each side blamed it on the other. For the first half of the 1980s, neither side agreed, so the talks could not progress.

However in 80s China gradually softened its requirements and started to consider the USSR as a long-term threat, not a prompt danger. Even if there were no talks in 1980-81, China was very positive towards the USSR and eliminated a part of unpleasant ideological vocabulary directed at their neighbour. Besides, China aligned its now independent foreign policy with the adoption economical opening up of the country.

At the same time, Beijing increased its international projection in the communist world: they hosted two important leaders, Enrico Berlinger and Santiago Carrillo, respectively. On domestic policy level they restored the personality and ideals represented by Liu Shaoqi, (Chinese Khrushchev) who assessed Mao’s role less dogmatically and critically. In the meantime, “the PRC’s diplomacy toward the Soviet Union during the Andropov and Chernenko interregnums between 1982 and 1985 was lowkey, methodical, and totally consistent with the trend set in 1979.”\textsuperscript{108}

Finally, Sino-Soviet relations were renewed due to the Soviet leadership changes between 1982 and 1985, despite the fact that the Soviet presence in Afghanistan remained unchanged. In Russian literature it is considered to be gained due to Brezhnev’s effort, but China had done a lot in two years to make the path smooth. From then on they held a meeting together twice yearly. Bilateral trade doubled, cooperation in technology was recovered and cultural relations started blooming again.

\textsuperscript{105} In 1978 there are tensions between Cambodia (China’s ally) and Vietnam (the Soviet Union’s ally). In 1979 China enters into Vietnam as a revenge for the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. The USSR reacted harshly condemning China’s act and increased its military aid to Vietnam.

\textsuperscript{106} Chinese asked for the decrease in number, reducing the force to the similar power as in Kruschov times. Since then, the USSR had increased its military budget 8 times and was effectively competent with the USA in defence matters


\textsuperscript{108} Idem 104, p. 37.
In Gorbachev era since 1985, their relation had much better outlooks than before. Soviet Union treated China with greater flexibility: there was a plan to reduce troops in the Asia-Pacific region and in Afghanistan and Mongolia, the opening of a border railroad, space cooperation, and joint hydropower development. The important role in developing these ties further belongs to the Chinese Vice premier Li Peng, who was fluent in Russian and often spoke to Gorbachev. However, China hoped Moscow would step back from its imperialism and make its troops retreat from Mongolia and Afghanistan and make Vietnam do the same in Cambodia. Finally, they discovered that Gorbachev was very skilled in rhetoric and double sense, without doing anything Chinese side thought he had to.

Actually, Gorbachev was very busy during his first year in office preparing for the most important event, the 27th Party Congress. There, he obtained great political achievement and soon started reforming all ministries and cabinets. Mikhail Kapitsa was replaced by Igor Rogachev as a minister in charge of China, whereas the last was fluent in Chinese and had a great knowledge on the country. This, along with the election of Troyanovsky as the new ambassador in China, all set up the basis for the new Chinese-Soviet policy launched since then, July 1986. Apart from the definite troop withdrawal, Beijing insisted even more on Vietnam question and was ready to negotiate economic help to it, especially if Moscow could convince Vietnam to free Cambodia. At the same time, all ties were spreading to a wide cooperation. Likewise, they agreed to arrange all remaining border questions. They sealed the agreement on these issues, excluding the Bear island - the only temptative point - in October 1988.

Even if the relationship had entered the path of normalisation, the knotty Vietnam issue still remained open. Finally, the Soviets withdrew their troops from the Sino-Soviet border in 1988 and then they withdrew from Afghanistan, too.

Actually, in the progress of the relationship between China and the URSS, China had been prone to assure peaceful international environment for her steady growth and compromised on a lot of issues. It is to say that all these political efforts on the Chinese side had been concentrated in the leadership figure of Deng Xiaoping, while on the Russian side we can see a lot of leadership changes. Also, we can follow the direct thread between the domestic and foreign policy in both countries at that time and conclude that China needed normalisation of relations more than the USSR.

3.2. Deng Xiaoping’s foreign policy orientation and strategic thought and reforms.

Deng’s foreign policy leitmotiv was taoguang yanghui, a low profile foreign policy, in the sake of assuring the best environment to develop internally. However at the same time, China was very interested in creating more stable strategic relationship in the world. Deng tried to approach the


Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech in July 1986.
US, while negotiating with the USSR. China also closely scrutinized the whole situation in Asia-Pacific region and it was the factor that influenced its Soviet policy. In 1980s Beijing need more strategic alliances than before, so it started seeking international assistance for its modernisation and progress building. Its relation with Washington was more economy and not strategically oriented. Moscow entered in economic stagnation and was less useful for modernising China at the end of 80s. Deng understood the importance of winning the long-term game and thus pivoted successfully among the two superpowers, taking benefit from their rivalry and accommodating his country’s needs through a more relaxed strategical approach.

Referring to security matters, Deng Xiaoping had a pivotal role in defence planning, given that it was a part of four modernizations. In his strategic thought the idea of mutual security among neighbours, as well as in the whole region, was of crucial interest. Hence, he wanted to create a genuine and reliable security environment. Deng dismissed the old idea of merely seeking massive military power, and started rationalizing China’s army forces. His idea was that national defense had to be subordinated to economic development as a whole. His plan for the armed forces was to support that development with all existing resources. The army was downsized, however very well-trained. The final goal was to establish the highest fighting capability and build suitable equipment to meet the requirements of modern warfare. He pointed to the need to adopt new patterns of limited warfare under modern high-technological conditions. As Deng’s priority was centered on the air power, air defence, navy and military research and development, he agreed with the PLA chief commanders to purchase new systems and technologies from the West, and not from the Soviets. He was completely aware that defence modernization would take decades to achieve, because of the inner policy needs and China’s significant setback and retard in technological sense.

Chinese acquisitions were guided by a “two pronged” strategy: they sent experts to the USA, Western Europe and Japan to “browse” the market and decide what China exactly needed from their offer in modern weapons and military technology; then they used to buy some military asset and tried to build their own one, imitating to the original. In some cases, Beijing had used foreign technologies in the development of its own defence programme and it also obtained some licenses to produce the same product in a join-venture company (eg. Spey in China, Sian). Also, British Chieftain tanks helped China patrol along the Sino-Soviet border.

Quote from the text: «We should have a strong air force, as control of the air is a must in modern warfare. Navy construction must pay attention to real fighting capability. We must rely on science, and only by doing so will we have a future.» Retrieved February 7th, 2017.
Obviously, Brezhnev sent a letter to British PM at the time to warn that “any weapons transfers consummated in China would seriously harm the suppliers’ relations with the USSR.”\textsuperscript{113} This reaction was normal to be expected. In general, China found a lot of problems in the West, because it could only purchase the technology and weapons that the US allowed their allies to sell, not the ones it really wanted to.\textsuperscript{114} Besides, it could not get the newest technology from Europe (f. eg. Tornado, the supersonic fighter, produced by British, German and Italian), because of the possibility of a severe conflict with Moscow on behalf of the nations involved.

Finally, in all this confusing matters, in 80s, under the Carter administration, the US favourably changed its policy of technology transfer to China: they distinguished it clearly from the countries of the Warsaw pact, and of course from the USSR. The only system it could still not acquire was the one sensitive to produce nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{115} However, all these military transactions and political changes raised only certain concerns in Moscow: they were aware of Chinese need to secure a long-term peaceful environment. China was deterring all war possibilities “to gain time and strength to compete more effectively in the future international system.”\textsuperscript{116} Additionally, Moscow understood the weaknesses of that new partnership against them and realised there was a great conflict in interest beneath the superficial cooperation. (Ideology, Taiwan question, the Republican Party in the USA feared strengthened China, clash with the imperialist powers in Asia – the USA and Japan, etc.).

Likewise, Deng insisted on the non-military approach to the conflict on the Chinese longest border. Instead of keeping strong army there, he dedicated all budgetary, manpower and technological resources to reduce China's vulnerability to the Soviet Union. He realized that there was neither quick solution for the border problem with the USSR, nor any direct immediate threats to China from there.

However, even if he also counted on the gradually improved relationship with the US, Japan and Europe, the Taiwan question was the main obstacle in strengthening all these ties. Finally, the ruling pragmatism softened excesses on both sides and after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the Russian Federation in 90s, the demarcation line between two countries was finally defined.

After Tian anmen events in Beijing in spring 1989, China was especially worried for the advance of western democratic values and had frightfully watched the process of disintegration of the USSR. At the same time they feared the doctrinal change in their path towards communism and

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid 103, p. 289.
\textsuperscript{114} They could only buy arms of defensive nature and the ones uneffective against Taiwan, the USA protegee.
the possibility of dismantlement of their vast country. (On the Soviet territory 15 new countries were established).

