

**Explaining Russian and Chinese Foreign Policy in Central Asia  
through Identity and Grand Strategy**

by

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## **Declaration**

I, hereby declare that this thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Science in International Relations is result of my own independent work accomplished under supervision of Prof. Steven B. Rothman. I, also declare that this thesis has not been submitted in any form for other degrees. All literature and information used in this paper are properly acknowledged and referenced.

## **Abstract**

This research conducts foreign policy analysis through the frameworks of national identity and grand strategy. The research focuses on Russian and Chinese foreign policy in Central Asia from the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 to recent times. The analysis of each case is conducted in chronological order and divided into three periods. Each period focuses on security, economic, energy and institution building policies. The research uses qualitative case study approach, which comprises exploratory, explanatory and descriptive typologies.

Primary aim of this research is to explain foreign policy of Russia and China in Central Asia during the last two decades. This choice stems from understanding the two countries' proximity to the region, as well as the assumption that these states are most influential neighbors of Central Asia. Analysis of foreign policies of third parties involved in the region will offer better understanding of these individual states' behavior in Central Asia and help explore new patterns of relationships that are simply shadowed by geopolitically driven approaches.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Great powers have had strong attraction and interest in Central Asian region. By the end of 19th century, Central Asia found itself between Tsarist Russia and British Empire. For Tsarist Russia, this region represented a ground for quest from declining Persian Empire and weak Turkmen tribes. Meanwhile, to the British Empire, Afghanistan and small Central Asian states (khanates) represented a buffer zone to defense northern borders of India and secure access to Persian Gulf. Thus, the competition between two powers or so-called “Great game” has influenced the region over past century.

Since the fall of Soviet Union in 1991, Central Asia has been tackling with challenges coming from within, as well as outside of the region. During the past two decades due to region’s growing geopolitical importance, the “ New Great Game” replaced the old appellation, “Great Game”. With a population of 60 million, significant oil and gas reserves and central position between China, Russia and the Caspian States, Central Asia is a pivotal crossroad and strategically important for power seeking states in the Asian hemisphere (Blank, 2010).

Since the collapse of Soviet Union Central Asia has passed through significant geopolitical shifts and changes. In 2001 with the launch of Global War on Terror (GWOT) in Afghanistan, this region became of vital interest to the US-led Western coalition. Later, in 2005 region Central Asia witnessed “color revolutions” and political turmoil. Since 2001, China and Russia have made important strides in Central Asia with the establishment of the Shanghai

Cooperation Organization, which is usually regarded as anti-Western alliance. Russia, which perceives Central Asia as its own sphere of interests, has been attempting to re-gain its positions in this region by launching its own projects of integration (Customs Union, Eurasian Economic Unity). China also has confidently improved its links with CA, particularly in security and economic spheres, by promoting its own plans such as Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB). Afghanistan, which lies to the south of the region, is still in the war between national minorities and radical groups. This country is politically weak and poses threats to the region such as terrorism and spread of radical Islam. Some other states such as Turkey, European Union, India and Japan also stepped up their engagement with the region. In general, many experts regard these cases as the result of rivalry between involved states. They simply highlight these relationships as newly appeared “Great game”, which traditionally was used to describe rivalry between Russian and British empires in nineteenth century and assume that comparing to the situation in nineteenth century, current “New great game” involves much more players (Mullerson 2009, Blank 2010, Kim & Indeo, 2013). In other words, Central Asia has become space of engagement for external powers, seeking their own interests and motivations in this region. At the same time, experts consider Central Asia unstable due to a number of intra-regional problems such as weak cooperation in the region. As one report has pointed there are problems such as absence of political will among local states to consolidate their approaches towards cooperation, lack of accountability in public-decision-making and high levels of corruption (Linn, 2012). Now the region is the object of

interest of many scholars and experts specializing both in world politics and in regional issues.

Study of world politics and foreign policy of states are main concerns of International Relations (IR) discipline. Understanding world politics is core issue of systemic approach, while the study of foreign policy of actors is unit-level perspective. Yet, both perspectives explain causes of conflicts and wars or cooperation in world politics and predict how to maintain peace within international community. Both perspectives agree that states are main decision-makers and unitary actors in the system; hence, the patterns of IR depend on nature of international system as well as behavior or foreign policy choices of states.