Next move was in May 1991, when the following Chinese General Secretary Jiang Zemin (3rd generation) visited the USSR. There, they raised their relationship to the new level by signing the treaty delimiting eastern border. Trade and construction started to increase a lot in the area. Later, after the new Russian state emerged, Jiang Zemin and the president Boris Yeltsin signed in Beijing the Narrative Protocol on Eastern and Western Sections of the China-Russia Boundary, in Beijing in December 1999. In Chinese historiography the agreement is seen as the “treacherous treaty”, arguing that what Jiang signed masks several alarming, behind-the-scenes deals. In it, the Chinese side ceded more than 1 million square kilometers of fertile land, that equals the size of the three northeastern China provinces. Jiang also agreed to give Russia the exit point of the Tumen River, cutting off northeast China from the Sea of Japan. The new protocol went further in permanently giving to Russia controversial lands Russia had occupied by force.\(^{117}\)


Chinese reaction to the dissolution of the USSR was not easy to decipher: they insisted on the principle of non intrusion into policy matters in a foreign country, but at the same time advocated for the maintenance of their cooperation and tried to boost the relationship further. On the other hand, all domestic convulsion and economic shocks Russia had been experimented in 1990s had influenced the dynamic of their relationship. As Russian priorities laid in the West, China-Russia relations suffered from slow down and ravelment. Thus, China turned its eyes towards the Russian Far East, as she could not receive very promising and positive signals from the centre. Also, when pri-Baltic countries decided to separate, Beijing developed cooperation and commercial ties with them. Next, they criticised perestroika, and hoped that Soviet socialism could withstand. Chinese governing board was, actually, alarmed with the new situation and their intellectuals wrote a lot against the new events in Russia.

The Tian anmen experience had taught Beijing to be very cautious. After it, the president Jiang Zemin rose to power. Moreover, the fall of socialist countries in Eastern Europe and the August events in Russia had led China to increase its propaganda to protect the internal path of development. They coined the term “socialism with Chinese characteristics”, which advocated for relentless fight against bourgeois values and liberalisation. Now China has become a real missioner to advance socialist values, as it had skillfully avoided the repetition of the Soviet scenario in its vast land. Chinese statements were based on the idea that the USSR had long

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been influenced by foreign powers and dragged out by their secret services. China believed that Gorbachev’s ideals of “new way of thinking”, “loudness”, along with political pluralism, caused political crisis, economy disaster and ethnic strife.

On the other hand, since the end of the Cold War China and Russia have no longer seriously feared armed conflict with each other. With the acceptance of their common border, other security issues have appeared: illegal Chinese immigration problem and the overwhelming pollution from the Chinese side. The two governments accorded security measures for mutual protection: no unauthorized ballistic missile launches, no communication technology interferences or blocking and warning strained ships and aircraft if they inadvertently violate national borders. In the middle of 90s the leaders agreed not to target each other’s strategic nuclear missiles and arrived at mutual “no first use” nuclear weapons posture. Furthermore, in April 1998, two presidents enjoyed a direct hot line— China’s first with another government.

With the presidency of Hu Jintao (“fourth generation” leader) and Vladimir Putin the relationship consolidated itself, as both leaders had felt the threat of America’s world dominance. Russia was eager to strengthen its position among the countries emerging as important geopolitical players, especially in the Asia-Pacific region and started assisting regional summits and conferences to form new alliances. Throughout the membership in some international organisations (which I will later analyse in this work), both have wanted to establish together a new pole on the international political scene and be seen as a global player in a multilateral world order.

Undoubtedly for Russia, China is the most important state to develop cooperation and ties further with, expand multi-level contacts in all areas, stressing their increased security partnership. Moscow’s foreign policy is directly emboldened by the increasing weakness of the US and the EU on the other side. Yet, the cooperation has been most successful in the economic field, but the relationship has also grown in shared security matters. As the great part of a country’s safety comes from resources’ richness, China needs Russia as a supplier of raw materials and energy provider (oil, gas, minerals, water). Already in 2003, China surpassed Japan as the largest importer of oil and soon needed two million barrels a day. At first, Russia played off Beijing against Tokyo, building pipelines financed by Japanese money. Putin wanted to make both neighbours dependant on Russian oil and gas. Anyway, when Hu Jintao visited Vladimir Putin in 2005, they engaged in talks that resulted in forming an energy partnership. Moreover, Russia started supplying China with gas and later, in 2015 they began with the massive construction of shared gas and oil pipelines. At that time, China used seven million

118 Weitz, Richard, China-Russia Security Relations: Strategic Parallelism Without Partnership Or Passion?, University of California Libraries, 2008, (1st edit.), p. 3: «Russians worry in particular about the long-term implications of China’s exploding population for Russia’s demographically and economically stagnant eastern regions, a situation some Russian leaders already consider to be a major security threat»

119 Idem 28, p. 4.
barrels of oil a day and reached the peak of 10.32 million barrels per day.\textsuperscript{120} Likewise related to Chinese energy needs, since the leadership of Hu Jintao this oil imperative provides for the strengthening of the PLA’s naval and air force to guarantee the safe supply and free passage of raw materials in all areas around China.

Seen from the Chinese side, the strategic re-approachment to Russia and the expansion into the whole ex-Soviet space as the belt of national interest’s protection was absolutely necessary. Yet, since 2002, the US with its National Security Strategy (NSS), declared war and preemptive attacks to all countries capable of developing weapons of mass destruction (WMD), what made China totally tilt towards Russia to counteract this possibility. In the first decade of the new millennium the US also claimed that they will not permit any country in the world to develop the same military strength as they have, no matter the cost. After the Middle East crisis and Iraqi war China learned the lesson not to trust the US when it comes to promises or ideas about democracy, but to bolster its defence capabilities in order to save its complete independence.\textsuperscript{121}

Furthermore, the US had developed its relations to India, as a part of a plan to contain China in the G. W. Bush’s era. In 2005, the US resumed hi-tech weapon sales and transferred new nuclear technology to India. Since then, the Chairman Hu had added the \textit{countercontainment} (\textit{weidu zhengze}) as the keynote to his anti-imperialist thought. Hu, as well as Putin, openly suspected that the US were involved in series of \textit{velvet revolutions} that had shaken the ex USSR space.

Hu, the head of fourth generation leaders had a quite conservative approach to foreign policy in general, the same as Jiang; he was heavily marked by the Cultural Revolution and the Sino-Soviet split and had been insisting in \textit{status quo} on the world political scene, trying to accommodate the \textit{peaceful rise of China} and the strengthening of PLA at the same time. He was openly against all explicit alliances and promoted China’s cross-continental cooperation. He wanted to build up the Chinese reputation as a stable partner in maintaining peace and balance in the long haul, and even if the relation with the US had been troublesome, they promoted further cooperation. China started participating in peacekeeping missions around the world, showing its will to fulfill the international obligations. Additionally, under Hu’s leadership and guided by the idea expressed in \textit{jiyulun} (a theory of opportunity), China has started its expansion in Africa, Europe, Latin America, Oceania and in South Pacific region. China stopped being a medium power advocating for the world’s revolution and slowly turned into a state seeking maximal stability and adopted behaviours of a great power in all senses.\textsuperscript{122} After Bush’s period,
the arrival of Obama as the president of the US reconsidered the policy of strategically isolating China in Pacific Rim.

Chinese diplomacy at the time of Hu’s leadership was oriented towards practical goals with the aim to benefit the country economically, provide its support in energy and security sense and to enhance Chinese influence in the world, making it approach a great power status and assure its credibility as a trustful partner in maintaining the world’s peace and stability. “Under Hu Jintao’s leadership, China’s rise and its nationalist diplomacy elicited increased apprehension among its neighboring countries and contributed to greater US efforts to consolidate its presence in Asia.”

In this period, China and Russia held together in many international affairs and crisis: they both supported Iran and Libya voting against the economy sanctions from practical reasons (China is the biggest energy export market for them), sympathised with North Korea and its nuclear program, supported regime in Syria and so on. Moscow maintained neutrality in vital questions for China, such as the opening of the crack with almost all Asian-Pacific neighbours about its territorial rights in South China Sea during Hu’s leadership, but currently, under Xi Jinping, Putin plays on the Beijing’s side. In Taiwan cross-strait relations, Russia has unconditionally supported China, too.

4. Xi Jinping, the 5th generation leader, and Vladimir Putin.

4.1. Xi: a strongman with bold ambitions. The rise of China.

The brilliant political career Xi has had was marked by a millstone in 2007, when he became CPC Secretary of Zhejiang and later the member of Politburo Standing Committee. Even more startling was the 17th Party Congress’ decision to officially make him the leader of the fifth generation, and with it, a successor of Hu Jintao. He was in a run for leadership with Bo Xilai, but at the end, Xi was prefered for being more discreet and less idolatrous and self-centred. The party knew he would serve more the state, rather than his own interests. Even before taking the leadership, he has been famous for purging the Party in different places, especially in Shanghai. In 2010 he engaged in “taming” the military and soon became the vice president of the Military Commission. In 2012 he assumed the power as China’s president, also as a general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party. He promised to fight corruption in all spheres of Chinese political life and that has made him very popular among masses. He is a princeling

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123 Ross, Robert, Bekkevold, Jo Inge, China in the era of Xi Jinping, Domestic and Foreign Policy Challenges, Georgetown University Press, 2016, (1st edit.), p. XIII, introduction.
politician\textsuperscript{125}, who has recently concentrated a lot of power, controlling different commissions and he is changing the leadership style established by Deng Xiaoping in China. His control over PLA is almost absolute and since Mao’s times never seen before. Western media often accuse him of reviving Maoist-style methods, when it comes to frequent anti-corruption purges among officers and public servants, as well as in the business world. This along with his public support of Maoist thinking, the enforcement of an internal monitoring system makes him be the almighty core leader and enables him to make almost personal foreign policy decisions.\textsuperscript{126}

In Russia, Vladimir Putin has also seized all power for himself and represents a geostrategic Russian icon, a charismatic leader of Slavs. His long-term strategy is the restoration of the geographical integrity through the creation of union of Eurasian states along with regaining honor for the Russian state in world affairs. He uses every opportunity to proclaim his intent of reestablishing Russia as a great power. Both Xi and Putin assume that the decision-making must be highly centralized around their own offices and involve themselves personally in every stage of that process.

Divergently from his predecessors, Xi has formulated his own national strategy under different ideas, such as “China Dream,” “Asia-Pacific Dream,” and “One Belt, One Road”. The first dream speaks of rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and insists on prosperity, collective pride and collective happiness forever, too. It all proves the deep rooted Chinese traditional values and preference for “long-term thinking” and “strategic patience”. Xi’s strategic thought is aimed to project Chinese influence on other parts of the world. In other words, the “China Dream” reflects a major strategy of becoming the world’s dominant superpower with one of the strongest economies and a potential powerful military force.

China’s growth has increased expectations at home for a tougher stance to implement revisionist aims in international affairs. President Xi’s “Asian Dream”, formulated at the APEC congress in 2012, raised caution and anxiety in neighbouring countries, making them wary, despite being eager to benefit economically from powerful China. However, China has faced significant structural and international obstacles when it comes to its rise. Since 2012 and apart from long-term friendship with Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, the US President Barack Obama has strengthened his ties with other countries in Asia: India, Indonesia, Singapore, New Zealand, Malaysia, Mongolia, Vietnam, Brunei, and some small Pacific states. So, under Xi’s leadership, Beijing has experimented a series of diplomatic setbacks in Asia from 2012 until 2016. These have raised serious doubts on China’s peaceful rise and suspected whether the new leader is able to guide China towards supremacy in Asia-Pacific area.

\textsuperscript{125} A son of a veteran communist Xi Zhongxun, who held high-ranking office before the Cultural Revolution and served as secretary general and vice premier of the State Council in the 1950s and the 1960s and as a Politburo member in the 1980s, he belongs to princelings in China.

4.2. Xi’s regional foreign policy and its results. Sino-Russian mutually supported positions.

South and East China Sea disputes

Since 2012, the backbone of Beijing’s maritime policy in Asia has been based upon China’s “Nine-Dash Line”. In its virtue, Beijing claims disputed reefs and islets (where significant reserves of hydrocarbons have been found)\(^{127}\), as sovereign Chinese territory, accounting for 85 percent of the South China Sea.\(^{128}\) There, China has led a policy of ambiguity: firstly combining rhetoric of historical rights (emerged after the WWII with the new world -order), yet secondly respecting the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Finally, Chinese claims were not taken into account, and were nullified by the United Nations tribunal in July 2016.

Previously, Russia had always been quite inactive in East Asian affairs and played a neutral part in the conflict, due to its numerous interests in the area and a great trade pursuit with the countries involved in the dispute. By time, Moscow turned into the major energy and defense provider to some of the countries involved. Besides, the development of the northern shipping route as an alternative to the Malacca Straits and the Indian ocean have changed the understanding of Russia’s partner’s role in the region. As the major defense provider, Russia has been supplying Vietnam and Philippines with its weapons.\(^{129}\) Moreover, Southeast Asian states see in Russia a power capable to balance the impact of a rising China.\(^{130}\) To guarantee its position, Russia has tried hard to enhance its independence of action by using multiple leverages in Southeast Asian diplomacy. However, it is willing to side with China for mutual interest at the same time. In conclusion, Russia pursues its regional energy interests and plays with its growing influence in Asia-Pacific regional institutions, balances with China as its strategic partner, and also hedges for its goals with Southeast Asian states. One of the aims is broader Russian engagement with Southeast Asia.

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\(^{127}\) Allegedly China could get 11 billion barrels of untapped oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, according to Global Conflict Tracker, Council on Foreign Relations.


\(^{129}\) The Kilo-class diesel submarines are the basis of Vietnam’s navy; it delivers Su-30MK2 fighters, etc.

Among Chinese experts on South China Sea crisis\(^{131}\) some are completely aware of the Chinese geographical disadvantage: in spite of its 18,000 kilometer long coastline, it can only access seas\(^{132}\) but not oceans and its maritime space lacks width. Thus, it hinders the fulfillment of its maritime ambitions. Russia is aware that Chinese possibilities to win the conflict are limited, as the South China Sea is enclosed by states claiming their share of it.

On the other hand, Russia had avoided to openly support Chinese interests, but at the G20 Summit in Hangzhou in September 2016, president Putin publicly expressed support for China’s defiance of the arbitration ruling. At the same time, China has increased pressure on this issue by building artificial islets in the sea, constructing on the Paracel and the Spratly Islands and equipping them with military infrastructure. Russia can obviously not side with China in this behaviour, however, Chinese and Russian Foreign Ministers reached an important consensus on this maritime issue. For the sake of Moscow’s growing blossoming political ties with Beijing, it opposes any attempt of external interference in the conflict to avoid its internationalization. China welcomed these remarks uttered by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. Nevertheless both Moscow’s partners in the region (China and Vietnam), seem to understand the nature of the Russian dilemma and have been very comprehensive toward Russian balancing. Adversely to its neutrality, in 2015 Moscow participated in joint military drills in Russia’s Far East region and in eighth-day military exercises\(^{133}\) in the South China Sea, showing major siding with its partner, Beijing.

The two countries have grown closer in the nautical realm and this bilateral synergy is impacting the balance of power in Asia. Their growing alliance is the reaction to their beliefs that the US is the main destabilizing factor in the region’s geopolitics, with the aim of systemic containment of Moscow and Beijing. When staging more direct combat naval exercises, they expect to jeopardise and bring to an end Washington’s primacy in maritime Asia.

Another maritime dispute in the East China Sea has caused big worries, due to the Chinese leader’s revisionism. Beijing was defeated in the Diaoyu (Senkaku) Islands dispute with Japan. Beijing tempted the strength of the U.S.- Japan alliance by driving a wedge into it, questioning whether the US would help Japan in the dispute. Finally in April 2014, the former President Obama expressed clearly that the Article V of the alliance\(^{134}\) also includes the Senkakus. The PRC responded sharply and China’s continued air and naval incursions into the Senkakus and East China Sea up to the present time. It has major impact on Japan’s security policy, as its

\(^{131}\) Liu Feng, Hainan-based expert on South China Sea studies.

\(^{132}\) Four seas it borders are: the Bohai Sea, Yellow Sea, East China Sea, and South China Sea.


\(^{134}\) The Security Treaty Between the United States and Japan, from September 1951.
President Shinzo Abe wants to “normalise” the country by providing it with the constitutional right to defend his country against Chinese aggression. Any mentioning of the possibility of Japan amending its Peace Constitution, represents another long-dreaded nightmare for China and, eventually, to Russia, too. However, three Russian naval vessels were seen surfing the sea close to the disputed Diaoyu Islands in June 2016. Serious doubts over a possible coordinated initiative between Beijing and Moscow in the East China Sea terrified Tokyo and urged reaction in Washington. But, Russian Foreign Ministry denied this incursion, saying that it was a sheer coincidence and that its vessels were turning back home after military drills in the area.

On the other hand, Russia is providing China with the advanced high-end S-400 anti-aircraft missile system, equipped with 40H6E missiles, which will give Beijing the advantage over its opponents in the sea conflicts. It is enough to fully cover the airspace over Taiwan, and if deployed on the Shandong Peninsula, they will be able to target aircraft over the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. Through this defense cooperation, China has already caught up with the U.S there, and has overcome Japan’s possibilities in air defense domain.

Korean peninsula

The third foreign policy defeat Xi Jinping has faced on the Korean peninsula. Sino-North Korean relationship has been an open question for China since new millennium, but has now hijacked China’s foreign policy agenda. Some scholars advocate that it remains ideologically and geopolitically crucial for China. It’s a valuable asset in the game the United States, Japan and South Korea are playing in the Korean Peninsula and guaranties that Beijing will not be alone and isolated in its positions. They believe in the importance of these ties for the uncertain future that is yet to come to this part of Asia, in case of the clash with the U.S. Other voices in Beijing are asking for the abandonment of North Korean cause, blaming Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons program for provoking the instability on the peninsula. After several tests over years, the North Korea’s nuclear and satellite test performed in January 2016 has brought South Korea even closer to the US and it decided to let the US deploy the THAAD system, (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense). General belief is that it’s not only aimed at North Korea, but directly at China, thus they blame Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons program for providing an excuse for the deployment. THAAD is anti-ballistic missile interceptor, whose radar could also track China’s developing missile program. It was delivered in March 2017 and will be operational by the

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137 A group of largely pro-reform, pro-free market right-wing leaning public intellectuals and think tank scholars, p.ex., Zhao Lingmin.
138 They are ground-based missile defense arrays, designed to disable medium and intermediate-range ballistic missiles.
summer. The US satellites and radar systems in Guam and Japan can already see deep into China, the same as its ships in the region. Now China alleges that the Korean peninsula is very close to it and it has to take the necessary steps to safeguard its own security interests.

This symbol of American presence has also touched Russian sensibilities. Moscow and Beijing agreed on increasing diplomatic efforts to release tensions and avoid possible military actions across Northeast Asia. Their efforts are directed towards resolving the nuclear issue and aim at solving the political crisis on the Korean Peninsula. Their common worries are that THAAD will shift the fragile strategic balance from its status quo and favour the US, by giving Washington better early warning and faster Chinese ballistic missiles tracking. Moscow supported the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang’s statement that THAAD “severely disrupts regional strategic balance and jeopardizes the strategic security interests of regional countries including China.”

Last news at the UN Security Council’s meeting on April 29th 2017 speaks about their joint diplomatic action, where “Russia supported China's proposal on ‘double suspension’ (suspension of missile and nuclear tests by Pyongyang in exchange for termination of US-South Korean military drills near North Korean border) as a starting point for political negotiations,” according to the statement by the Russian Foreign Ministry.