There are three main theoretical schools, which explain world politics from different perspectives. One of them is theory of realism. Realism assumes that there is no supranational body, which controls the nature of relationships between states, and therefore international system where states act is anarchic (Waltz, 1979). Anarchy of the system is naturally predetermined and implies that state preserves its security in a “self-help” manner, which means that state must rely on its own material capabilities. International politics is anarchical, and anarchy is permissive cause of war (Waltz, 1979). Under such assumptions realists argue that power distribution in the system is core element of world politics, and changes in power distribution causes changes or conflicts in international system (Waltz, 1979). Realism has developed several strands such as offensive and defensive realism. According to defensive realists, “First concern of states is not to

maximize power, but to maintain their position in the system (Waltz, 1979). In general, defensive realism claims that international system does not necessarily engender conflicts or war, and defensive strategy is the best way to maintain security (Lynn-Jones, 1998). In contrast, offensive realists argue that states tend to maximize their capabilities because (a) state's primary objective is to survive (b) states are never certain about other actors' intentions, and (c) states inherently possess military capability, which can be used to destroy each other (Mearsheimer, 2001). This strand of realism maintains that anarchy stimulates aggression; insufficient security in the system provokes war and conflict (Lynn-Jones, 1998).

Meantime, for both strands, "relative power" of states is central to maintain their security. States improve their relative power over other states through three ways. The first is "internal balancing", which means that state improves its capability by spending more resources on military power (Waltz, 1979). Second way refers to "external balancing" or when state joins alliances to balance potential threat (Waltz, 1979). Finally, "military conflicts" through which state seeks to strengthen itself or weaken its potential opponent (Mearsheimer, 2001).

Another theoretical camp of IR is liberalism or idealism. Liberalism has become grand theory of IR when realism was unsatisfactory to explain growing institutional cooperation in world politics during post-Cold War era (Weber, 2010). Liberalism maintains that fundamental actors in politics are members of domestic society – individuals or groups that pursue their own interests (Moravcsik, 1997). Unlike realism that sees "relative gains" as primary

motivation of states, liberalism maintains that international institutions generate cooperation, which provides states with “absolute gains” (Keohane & Martin, 1995). Liberals reject realist assumption that state policy is foremost driven by actor’s relative stance in international order. Rather liberals assert that individuals measure their gains and losses from state’s foreign policy and further support of foreign policy initiatives, governmental institutions and survival of the state fundamentally depends on nature of individual preferences (Moravesik, 1997). In other words, liberalism believes that “international community – a formal or informal collective and cooperative set of social relationships among sovereign nation-states – may be an alternative to world government and alternative to international anarchy (Weber 2010, p.38). Liberalism also has several strands. One of them is institutional liberalism, which believes that states can cooperate with each other economically, even though they act in the system, which implies competition in terms of security. Economic cooperation can generate interdependence between states, and such interdependence brings mutual benefits for each side engaged, thereby minimizing the risk of war and maintaining peace between actors (Keohane & Martin, 1995). However, in the process of coordination choices states face problem as which of the outcomes is preferable for each side, because every choice has various distributional power. In such situations where disagreement generates barriers to cooperation, institutions are helpful as they provide framework that “makes particular cooperative outcomes prominent” (Keohane & Martin 1995, p.45). Thus, international institutions make cooperation between states more likely, when actors face problem in coordinating

their choice on particular cooperative outcomes (Keohane & Martin, 1995).

Another brand of liberalism is the theory of hegemonic stability. This theory asserts that stability and peace in international system is maintained by hegemonic power, which possesses more economic and military capabilities than other actors. A hegemon state can maintain economic stability through setting agenda in international institutions and by sharing public goods, which are beneficial for all other states (Kupchan & Ikenberry, 1990). As Gilpin points “Without a hegemon, international cooperation in trade, monetary, and most other matters in international affairs becomes exceptionally difficult, if not impossible, to achieve (Gilpin 2001, p.94). The hegemony is based on international cooperation, not coercion and to maintain stability in the system, a hegemon state must be committed to liberal economic principles such as market economy and liberalization of international trade (Gilpin, 2001).