4.3. Security in Asia: new menaces and challenges

In recent times the current system of international relations and the world order have undergone huge transformations. The core of the newly developed system is shifting from the West to Eurasia, hence Russia and China are emerging as the biggest and most influential actors.

Central Asia and Ukraine in Sino-Russian partnership

The Eurasian arc of instability in its first belt comprehends the Eastern Europe, from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea, including Ukraine, the Baltics, and so on. Geopolitical changes in those areas affect mostly Russia, but also touch Chinese economic and security interests. Another source of instability is Central Asia. Chinese ambitious initiative OBOR represents a great challenge to the US and Western economic supremacy and involves the states of Central Asia. West has attempted to undermine its relevance and impede joint Chinese and Russian

initiatives. Even if it represents an economic Chinese project, the New Silk Road naturally impacts Russia and its security, as it has common borders with Central Asian states.

Beijing and Moscow are more and more present in the Central Asian territory. Vladimir Putin’s goal is to pursue the establishment of a new kind of union comprised of former Soviet republics and headed by Russia itself. For this he has reorganized its whole foreign and domestic policy in order to maximise Russia’s dominance in the region. He has never spared any of the questionable methods to materialise the idea of greatness: the attack on Georgia in 2008; the twist in Kyrgyzstan’s colour revolution in 2010 and placing it back to the Russian loyalty track\textsuperscript{142}; the Ukraine invasion that enabled the seizure of Crimea and adjacent territories in 2014, have all been the stages in the plan. For Vladimir Putin the collapse of the U.S.S.R. in 1991 was the major geopolitical disaster of the century that has to be addressed by his powerful nation. The idea is to build strong economic ties and deepen the political, security, and cultural "integration". Thus, the Eurasian Economic Union and its part Customs Union are his crucial policies. Russian politicians have openly admitted that Moscow “not only wants to revise borders or intervene abroad, but also demands a sphere of influence throughout Eurasia.”\textsuperscript{143}

Here will be included Ukraine, too, even if it is located in Europe, but represents the expansion of Russia in all territories once belonging to the USSR. It is a case which has shown how Moscow can destabilise and dominate the area politically or militarily and how Chinese position on the conflict has changed over times. In this crisis the opposed key international actors are the West\textsuperscript{144} and Russia and any explicit or implicit support of China to either side could make all the difference in it.

Beijing has long been very cautious to avoid to be enmeshed into the struggle between Russia and the West over Ukraine, but at the same time not wanting to alienate a key ally. However, this neutrality changed quickly, expressing that China will no longer tolerate Pax Americana and a unipolar western world. In 2015, Chinese ambassador in Belgium expressed Chinese view that “Western powers should take into consideration Russia’s legitimate security concerns over Ukraine”\textsuperscript{145} He also criticized double standards in the world’s policy making, referring to Ukraine. The PLA official said that the army most admires Russia’s rejection of the West’s global leadership, its defense of its core interests, and its lack of hesitation in becoming the enemy of the West.\textsuperscript{146} In this year, 2017, China has adapted its stance on Ukraine to its economy needs: it

\textsuperscript{142} They won Manas military base that was vital for the U.S. in their war with Afghanistan, a part from the concession of other two bases, Barken and Kant to Russia.


\textsuperscript{144} the US, the European Union, and NATO.


\textsuperscript{146} Senior Colonel Fang Bing [房兵大校], 軍事文摘
is now willing to play more constructive role, as Ukraine is considered a friend, according to the President Xi’s words. However, Russian political scientist and diplomat, Georgi Kunadze raised that the only Chinese interest in solving the conflict is to support Russia and obtain important backing for their actions in Asia, let alone all the benefits resulting from structural investments and intensive trade relations with Ukraine and wider.

On the other hand, China is now seeking a suitable political resolution to the crisis over Ukraine in order to make it a gate of the China's Silk Road to Europe, thanks to its geographic location (access to the Black Sea and Europe) and the recent Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) between Ukraine and the EU. Already in 2015 Ukraine overtook the U.S. as China’s number one corn and wheat supplier, so that China has been able to reduce its heavy reliance on American agricultural produce. A part from intensive exports to China, Ukraine engaged in the cooperation in air industry with the Chinese Aerospace Industry Corporation. They started the production of the AN-225 Mriya, the largest plane in the world. Moreover, Ukraine has strategic meaning for the future of cargo trains from Europe to China and back, which could reduce delivery time to between nine and ten days.

The first few trains have enabled China to bypass Russia, as the railway runs from Ukraine through Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan to China. After works on the construction of the new double-track Beskyd tunnel in the Carpathian Mountains in western Ukraine will be finished, loads will have a direct route from Vienna via Bratislava to the furthest Ukrainian border. It will represent a major link to connect Asia with Western Europe.

Undoubtedly, China has a strategic interest in Ukraine and it has wisely matched it with its partnership with Russia. Chinese interest represents a long-term perspective and strategy in Eurasia, where Ukraine is a key link to Europe.

This study will not analyse the area in depths, but overlook at some of the countries integrating the Union that have direct interest for China, too.

At the end of the 20th century, Beijing realised economy and strategic potential in Central Asia and founded the "Shanghai Five" in 1996, renamed into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in June 2001. Since then, China has economically eclipsed Russia in this region. It rapidly displaced Russia as the major trading partner and investor. Observers thought that China's rise in Central Asia would trigger confrontation between the two regional powers as their interests lay

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147 Chinese President Xi Jinping’s speech in Davos, Switzerland, at the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting on January 17, 2017.
149 Its part of the fifth Pan-European transport corridor, uniting all central and east European countries with Ukrainian ports.
in the very similar domain and are vital for both the economy and energy security. Yet, it has still not happened, as Moscow and Beijing are aware of their real possibilities and have cooperated in the area in different projects and domains. Russia is conscious of its inability to compete with enormous Chinese capital in the Central Asian markets, while China is aware of Russian supreme influence on its ex-common territory and thus has refrained from prompting any regional military, political or cultural supra-structure.

However, Central Asia is a part of Chinese long-term goals and strategy. A very meaningful description of Central Asia that depicts China’s expansionist policy in the region, was uttered by the PLA general Liu Yazhou: “a rich piece of cake given to today’s Chinese people by heaven”. Indeed, in this region we can see the combination of China's westward march: it looks for secure commercial routes that will reduce vulnerability at the sea (by hostile foreign powers), and the rest of the states, who are eager to seize the opportunity for their shaken economies to reduce the risks of economic over-reliance on Russia. In order to preserve their political entity, most of the countries in the region try to hedge economically with China or EU and diminish Russian pressure and financial impact on their mostly fragile economies. Some examples follow.

For neighboring China, Kyrgyzstan has become a storehouse for the import and re-export of consumer goods elsewhere. Beijing has also engaged in infrastructural projects of high quality in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Belarus, Armenia and the rest. The whole region is ecstatic about major investments from Chinese industries, which also grant ready access to the Chinese market.

When it comes to gas and oil supply, some of the countries in the area are vital for China, too. Kazakhstan is the biggest recipient of Chinese FDI150 mostly placed in oil & gas and mining sectors, apart from signing around 30 big infrastructural projects with China. Also, a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to China via Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan was built to avoid Gazprom’s monopoly over the export of natural gas. These countries expect Beijing’s funds to build a more direct route to Chinese territory across the Tien Shan Mountains via Kyrgyzstan. However, after intense two decades investing in Central Asia’s energy sector, China has reduced its gas pipeline expansion plans (March 2017). It cancelled one of its biggest projects in Central Asia, the Line D route. The project offered a chance to China to knit the region together and tap a major regional energy supply at the same time, but it was suddenly abrogated, due to the decline in its economy and suspected overflow in fuel.

Indeed, several Chinese economic plans are about to bring the Central Asia region together. Its “One Belt, One Road” project, first iterated during Xi’s September 2013 visit to Central Asia, is a


"The inflow of direct Chinese investment in the economy of Kazakhstan amounted to $623.9 million between January and September last year, seven times higher than in 2015, finprom.kz reports".
targeted revival of the land and maritime Silk Roads dating back to the days of Marco Polo. It will stretch from China's cities to Europe and cover 65 countries, and three continents. The project includes five Central Asian nations: Kazakhstan in the north, bordering Russia, and to its south, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. The President Xi set up an initial amount of US$40 billion to start the project. The rest of the funds are expected to come from the newly established Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Consequently, these five countries will largely benefit from it and potentially become an economic hub within Eurasia.

In all its projects, China needs not only to avoid any open challenging to Moscow, but to assure its full support and make it feel as an equal partner, a real ally. All countries in Central Asia are highly dependant on Russia in most of its economy and security aspects, but China will probably economically win in the long-run. The Chinese have been more prone to bilateral relations in the region, rather than offering a global, regional strategy, which Moscow has tried to implement. For these reasons, Beijing has to use its soft power and intense low-key diplomacy.

On the other hand, Russia's integration project cannot satisfy the nations in the region, as it does not match entirely economic and security interests of the members. They know that there is no equality in partnership, yet the Moscow's overriding supremacy vision. This attitude has impeded Russia from being a driver for regional economic development unlike what China has done in East Asia.151


The next instability point is for Moscow and Beijing is South Asia. The region has very complex issues in Iran, Pakistan and India. These problems also connect with Southeast Asian problems. As a result, current territorial disputes in the region largely benefit external powers and this hot spot is changing sensitive balance on Asian continent.

Thus, Russia and China have wider political and economic interest with the biggest countries on the Indian subcontinent: India and Pakistan. In the recent past Russia has maintained good relations with Delhi, whilst China is the closest ally with Karachi and has an open border conflict with India. Yet, these historic relationships have started to change and somehow there are signs of bilateral cross-cooperation in energy and strategic domain. Since 2013 Pakistan turned to Russia in defence supplies, thus closer the US moves to India, more will Pakistan search for Russian political and military support. Minister Shoigu signed an agreement on military cooperation in November 2014. They agreed on delivery of combat helicopters, Mi-35M Hind-E. In 2016, Kalashnikov Concern promised to help build a new assault rifle for Pakistan's infantry. There were some talks on delivering Russian Su-35 and Su-37 aircrafts, air-defence systems,

151 Idem, 140, p. 167.
but it is still the matter of time. The same year in Autumn Russia and Pakistan held their first-ever joint tactical exercises and there will be a second joint exercise in 2017. Nonetheless, even if they have poor economic interdependence, the recent construction of the ‘North-South’ gas pipeline, from Karachi to Lahore, could help them boost the bilateral trade and ease Russian investments, which compete with enormously worth Chinese infrastructure projects. However, this sudden strengthening of military cooperation to a full-scale one, camouflages almost complete lack of strategy for regular bilateral relation, though Pakistan still has not a well-formulated place in Russia’s foreign policy in South Asia.

There, Russia has to take seriously into account how could India correspond to this new military cooperation, considering Moscow’s historic strategic partnership with India.

Conversely, Chinese rhetoric on long-term friendship with Pakistan speaks about "all-weather" allies and qualifies their ties "higher than the Himalayas and deeper than the ocean". Islamabad's help has proved vital for the Chinese in the Islamic world: China is among the top enemies of radical Islamic countries and Pakistani ties can help them there; also, they opened a fluent contact between Arabic world and China; Beijing needs Islamabad in its border regions, such as Xinjiang and Tibet. In energy supply area, Pakistan is one of the corridors between Iran, Iraq and China. Islamabad needs Chinese help, too. In defence matters China has acted certainly as a key factor in bolstering Pakistan’s military capabilities, developing from the JF-17 fighter, to attack submarines, Type 039 and 041. Last cuts on American aid made China step in, to fill the void. Islamabad was forced to lean more firmly on the Chinese side and look for win-win loans to help its economy. Beijing’s significant help and record-breaking investment has reinvigorated Pakistan. The establishment of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) proves long-term strategy for both countries, however it also reflects rising Chinese geopolitical ambition - it opens up to the Indian Ocean, too.

Here, China follows its leitmotiv that economy determines geopolitics: by investing in transport modernisation, in harbours it assures uninterrupted fuel and energy supply from the Persian gulf to the South China sea, and limits the American influence in the whole region that matters to China a lot - the Middle East, Central and South Asia.

All in all, Pakistan, Russia and China together was not a possible combination on the global policy scene. However, this powerful realignment has surged in order to bring a greater bipolarity in the world affairs and to, once more, challenge the US supremacy as a hegemonic power on the globe. It is a proof that Russia and China together can shrink the US influence in regions of significant interest for them. The U.S. sees it already as an alliance with important intimidating

152 Represents a collection of infrastructure projects currently under construction throughout Pakistan.
153 It links the Chinese city of Kashgar to the Pakistani port of Gwadar.
force, as all the three countries are nuclear powers. The nuclear triangle would have massive lead in any wars against the opponent.\textsuperscript{154}

The situation in India could be described just as the opposite, where Russia has been the ally and defence provider for more than four decades, since the 1971. (Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty). Nowadays and to the world's surprise, India-Russia relations seem to maculate by Moscow's upping security ties with Pakistan, India's traditional rival. One of the strongest alliances which have stood the test of time has been seriously shaken by Russia's decision to perform joint military exercises with Pakistan in 2016. Moreover, for the first time Russia didn't stand up for India to back it fully on terrorism coming from Pakistan at eighth BRICS Summit in Goa. The decision was made to please China, whose strategy is sheltering Pakistan from any India's diplomatic offensive.

On the other side, India has shown more involvement with the US in strategic ambit. It has acquired sophisticated space technology, modeled its defence capacities towards American technology and has changed its nuclear policy, now influenced by the U.S. Even if Moscow supported the US thought to force India limit its nuclear power and enter the non-proliferation international groups\textsuperscript{155}, it saw that the balance started to tilt against them due to the burgeoning India-US relations. India has always believed its traditional friendship with Russia will remain unshaken under any circumstances, but both countries are now more wary of each other. Nonetheless, they signed enormously worth defense deals during the BRICS Summit in Goa: India will enjoy the latest Russian technology in air defence. They have purchased the S-400 Triumf surface-to-air missile system, one of the most advanced in the world. India will import and later manufacture light utility helicopters (Kamov Ka 226T), too. They are also collaborating in manufacturing guided-missile stealth frigates (Admiral Grigorovich–class). India got the right to lease nuclear-powered attack submarines from Russia, too (Akula II–class). Hence, India is still one of the most valuable partners for Russia and officials in Moscow consider it as a real friend, an ally. Their bilateral relations are strong, as they were built on trust and time-tested imperatives.\textsuperscript{156}

On the contrary, China has been seen as an untrustworthy, troublesome neighbour, an enemy. Sino-Indian conflict has been intense along India's far north-eastern border, (the state of Arunachal Pradesh, Tawang). Official China started calling a part of it "South Tibet", expressing their territory claims to expand regionally. In Kashmir, disputed between India and Pakistan, China has been extending its influence, and control, over portions of the province, largely with

\textsuperscript{154} SIPRI estimates that the three states together possess around 7.620 nuclear warheads.

\textsuperscript{155} the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) disclaimer and nuclear energy expansion reject, (Haripur nuclear project).

the support of Pakistan, which complicates matters further. However, the first conflict could soon be solved, though China believes that if India “takes care of China’s concerns in the eastern sector of their border, the Chinese side will respond accordingly and address India’s concerns elsewhere.”\textsuperscript{157} On the contrary, it is still unacceptable for India, yet, by controlling Tawang, Beijing would have the ability to cut India’s North East from the rest of the country. It could be interpreted by Pakistan as the sign of weakness and could make them think India is willing to hand out pieces of its land.

In its recent siding with the U.S., New Delhi transcended the critical point by signing the strategic agreement of Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)\textsuperscript{158} in June, 2016. Viewed from China, it reflects an implicit military alliance of India and US against China. India is used as an extensive arm to hedge against Beijing. Additionally, the agreement has prompted Moscow to review its time-tested friendship with the India.

The situation between Asia’s economic giants, China and India, has gotten more intricate, because both states would like to be Asian leaders apart from conquering and controlling new markets, regionally and world-wide. Their political ambitions and distrust on either side have harmed their trade ties, where China is India’s largest trading partner. Fortunately, the two nuclear superpower neighbours have been progressing to gradually ease long-existing tensions between them.

On the other hand, it could be strongly perceived that Russia is moving away from India, and that it’s much closer to China. However, Russia has developed the “trilateral cooperation” and has systematically tried to promote a strategic triangle of Russia, India and China (RIC). This triangle protects most of Russian global interests: better understanding among RIC could help it strategically in the east, to impede further expansion of NATO. RIC have as a common ground the aim to stop the US bid for global hegemony and promote a "multipolar world." All of them have problems with Islamic militants and they could join in the effort to stop terrorism. RIC’s shared interest lies also in the arms trade, as China and India account for nearly 70 percent of Russia’s arms exports. All in all, there are a lot of very sensitive issues in the achievement of the triangle and they mostly and reasonably come from the Indian side.

4.4. Sino-Russian partnership seen through International Organizations (IO): UN and SCO.


\textsuperscript{158} It is one of the four “foundational agreements” that the U.S. enters into with its defence partners.
People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation have become more and more powerful players in the world policy arena and they both actively participate in numerous International Organizations. Through their membership they efficiently pursue their national interests and influence political decisions on a regional or global level. Here, only two organisations will be mentioned, where Moscow and Beijing interact and share their interests, or are important actors. Their international behaviour derives from the common posture towards the role of the IO in global governance generally. Chinese and Russian particular strategic and foreign policy concerns shape their decisions in the UN and in the SCO. There are apparent contradictions between the policies of the two states, but we will analyse the common threads they have shown in these two international bodies, which make them influence the global governance.


China and Russia are members of the UN, a multipurpose international organization with several bodies. They attach the fundamental importance to it, considering the UN as the core of global governance, especially in security matters. Both participate in the UN Security Council, the principal UN crisis-management body, empowered to maintain peace by imposing binding obligations on the UN’s 193 member states. Moscow and Beijing belong to the permanent five, veto-wielding members, who can block a resolution in the Security Council from getting adopted. The US and Western countries consider that Russia and China use their UN veto continuously and can jeopardise the Security Council’s long-term legitimacy. Likewise this Sino-Russian connection may blunt common efforts on very important decisions for the global peace. However, in the actuality Chinese preference is to abstain rather than veto on resolutions not directly related to Chinese interests. The Soviet Union had used veto very often, while Russia uses its veto power sparingly. Nevertheless, it started using this right abusively since the year 2000 and due to a number of resolutions on conflicts where Moscow was involved militarily or idealistically. (Georgia, Serbia, Bosnia, Ukraine, Syria). Thus, Russia is the state which has used its veto most frequently. The US has already expressed the need to reform the veto policy to stop this powerful wing from siding together and paralysing the world body’s main decisions. On the other hand, it could lead the others to bypass the UN Security Council as a decision-making body.