Finally, for the theory of constructivism principal element of international system is identity of states. In contrast to realists, constructivists assert that the nature of international system is not predetermined, rather its nature changes according to the pattern of interaction between various identities (Wendt, 1992). Constructivists also believe that state’s interests are endogenous to its identity, therefore their interests in international system are shaped by their identities (Hopf, 2002). Likewise above-mentioned theories, constructivist approach also has its strands namely “systemic”, “unit-level” and “holistic”. Discussion of constructivism is provided in details in Chapter 2 of this paper.

## **1.1. Statement of the problems**

Majority of the existent literature tends to view Central Asia as the region, which is covered by competition or rivalry between external powers. The authors belonging to this camp argue that major powers have conflicting views and are bound to involve in this region in order to prevent their rivals from gaining relative benefits while dealing with region. Therefore, scholars and experts assume that current international relations in this region are “zero-sum game”. For instance, the argument goes that Russia became cautious about China’s growing influence in Central Asia and therefore Moscow supported the enlargement of the SCO by inviting new members (India, Iran). Moscow assumed that such expansion was opportunity for Moscow to increase its role in Central Asia thereby limiting that of Beijing (Kim & Indeo, 2013). Another example shows that in order to balance potential losses from Moscow’s actions, Beijing used its economic advantage in the region thereby pulling Central Asia into China’s orbit of influence (Dittmer, 2007). Meantime, some experts called this region as “laboratory for Chinese foreign policy” (as cited in Kim & Indeo 2013, p.277). They explain that Central Asia is a space where major powers such the US, Russia and China check each-others’ relative influence (Kim & Blank, 2013). At times when Russia felt its influence was diminishing relatively to China, Moscow assumed closer relationships with Western powers in Central Asia. Similarly, when the US became power broker in Central Asia during early 2000s, both Russia and China reached strategic convergence to constrain Washington in the region. In 2005, Sino-Russian strategic convergence in CA reached its peak and

was able to limit Washington's role by restoring status quo in the region. Another recent study also has found that Central Asia is still a space of "zero-sum competition" because "relentless expansion of China's footprint in the region has come largely at the expense of Russia's influence" (Rumer et al 2016, p.11). Although such views are convincing, broad implication that region is under "zero-sum" competition may lead to certain omissions. Some scholars have pointed that "realists interpret the relative-gains logic as showing that states will not cooperate with one another if each suspects that its potential partners are gaining more from cooperation than it is" (Keohane & Martin 1995, p.45). One may consider an important point that "zero-sum" approach mostly explores rivalry between involved states and therefore simply omits the explanation of driving factors, main features and patterns of their foreign policies. Another counter-argument is that traditional "zero-sum" approach ignores co-operative patterns of relationships among involved parties and fails to suggest local countries in CA how to cooperate with external players in the region.

Primary aim of this research is to explain foreign policy of Russia and China in Central Asia during the last two decades. This choice stems from understanding the two countries' proximity to the region, as well as the assumption that these states are most influential neighbors of Central Asia. Analysis of foreign policies of third parties involved in this region will lead us to better understanding of these individual states' behavior in CA and help explore new patterns of relationships that are simply shadowed by geopolitically driven approaches.

## **1.2. Significance of the research**

As previous section notes, there have been many discussions on international relations in Central Asia and they tend to see ongoing relations in the region as “zero-sum” between major powers. These discussions look at Central Asia from systemic-level perspective and therefore place Central Asia at the center of triangle or within Russia-China-US rivalry. However, there is a lack of study, which provides detailed explanation about individual states’ foreign policy in Central Asia. This research makes a contribution to the “unit-level” body of analysis by studying and exploring foreign policy in the case of Russia and China. This study is important for several reasons. First, given the argument that “...Central Asia is once more a key to security of all Eurasia” (Starr, 1996), it is important to understand what major powers seek in this region and what are their motivations beyond “geopolitical rivalry”. In this sense, the research offers explanation and chronological observation of foreign policy of Russia and China – two closest and seemingly most influential powers in Central Asia. Second, Central Asia is home to five countries that have no prior independent statehood in current order and this fact requires more expertise in foreign policy analysis. Thus, comprehension of Russia and China’s actions in Central Asia will improve the process of decision-making while dealing with these unitary actors and provide knowledge on improving relationships between the region and the two countries.

## **1.3. Research questions**

This work conducts analysis of Russian and Chinese foreign policy towards

Central Asia since the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991. To do so the research examines following questions and sub-questions:

Main questions: What are driving factors of Russian and Chinese foreign policies towards Central Asia? Why Central Asia is important for these countries?