Recently, we have seen how the Middle East question directly affects Russian and Chinese energy issues and how Moscow and Beijing hedge against the other nations to protect oil supply

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and gas pipelines in the area. For Moscow the priority is to put an end to the Syrian civil war, but influencing its development. Russian involvement into the Syrian crisis causes several risks: numerous military casualties, severe economic consequences and the increase of terrorism in the region. That is why the last common Russian and Chinese veto was on the resolution to impose sanctions on Syria over the alleged use of chemical weapons by the government of President Bashar al-Assad. Western powers blamed China and Russia for the failure of global efforts to implement peace in Syria. The Russian veto was expected, but the surprise came with the Chinese complete backing Russia with its sixth veto on Syria. It clearly once more shows that China stands firmly by the Russian side, and both are opposing the west. The impact of their joint vetoes on Middle East crises in general was striking and suggested an important shift in the foreign policy thinking of Russia and China. Moreover, both countries are angling for a bigger influence and say in how and where the UN should intervene or conduct its peacekeeping operations. Moscow and Beijing are aiming to run vital UN departments for political affairs and peacekeeping missions, in spite of strong reluctance by Western nations, caused by open conflicts both Beijing and Moscow have in their geographic proximity.

Although Russia and China do not regard issues and affairs through identical eyes, yet they have looked to each other for mutual support, with the aim to avoid isolation in the Security Council. Both states want to see a more active UN and empower the SC with prestige and effectiveness to assure consensual global decisions.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Another highly important factor in Sino-Russian relation is their membership in the prominent Asian regional alliance, SCO. Firstly, the group known as the “Shanghai Five” was founded in 1996. Then, the five members signed the “Treaty on Deepening Military Trust in Border Regions”. In 2001 they included Uzbekistan, too. Since then, it was composed of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The group was a confidence-building mechanism to resolve border disputes. It was often claimed to be the Chinese-Russian condominium, providing Beijing and Moscow with full information, which will help them manage own interests in the newly independent countries of Central Asia. Apart from its full members, there are some observer-countries: Afghanistan, Iran, Mongolia and Belarus, while Turkey, Azerbaijan, Sri Lanka, Armenia, Cambodia and Nepal are dialogue partners. India and Pakistan are likely to become

161 Idem 158, p.7.
162 Brewster, Murray, “China, Russia aim for key UN peacekeeping positions as Canada prepares deployment”, CBC News, October 5, 2016.
full members of the SCO by June 2017. With accepting these new members, SCO will unite more than 60 percent of the Eurasian territory, 45 percent of the world's population and over 19 percent of the world GDP, according to President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev. Aside from growing into a strong regional security actor, the SCO represents a platform for economic and energy cooperation and exchange, whereas Central Asia appears as one of the world's most energy-rich regions.

However, the most crucial for the efficiency of the entire organisation is the bilateral relationship between Moscow and Beijing. Apart from border issues, their agenda has dealt with nonmilitary issues, such as regional terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and other transnational threats of concern to all members. The SCO members have taken part in a lot of practical exercises, of military and nonmilitary nature. They involve armies, paramilitaries, as well as intelligence and law enforcement services of the participants. Large-scale air, sea, and ground operations are practiced, supported by submarines, strategic bombers, and ground troops from the members states. The most relevant performances they have held up to now were: the Cooperation 2003; the 2005 unprecedented only Russian-Chinese exercise, with all member states' defense ministers as observers; a multilateral exercise in Uzbekistan, East-Antiterror-2006; vast force deployment in Peace Mission 2007 in Russia's Volga-Urals Military District and at Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang (sensitive Uighur issue, near East Turkestan); The Peace Mission-2014 drill, military exercises in inner Mongolia region and wider, engaging the largest number of troops, (7000), and military hardware, never previously gathered in one place before by the SCO member states. The last was in Kyrgyzstan, in 2016, but in numbers and intensity represented a big drop from the previous in China. The next joint military exercise will be held in in Russia in 2018.

There are different interpretations of these joint military and civil drills: officially, they are performed to help the SCO member governments deter and defeat potential terrorist threats. On the other hand, they also allow Russia and China to show their military supremacy in Asia and communicate to the rest of the world, especially the U.S., that Moscow and Beijing have a genuine security partnership, whose net extends to whole Central Asia. Moreover, for Russia the SCO has taken more prominent meaning in the wake of collapsing Russia-West relations.


Washington insists on the possibility to take part as an observer of the joint drills, but Beijing has declined it up to now. Thus, it is logical that Washington sees them as an explicit challenge to the U.S. military presence in Central Asia.

The joint exercises are test ground for the Chinese PLA to rehearse procedures and coordination of its military in a real time. For both China and Russia these maneuvers enable them to have a better scope into a potential enemy’s military. Besides, there is the chance to trade with brand new weapon systems and arms, which are tested in these encounters. It is great Russian opportunity to sign the best commercial deals for its military material.

The role of the SCO started being more visible in the West in July 2005, when the members warned the United States and its allies to set a timetable for ending their military presence in the region\textsuperscript{169}. Washington has often accused Moscow and Beijing of exercising pressure on their smaller neighbors to impede possible security arrangements with Washington and the West. The interest Russia and China might share is to block the US access the vast energy supplies in the region, and stop Washington's pursuit in supporting liberalizing and democratizing reforms.

It is questionable whether the SCO influences the current world order: since 2007 the SCO has developed the capacity to repress local uprisings or other forms of anti-governmental protests. Both China and Russia are deeply worried about the possibility to widespread the "color revolutions" on the SCO territories: Russia sees it as the enhanced US presence in the post-Soviet states, whilst Beijing suspects that the deployment of the US forces along its western border is as strategy to contain China's peaceful rise, orchestrated from Washington.\textsuperscript{170}

Russia, China and the rest of SCO members work hand-in-hand on the resolution of Afghan and now Syrian problems, because they represent major terror threats to all the countries in Asia.

Conversely, Russia and other members, including China have diametrically opposed views on the ultimate purpose of the alliance: since Chechnya crisis, Russia estimates the need to turn the organization into a growing quasi-military alliance, but the others oppose to it. On the other hand, China's expectations are that the organization should actively help in preventing future Tiananmen-like rebellions. The differences are also visible in dealing with the energy issues. The SCO gathers together some of the world’s leading energy suppliers (Russia and Iran) and consumers (China and India). The energy producing countries insist on more centralized control and pricing of their goods, while the consumers, leaded by China, prefer the bilateral


management of the organization in energy domain. Of course, Russia is afraid of losing supremacy as a supplier and has already suffered from numerous Chinese deals with some countries. The expansion problem of the organization is also linked to direct Russian and Chinese regards and full of cross-cutting interests, often hampering the SCO’s ability to achieve its full potential and reach its goals.

4.5. Increased Chinese and Russian Military Cooperation at the core of the partnership.

Figures. Competition. Possible consequences.

Since the 90s, Beijing and Moscow have prioritized defense and security ties. They are considered almost the most important components of the overall relationship. As Moscow and Beijing want to guarantee their own security in the short-, mid- and long-term, they need to increase their military assets by developing narrow cooperation in military domain. Previously mentioned fragile balance of power in Asia and Eastern Europe offers a perfect infrastructure to continue the ongoing conflicts and fuel new ones, by escalating tensions between neighbours. To avoid this instability, China and Russia are growing closer militarily through a series of increasingly complex military exercises and advanced arms sales. This cooperation has created more security concerns to the US and its allies, who consider it harming to their global interests. However, the creation of the formal security alliance has still not happened. Moscow and Beijing each have their concerns on security and defence and prefer acting separately to achieve their goals.

When it comes to military trade to China, Russian Federation has resumed them since 1993\textsuperscript{171}, recovering from the drop in sales after the dissolution of the USSR and the disappearance of the Cold War. The arms import increased steadily and China has become leading destination for Russian military exports. The Federation has delivered big quantity of weapons and technology for over 2,5 decades. In 90s and in 2000 China still had not had the capacity to produce its own technically advanced weapon systems. Since the signature of agreement on military-technical cooperation in December 1992, China has been purchasing weapons from $1 up to $2 billion annually. It largely exceeded all other supplier countries' bill with it together. “According to one estimate, between 1992 and 2006, the total value of Russian arms exports to China amounted to approximately $26 billion worth of military equipment and weapons.”\textsuperscript{172} Since then and up to 2005, Russia turned into the biggest weapon supplier to whole Asia, well ahead of the USA. However, this defense cooperation increased sharply after the beginning of the Ukraine crisis in

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{On November 11th 1993 an agreement about military cooperation was signed by the defence ministries of both countries. Another agreement is from July, 2001.}
\end{footnotes}
2014. At that time, Moscow and Beijing concluded two major new arms sales agreements. They also increased the level of their joint military exercises, intensified the military-to-military contacts, and tightened closer coordination of their respective regional and global security policies.

Russia was the second-largest world arms supplier, with the share of 23% (15 $ billion). An estimated 70% of Russian arms went to India, China, Vietnam and Algeria, according to SIPRI data from 2016.

China quickly learnt from its cooperation with Russia and has has already surpassed the teacher in some domains, e.g., in warships building. Moreover, the Chinese arms exports have grown a lot over the last five years, up to a 6.2% share, as their sales jumped 74%. China is at present among the top world arms' suppliers.

In long-term heavy military hardware transfer from Russia, China has bought fighter jets, multirole aircrafts, military transport vehicles and aircrafts, warning systems, in-flight refueling vehicles, different carriers, diesel-powered submarines, destroyers of all types, missiles, anti-air, anti-ship defence, and so on. By time, China's capacity has been increasing and nowadays its technology is able to develop more and more sophisticated weapons. Besides, China produces aircrafts under Russian license, but is struggling to develop its own advanced engines that would allow its warplanes to match Western heavy fighters in combat. The PLA has relied on Russian models, mostly on the Su-27 and Su 30, even if they have adapted these fighters into the J-10, J-11. Since 2010, they have purchased also the Su-33 and Su-35, as well as Il-76 and Il-78 (transport aircrafts). In 2015, Moscow delivered S-400 air defense systems to China, which is definitely one of the top anti-aircraft weapons in the world. Previously, they started with the fifth generation of fighter aircrafts, creating the J-31, which uses the Russian airplane-carrier RD-93. Likewise, Shenyang Aerospace Corporation has recently developed the first stealth fighter, the Chengdu J-20, which should be fully operational by 2019. In order to improve its own J-20 technology, China is purchasing 24 modernized Su-35 Flanker-E multi-role fighters from Russia, to “analyse and model” the engines, phased-array radar, and electronic warfare capabilities.

On the other hand, China is also negotiating with other suppliers in order to acquire Western military technology and apply it to its own systems.

There are several reasons that have led China to purchase Russian weapons. At the beginning, it was cheaper to buy them than to research, develop, and manufacture its own systems - especially in the domain of advanced aviation and naval weapons. After the tragic killing of many unarmed protesters involved in the Tiananmen Square demonstrations and elsewhere, many

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174 A Chinese civilian and military aircraft manufacturer located in Shenyang, Liaoning Province
countries adopted sanctions against Beijing, including an embargo on the sale of weapons.\textsuperscript{31} Indeed, it was the opportunity for Russian enterprises to become the dominant foreign supplier of China’s military equipment and systems. Equally important for China is the quality of the supplied weapons and respect of accorded delivery terms.\textsuperscript{175} Also, Russian technique is much cheaper and simpler to manage, though very trustworthy. Aside, it is about a simple transfer of weapons and money, there are no hidden political conditions or additional requirements. Finally, Beijing and Moscow's shared views on multi-polarity also help their military and defense cooperation.

Their close relation includes intense contacts on all levels, and regular exchanges between military units in their bordering territories. Also, a yearly meeting is held between defense ministers and the chiefs of staffs of the armed forces.

In other words, the Russian-Chinese techno-military cooperation has been the millstone for modernising of the whole PLA's capacities. It has helped China reach the top three position in military issues and turn it into a considerable regional power in Asia. However, it is understandable why Moscow has been reluctant to sell advanced military systems to China and transfer its technology. But, the own economy needs prevailed and through weapon sales in Asia they could reinvigorate their defense industry and enable its perfectionnement. It has all helped the president Putin to hold annual military expenditures below 3-4 \% of Russia’s GDP.\textsuperscript{176} By basing most of their sales to China and India, Russia has also suffered some significant drawbacks: in 2007 their weapon exports to China dropped 40%, causing them a multi-billion deficit.

To a great degree, China has proved to be an extremely dangerous competitor for Russian industry and sales around the world, especially in Africa and Latin America. Russia has largely refused to sell its most advanced weapons (long-range strategic bombers or ballistic missiles) to its neighbour; they have experimented the danger of copying and reselling technology by Chinese side. They also fear the change in balance of power in East Asia, as it could enable China to possibly defeat the more technologically advanced militaries of Taiwan or Japan. Yet, the need for partnership in foreign policy matters make Moscow modify its approach to Beijing on a daily base. Thus, the situation in Asia is experimenting changes and the balance of power and influence has been slowly shifting in the PRC's favor.

\textsuperscript{175} It has caused a lot of frictions between the Russian supplier Rosoboronexport and the PLA as the customer.

\textsuperscript{176} Majumdar, Dave, “Did Russia Just Cut Its Defense Budget by a Whopping 25 Percent?”, \textit{The National Interest}, March 20, 2017. Russian defense budget is going from 3.07 trillion RUB in 2016, to 2.84 trillion RUB in 2017, which means the reduction of \~7\%.
Moreover, Moscow is very cautious, when selling arms to China: all “dragon's” potential enemies, neighbouring countries or the one's with sensitive interest in Asia would immediately criticize the sales as destabilizing. The most feared issue is that through Russian military help, China could progressively project its air and maritime power. The the United States, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam and India would blame it all on Russian greed or, even on their hidden, shared interests in Asia and wider. Furthermore, Russia is well-aware of supremacy of its neighbour and cannot allow undermining its own power to strike back in a hypothetical Chinese attack, if the time comes. Some Russian and Western scholars and strategists believe that Beijing might present a “major threat” to Russia one day.

When it comes to the missile defense cooperation, both countries have recently agreed to deepen it. They have fruitlessly insisted on anti-THAAD deployment in Asia. They are also against NATO expansion and installation of further ballistic-missile defenses systems that will enable the US to close all battlespace gaps around areas of their strategic interests. All these deployments are seen as a challenge and harassment both in China and Russia. Consequently, they have joined forces to protect their national security and not to work in concert to undermine a US-led world order, as it widely considered in the US media. Since 2016, two neighbours have engaged in a deeper nuclear cooperation, as well as in ballistic missile technology.

On the other hand, China and Russia have cooperated on civilian space research missions since long time ago. The collaboration was often interrupted in the Soviet era, even if Russia helped China to create its first missile. This work cannot mention all the phases in this mutual assistance, however it is noticeable that it has recently turned into synergy of shared interests in outer space.

Besides, space activities make up one of the most challenging hi-tech fields for both Russia and China and their space agencies have announced large joint projects, such as the deliveries of rocket engines, and cooperation in navigation systems. In 2016 they agreed on technologically complex projects, like the exploration of the Moon, Mars and piloted cosmonautics. In outer space cooperation both countries have great potential and are able to implement impressive projects, as they trust each other at the global political level.177 Their leaderships stressed this valuable industrial and military asset will largely benefit both countries.

Both countries have agreed on a common position on the non-weaponization of space (2002-2008) and have jointly tried to oppose the US for its deployment of weapons in outer space. Yet, behind benign China's space dreams and streamings, Washington sees higher strategic goals; space expansion can be the key to Chinese military successes on terrestrial battlefields. It has recently pointed out an active military component in Chinese space programs.

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177 Talks between Dmitry Rogozin, the Russian Deputy Prime minister and Vice-Premier of China's State Council Wang Yang, July 13, 2016.
Though the expenditure for Chinese space programs remains top secret, analysts estimate its civilian space budget at around $3 billion annually in recent years. The president Xi Jinping has repeated the country's ambitions to forge itself into a major space power by the early 2030s. As of now, Russia is the only nation that can regularly launch people into space and bring them back. But the severe sanctions and the drop in oil and gas prices have staggered its economy. Thus, the government space spending for the next 10 years will be cut to a half, from $64 billion to $21 billion.

**General conclusions**

The history two gigantic countries have shared for 400 years, speaks about their great expansion in Asia. It has formed the basis for tacit agreements and mutual understanding in the China-Russia relationship. As a matter of geographical fact, they are naturally oriented to rely on each other, albeit their conflict on the long frontier has been the millstone of the whole relationship. Yet at the same time, it was a reason to bring about diplomatic ties between two fast-growing neighbours.

Since the 17th century, both countries became very well-organised super powers in Asia and back then had started their rivalry for preeminence in the East and in Central Asia. Quing China feared Russia's enlargement and commercial yearning at its expenses, but on Russian side the fear of the merciless "yellow" invasion is still present in nationalist political discourse. Genuinely, both kingdoms could not understand each other until the very decline of China and the beginning of the revolutionary century (20th). It was due to their cultural and ideological differences: the Kingdom of Heavenly Peace sought for tributes, while Russian side looked for concessions, trade privileges and material gains.

Since signing the Treaty of Nerchinsk, Russia had largely been favoured in their relationship, gaining more and more benefits, commercial posts, controlling caravan routes in Asia, lowering of tariff rates, and so on. It was confirmed as a major European power at that time and acted accordingly. Already in 19th century big part of Central Asia was controlled by Russia and it used all opportunities to break into Asia-Pacific region and boost its power, arriving at the Sea of Japan and to Korean peninsula. It was feasible as China was a dying patient, submerged in rebellions and wars with Britain. Thus, Tsarist Russian approach to China was completely

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mercantilist and even if often disguised with goodwill, comprised wrestling of the rival, with no traces of friendship or caring.

With the major historical changes in the 20th century, both countries embraced revolution and, after long and exhausting wars started building a common communist front in Asia. The increased friendship and mainly shared ideology in the Soviet period helped recently declared PRC be recognised in some parts of the world, but it had also destined it to “lean” more and more to the Soviet side, for its mere existence. This friendship was essential for the development of very backwarded China, even if frequent frictions occurred. As expected, apart from economic interests, security was one of the most important aspects to take into account and it mostly shaped their entire relations. Hence, the new treaties regulating mutual protection were essential for the rebuilding of life in both countries. On the other hand, the decay in their ties could be imputed to a disaffected relation between two leaders, Mao and Stalin. In their coalition all the strength was on the Soviet side, so they skillfully matched Chinese growing needs for sponsorship with their own interests. Through hefty Soviet influence on Chinese foreign policy, Beijing adopted the lowest profile policy on the international scene, despite being completely immersed in the Cold War games. Nevertheless, China largely benefited from Soviet imperialistic plans and started developing its technology, especially for the defence purpose. Since the 60s, China has become a nuclear power, thanks to Russian assistance.