Sub-questions:

Have foreign policies of these countries changed? If so, what were reasons for these changes and in what context these changes did happen.

What are the main interests of these countries in Central Asia?

What are the main instruments that Russia and China have been employing to realize their foreign policies in Central Asia?

#### **1.4. Research objectives**

This research explains basic features of Russian and Chinese foreign policies in CA since the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991. The research is designed to identify and compare drivers of foreign policy that have been pursued by Russia and China in CA since the independence of this region. Moreover, each country's engagement in CA is divided into three main periods, which cover discussion of various variables such as security, economic and institutional issues that were present in their foreign policies in CA within the last two decades. By such periodization, the research also identifies factors associated with shifts and changes within each period of foreign policies of the two countries in CA.

#### **1.5. Research methodology**

To answer its questions this research used qualitative case study method. The choice of the two cases – Russia and China, comes from understanding that

both Russia and China are most proximate countries to the region, as well as assumption that these states are seemingly the most active and influential ones in CA. This work is qualitative empirical research. The study of each country's foreign policy in Central Asia is conducted in chronological manner by applying multiple frameworks for each state. The reason for employing multiple approaches is the insufficiency of single framework that can explain shifts and evolution in foreign policies of these countries. The research also used some secondary statistical data to explain patterns of economic policy of the two countries in Central Asia.

Yin (2014) notes that choosing research methodology depends mostly on the nature of question(s) that study intends to answer and distinguishes three main features of case study analysis: (a) main questions of the case study are “how” and “why” questions; (b) a researcher has little or no influence over behavioral events; (c) the research should focus on contemporarily event. According to the number of cases that researcher wants to examine, there are single or multiple case studies (Yin, 2014). In terms of research purposes, case studies have three categories: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory types (Yin, 2014).

Case study approaches do not necessarily mean that research is strictly linked to “how” and “why” questions. Although the nature of “what” questions imply more to either survey or archival studies, case study approach may also have “what” question as its main inquiry, and the researcher may employ “exploratory case study” approach (Yin, 2014). Exploratory case study helps to investigate any problem in the data by asking general questions, which create a

specific interest for researcher (Zaidah, 2007). Asking general questions will lead researcher for deeper and closer examination of initially observed phenomena (Zaidah, 2007). The main question of this research is *what* drive(s) foreign policy of Russia and China in Central Asia and therefore this study employs exploratory method of case study.

This work also examines *how* and *why* questions by establishing chronological order. These questions are inquiries of explanatory case studies. This type of case study investigates the data closely, in deep level to explain problems appeared in data (Zaidah, 2007). As Yin (2014, p.10) notes “why” and “how” questions are “more explanatory and likely to lead to the use of case study research method... and such questions will deal with operational links to be traced over time”. In this sense, this research established chronological order to create links with contemporary issues and explain these ongoing issues.

Third type of case studies is descriptive approach. This type helps to describe any phenomenon that occurs within collected data (Zaidah, 2007). Descriptive case study allows the researcher to study single or multiple cases by closely analyzing data within the specific context and relate these cases to a theoretical framework (Mikkelsen, 2005). As such the context of this research is twofold. The first is periodization i.e. the research studies foreign policy of the two countries during last two decades since the collapse of Soviet Union and covers security, energy, economic and institution building policies. Second is theoretical framework i.e. constructivist and grand strategy theories. For instance, the analysis of Russian foreign policy in CA employed the notion of “national

identity”, which falls under constructivist framework of International Relations (IR) theories. In case of China, the research explained China’s foreign policy in CA by applying “grand strategy” perspective.

There are some features that distinguish case study from other approaches. One of them is that the researcher has little or no influence over behavioral events. Compared to historical researches, case studies may use two additional sources of evidence that are not available for historical studies: direct observation of events and interviewing participants (Yin, 2014). In addition, the situations where researcher may have control over events or variables are laboratory or fieldwork studies (Yin, 2014). This study did not use any of these evidences, and therefore the researcher had no influence on the behavioral events. Final characteristic of case studies are contemporary issues. As mentioned earlier, objectives of this is foreign policy analysis, which is ongoing process.