Another proof that their partnership has always been connected with rivalry was the Sino-Soviet split, which seemed to be inevitable. It was closely related with the Chinese desire to be seen as a sovereign, growing power, capable of undertaking vindictive actions in its ancient sphere of interest. Moreover, by showing growing enmity to the West, Beijing was convinced that it could be the actor to reform Cold War bloc politics and play an independent role in “the great triangle” on the global political scene. This event was one of the key episodes of the Cold War, it was also part of a zero-sum game, and it directly caused Sino-American Rapprochement. So, through the split China influenced the outcome of the second half of the Cold War in general, whereas the world, led by the US continued to isolate China, as a result of the strategy of containment. Since then Mao applied “fighting with two fists” strategy, which had pushed China to confront the two superpowers at the same time. After renewed border conflicts coming from north, with the Soviets, Mao formulated his yitiaoxian strategy: he wanted to line up the US, Japan, China, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Europe to fight against the Soviet Union.

Until much later, Deng Xiaoping still held this policy view to contain the Soviet threat as long as the Soviet hegemonic strategy did not change. He believed in further improvement of Sino-US relations, as the part of China’s global strategy. Thanks to yitaoxian, China improved relations with many other western countries and quit its isolation in the world policy arena. All together, it
laid a solid foundation for the reforming and opening to the rest of the world phase in Chinese policy.

The enmity lasted until the 80s, as the USSR sided with Afghanistan and Vietnam, but it turned into a need for cooperation in important matters in Gorbachev's era. Both neighbours understood that the opposite side represented more a long-term threat and also both needed secure borders, which they finally settled in 90s. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia wanted to prove that it was an European power and looked more to the West, whereas it maintained a sort of friendship through mutual tolerance and strategic balance with China.

With the new millennium, two presidents on the Chinese side and Vladimir Putin have slowly turned the relation into a partnership with much stronger ties.

The increased need for the deep, trustworthy partnership is caused by the international situation. All in all, both Moscow and Beijing want to withstand the spread of influence of the Atlantic system and counteract most of American dictates on the world scene. Both aim at the preservation of their own political and cultural values and need to protect their national interests. To provide an efficient defense of the country and protect their goals, each needs an ally, someone to rely for support internationally, especially in Asia.

The need of joining forces emerged strongly after the Kosovo war, because they recognized the U.S. policy of pursuing its global supremacy as an increasing military threat to them. Thus, the asymmetrical ex-Yugoslavian wars (1992-99) strongly affected the East Asian strategic environment as they gave China and Russia a chance to reinforce the strategic partnership.  

Both countries, along with other new geopolitical centers of power (India, Iran), are regional states with very developed continental treats, but which need to confront the expansion of countries with highlighted maritime or merchant profile. Consequently, in order not to lose their possibilities to strike back, they have to form alliances. Yet, depending on the moment on the world scene, these countries can easily be rivals, what this work analysed in depths. As Moscow and Beijing are aware of their rivalry, it also offers them the possibility to maintain the balanced partnership and combine acting commonly or independently, when it comes to core national interests.

On the other hand, the reasons for the narrower cooperation lay in their enormous joint potential in people, territory, resources, strategic, military-economic domain. Nothing but their union can

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181 “Rossia i Kitai - geopoliticheskie partneri ili soperniki na Evraziskom prostranstve. Shanhaiskaia organizacija cotrudnichestva (ShOS) i ee rol na evraziskom prostranstve”, report for the Katedra Istorii i ekonomicheskoi teorii, Akademia Gosudarstvenoi Protivpozharnoi Sluzhbi MChS Rossii, Moskva 2011.
counterest alliances of a western type. They have recently shown that their mutual force can turn the balance in the UN to their favour and stop the U.S. influence on a global level.

From Russian perspective, this bolstering partnership with China is extremely valuable: a part from gaming the west, it helps to free up Russian forces and influence in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Libya and lately, Syria. It also acts psychologically, though it can make up for its decreased influence in the world, or worse, in spheres of its strategic interests. Now, Moscow can openly remind Washington that it can skilfully diversify its foreign policy and not depend on the west, as it has proven to be an Euro-Asian state. Additionally, it provides the Russian government with domestic support, showing that the country is not that isolated now, as the western propaganda claims. China has become a key market for Russian foreign energo policy and it permits its diversification. Russian defence goods are exported to China, which allows for more resources in further development of military industry and sophisticated weapons production. It also provides for additional tools for Russian diplomacy. Moreover, through defence trade, Russia lowers its economic debt and regulates its internal stability. Apart, it can rise Russian economy to a more qualitative level, so that it can better regulate its disbalance in foreign trade.

In a different manner for China, this partnership enables it to affirm its position in the world, to set up the idea in the west of the scope of its power in other domains, save the economic. What matters for its foreign policy is that in joint action China with Russia will be able to force the US to slowly retreat from Asia-Pacific and Central Asia region, by removal of its military bases and fleet. By acting so, it can also weaken a potential threat from South Korea and Japan and create favourable conditions for implementing of its economical and geopolitical positions in Asia. Through strengthening the partnership China obtains from Russia advanced technologies for the modernization of the armed forces and gathering information. Chinese opponents have been paying more attention to the possible military tension in Asia, which may arise adversely out of this Sino-Russian cooperative framework. Additionally, in Beijing’s calculus Moscow has major assets to help them promote the new Silk Road project and strategy, as it can be the mediating power with other countries and help China expand commercially westwards. In fact, Moscow is a major partner and a key driver of OBOR. Russia will largely benefit from this most ambitious foreign policy initiative: this linking strategy for Asia and Europe is worth $40 billion.

In the end, the partnership is a way of catering for stable and smooth development that will, in Chinese eyes, lend China more importance on the global stage.

Their strong ties do not seem to fade, however, some point at the US which could use the “China card” against Russia once again. On the contrary, China is also wary of the possible increase in good relations between the presidents Putin and Trump. All possibilities are open and thus hard to predict.
Besides, the relationship between China and Russia is currently ambivalent: it combines symbolic unity on the global level and in the public eye, yet with increasingly strong rivalry for political leadership in Asia. Moreover, their difficult negotiations in issues regarding security and energy policy show their antagonic views in development strategies.

Yet, seen from the Chinese side, the partnership will facilitate better outcome in its strategic dilemmas. It has to deal with numerous alliance systems aimed at containing its rise. Both countries face criticism for their aggressive foreign policy and authoritarianism and at the same time China experiments very challenging strategic environment on almost all of its borders.

On the other hand, their transitional economies need each other. This work has also shown how two countries are naturally attracted to rally for cooperation. Nevertheless, they are not “allies” without an alliance treaty, as some media claimed. They are more like passengers in the same boat, united by external threats and the need for cooperation. Up to now, they have not sought the creation of any nominal alliance; neither have they attached oneself to the other excessively. In foreign policy, they take decisions bearing in mind only their own national and strategic interests. As well, they have raised mutual political trust and have similar positions on major international issues. China needs Russia and the opposite; they complement each other economically more and more. Their cooperation in security and defence issues is relevant for the balance of power in the East.

Even if the complicated world situation has pushed them further to foster and intensify important links, some facts show that an outright alliance may be unnecessary: both have been able to attain local superiority in areas of their concern, so they do not need to unite their interests, except for security, defence and side in international policy decisions.182 Nevertheless, the most recent events have led a lot of political analysts to define the strengthened ties at their closest to an alliance.183 At the opening of One Belt, One Road forum184, the president Xi said he hoped to soon create “a big family of harmonious co-existence”, starting with his main partner, the president Putin. Most of western press has alarmly pointed that relations between Beijing and Moscow have attained an “unprecedented level”, which is to be further confirmed by a Xi’s official visit to Russia early in July this year.

Sino-Soviet ties are growingly asymmetrical in material and defence capabilities, and that is also an important feature of their partnership. It provides for Russian dependence on Chinese market and economical strength for most of common current projects; China’s continuing military

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182 谢超. “与中国结盟吗？” 清华大学, 2017 年 01 期, 第 44-69
184 It was held in Beijing on May 14th -15th this year.
weakness makes it rely strongly on Russian defence capacities and technological help. Still, China is seen as the more senior partner in this possible formal alliance, due to its economy leverage.\textsuperscript{185}

There are great prospects that both states cater for developing the partner's weaker capacities and continue trusting each other in the international environment. In approximately ten years, the potential for a China-Russia alliance will increase and it represents one of the major issues for the US foreign and defence policy. But the scenario where Beijing and Moscow could coordinate forces and openly provoke the US is highly improbable, yet each country has its own goals and different interests in the world. What is more likely to happen, is that they increase pressure to reach their regional gains.

At the end, this economic and strategic partnership has certainly influenced the global governance, by making it more triangular, due to the joint Sino-Russian acting. Additionally, it has encouraged both countries to take tough attitude on the international stage. Mutually, they have played a game of displaying deterrence in relevant questions for each of them, without compromising directly. This strategy leaves each other “ample room for ambiguous policies, which is actually proof of an increasingly deep partnership. In this way, both China and Russia gain the maneuvering space they need to maximize their national interests”.\textsuperscript{186}

Also, their connected rising economic power can threaten the US supremacy as the largest world's economy, ergo China will overtake the US soon, and Russian economy is slowly growing, too.\textsuperscript{187}

So, even if the Sino-Russian relationship has elements of both competition and distrust, the partnership is a fluid alliance, shaped by their external environment and shared regional interest, whose outlooks seem to keep China and Russia together over the years to come.


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