Meantime, case study analysis has some disadvantages. Common criticism is that since case study method includes small number of cases, it prevents the research to make generalizing conclusions. In this sense, conclusions made from the examination of two cases cannot be generalized in respect to other states’ foreign policies.

The researcher used online data collection, which included various materials such as monographs, academic journals and publications of research centers. The research also benefited from interviews of experts and scholars on Central Asian issues conducted by some research centers. In order to find out the patterns of economic cooperation between CA and these countries, this work also included a

set of statistics from sources published in Russian language.

### **1.6. Limitations of the research**

Although the objective of this study – to identify basic characteristics of Russian and Chinese foreign policies in Central Asia, might be considered more general, the data collected during this research gives the researcher clear idea about some aspects, which need further detailed examination. Among these are bilateral relations of Central Asian countries with Russia or China. The study of bilateral relations was beyond the scope of this research due to the difference in analytical frameworks. In this sense, the study of bilateral relations gives opportunities for further research.

Another limitation of this research is case study framework. Although it was helpful to fulfill the study, conclusions of this research are not generalizable and cannot be adapted to some other countries such as Iran or Turkey, although Central Asian neighbors, yet with lesser influence compared to Russia or China.

## **CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURES**

This chapter appears through three main sections. The first two sections describe existing literature related to Russian and Chinese foreign policy, respectively, while the last section reviews other body of literature, which concentrates mostly on international relations in CA.

### **2.1. National Identity: Russia and its foreign policy in Central Asia**

Identity is central variable of constructivist perspective of IR.

Constructivism has three main streams, and the notion of identity is main criteria for each strand. The first stream is “systemic” approach, and mostly focuses on interactions between state actors and explains changes in the system as the result of various identity interactions. Wendt (1992) claims that “Anarchy is simply what states make of it”, i.e. the nature of anarchy is not naturally competitive, but its nature changes according to how unitary actors see themselves with the respect to others. The meanings from which state’s actions are organized rise out from the interaction of Self and Other (Wendt, 1992). This argument is built upon two considerations: first, social structures that involve human association are established by shared views rather than material forces; second, interests and identities of actors are not given by nature, instead they are based on these shared ideas (Wendt, 1999). Thus, it is state identity, which determines whether states see each other as allies or enemies thereby altering power differences within the system (Nau, 2003).

Second stream of constructivism is “unit-level” approach. This line of constructivism concentrates on political realm within the state or how state’s

domestic policy (domestic social norms) influences its identity and interests, consequently on national security of the state. “Unit-level” constructivism explains that society is social cognitive structure with many discursive formations operating within this structure. In turn, discursive formations are constituted of identities. The main argument is that states generate their identities and social cognitive structures domestically regardless external interconnection with Other (Hopf, 2002). According to this approach, states have two most common interests – strategic and economic; states define their interests through their domestic identities (Hopf, 2002). Therefore, state’s domestically constituted identity is important in shaping the perception whether other actors are enemies or allies and consequently has crucial impact on states’ foreign policy (Hopf, 2002).

Third stream within constructivism is “holistic approach”. This perspective combines “systemic” and “unit-level” approaches, and argues that identity is product of competing views that are influenced from both domestic and international level. External interaction with the Other influences on Self’s domestic political processes, of which some political groups with their own views on national identity are members (Tsygankov, 2013). Such groups hold their views about world politics, state’s national identity and its foreign policy. As the result domestic and international influences, Self’s domestic politics will be shaped by those views, which represent the best strategy to advance Self’s national interests given the nature of relations with Other (Tsygankov, 2013).

Western community has played the critical role of Other in developing and constituting Russia’s Self and therefore Russia’s foreign policy and national

interest are best understood within the context of Russia's relations with Western countries (Tsygankov, 2013). Rather than arguing that national interest is about power and modernization, Tsygankov assumes that Russian behavior in world politics is foremost driven by the perceptions whether the West accepts Russian "great powerness" or not. When Russia feels that West accepts Russian Self, Moscow's foreign policy takes cooperative stance to the Western countries. In contrast, Russia seems to take an aggressive foreign policy line when Russia's efforts to integrate into Western civilization meet rejection from the West. Russian foreign policy course also depends on the process whether Western reaction reinforces or undermines Russia's domestic political forces (Westernist, Statist, Civilizationist), which perceive Russia's national identity in different ways (Tsygankov 2013, p.15).

Bobo Lo (2002) provides an explanation to the complex patterns of Russian foreign policy in the post-Soviet period from the collapse of the Soviet State to Putin's early presidency. The author argues that after the collapse of Soviet Union Yeltsin administration built its policy on illusions and mythmaking and calls it as "potemkinization" which meant to establish an alternative reality being far from true state of affairs. Lo argues that foreign policy under Yeltsin had some irrational patterns that lead to a decline of Russian foreign policy stance worldwide. First, Yeltsin's Russia was excessively Westerncentric, but not pro-Western, meaning that while Russia was under illusions of post-Soviet integration, the West maintained its dominant position in the eyes of Moscow. Second, major policy statements were hardly a coherent guide to policy

realization, rather they were important “as an indicator of political fashion” and instruments to conform contradictions within elite and imitation for real policy action. Likewise Tsygankov, Lo also agrees that national identity is most critical determinant of Russian foreign policy. Two important findings are produced from this book. One is “the question of Russia’s global outlook is intimately connected with the issue of its imperial identity - not so much Moscow’s imperial ambitions, but the extent to which the country’s imperial past has molded conceptions of nationhood” (2002, p.21). Another important finding is that “The linkage between the policy of diversification [Primakovian “balance of power” vision] and unfriendly Western behavior became tighter in reaction to perceived Western attempts to establish a unipolar world in which Russia would be relegated to the margins” (2002, p.59).

Lo (2003) also debates the formation of Russian foreign policy starting from Putin’s presidency and argues that Putin’s foremost foreign policy objective was to revive Russian economy and this agenda was main component of relations between Moscow and international community. Lo also gives an analysis of Putin’s efforts to integrate Russia with West over security issues during post-9/11 period. Russia’s stance during this period the author describes as “strategic opportunism” meaning that it was not Putin’s “strategic choice”, rather the situation indicated how Moscow effectively used “an extraordinary set of circumstances” to achieve some objectives that were difficult to fulfill (Lo 2003, p.129). According to Lo’s assessment, the actual shifts were in Western reactions

after 9/11 events and the outcome significantly enhanced role for Russia that could merely be achieved by Russian own efforts.

While above-mentioned authors analyze Russian foreign policy in broader context, Dmitri Trenin (2007) provides detailed historical background of Russo-CA relations and Russian interests in this region since Russian Tsarist Empire. The author demonstrates that Russian Empire's interest in CA (then Turkestan) was inconstant until nineteenth century. The factor that made Russia to shift its interest to this space was its defeat in the Crimean War. This war restrained Russia in the Black Sea and the Balkans, damaged its prestige in Europe. Trenin argues that Russia turned its interest to CA to compensate injuries from the Crimean war and to manifest the capability to pose serious challenges to British Empire's growing hegemony (Trenin 2007, pp.77-78). One can draw parallels between that period and the early 2000s. This is an important finding, which provides idea that Russia's national identity has been driving force of its foreign policy since Russia's initial engagement in the region. Stressing Moscow's current policy in CA, the author argues that Russia has neither objective nor capability to restore "Eurasian super-state", as it is realistic enough to realize region's many links with outside world. To some extent, it is due to rising influence of other powers in CA and Moscow's limited military capabilities to dominate region's security environment (Trenin 2007, p.104). What Moscow seeks in the region is "favorable conditions for economic expansion and political influence which guarantees loyalty" (Trenin 2007, p.81). Moreover Trenin offers detailed discussion about Russia's stance after 9/11, in particular Moscow's

efforts to cooperate with Washington in CA. Soon after, when Russia did not receive expected Western recognition for its cooperation, Moscow took more aggressive stance to withstand Washington's hegemony in CA.

Joseph Ferguson (2006) provides analysis of Russian thinking toward CA during Yeltsin's presidency. In his discussion, the author states that although Kremlin tried to abandon from the region and focus on Russia's relations with Euro-Atlantic community, CA played (and will always play) big role in Russian strategy and geopolitical calculations. Along with security interests, Moscow could not abandon the region due to the deep cultural affinities and large Russian population of CA. Moreover, Moscow's fear to be marginalized from CA reached its highest point in 1997 as Washington established CENTRASBAT (Central Asian Battalion) – a joint battalion with Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Uzbek military forces. An important finding that was obtained from this text is the link between the resurgence of Russian Statist thinking and its foreign policy in the context of growing Western assertiveness in CA.

The next section of the literature review turns to the discussion of grand strategy and Chinese foreign policy in Central Asia.

## **2.2. Grand Strategy: China and its foreign policy in Central Asia**

The term "grand strategy" traditionally emphasized a set of military plans that states designed to win battles. As a modern notion "grand strategy" has broadened its meaning and now refers to the employment not only military means, but also political, economic and diplomatic capabilities together to maintain state's security and advance its national interests (Feaver, 2009). While

traditionally grand strategy was designed to win wars, now it is concerned with achieving peace in long term (Martel, 2015).

The most important point of grand strategy is in policy to bring all military and nonmilitary elements together to preserve and enhance nation's best interests during the periods of war and peace (Kennedy 1991, p.4). Kennedy highlights three main factors that are usually omitted from traditional analysis of grand strategies. First, managing state's natural resources is important to balance between ends and means of grand strategy. It is crucial to maintain country's defense capabilities, however states must achieve this aim in balance with their economic capacity. Economic component of grand strategy has no less priority to maintain country's security (Kennedy 1991, p.4). Second is the importance of diplomacy to enhance nation's stance both in periods of war and peace. Diplomacy enables state to gain allies, ensure the support of neutral parties and reduce the number of potential enemies (Kennedy 1991, p.5). Finally, national morale and political culture are critical issues in receiving population's support to share burdens of wartime and cost of maintaining defense forces in peacetime (Kennedy 1991, p.5).

William Martel (2015) maintains that grand strategy "is a coherent statement of the state's highest political ends to be pursued globally in the long term". The author states that grand strategy rests on three instruments of power: (a) diplomatic (political) power or how states employ their political and economic influence to advance national interests; (b) country's economic and technologic power or nation's resources that state employs to realize its policies; (c) military

capabilities that can be used to achieve nation's interests (Martel, 2015). The argument goes that function of grand strategies is to prioritize between various domestic and foreign policy choices and integrate all military and nonmilitary means to achieve those highest ends. In fact, grand strategy sets a framework, which facilitates statesmen to make coherent decisions about foreign policy conduct. In this sense, Martel emphasizes several elements that provide links between grand strategy and foreign policy. Foremost element of grand strategy is that it "must provide a coherent statement of what state seeks to achieve in foreign policy". Second, grand strategy comprises nation's highest political ends so that decision makers consider what they seek in foreign policy and what steps they take to conduct nation's foreign policy (Martel 2015, p.33-34).

In presenting his arguments, Avery Goldstein refers to the notion of "grand-strategy" as "combination of military, political and economic means a state employs to pursue its goals within the constraints posed by the international environment" (Goldstein 2003, p.87). The author states that China's grand strategy is a product of country's efforts to deal with the challenges of unipolar system, as well as Chinese way to promote multipolar regime in international relations and exploit opportunities of transition from unipolar system to that of multipolar. Goldstein argues that grand strategy is crucial particularly in case of China – not dominant yet but seeking to be so, who needs to minimize the risks of likely opposition of other states to its rise. According to the theory of realism, the power in systemic anarchy is distributed unevenly and the system punishes those states that possess the capability to become a great power but fail to do so (Waltz,

1979). At the same time, potential powers face systemic constraints from other actors, who see the rise of great powers as threats to their very existence in the anarchy. Given such circumstances and China's potential of major power, it is likely that China faces oppositions from other actors. Therefore, China needs well-established strategy, which would alleviate these perceptions and ensure China's secure rise. Looking at China's strategy during the late 1990s, Goldstein points that various theoretical perspectives forecast China's rise would be disruptive in challenging Western dominance. These perspectives could merely identify shifts in China's strategy at that period. According to Goldstein's assessment by mid-1990s, China realized expenses and risks of "challenger's role" and therefore Beijing changed its approach for "subtle, though no less self-interested" one.

In another account Goldstein (2005) defines the "grand strategy" more precisely, pointing that states do not simply develop plans to realize their goals. States build their plans in such circumstances where they must foresee whether other actors would oppose or facilitate their efforts (Goldstein, 2005). Moreover, the text explains why China did not follow other available options such as hegemony, balancing, bandwagoning or isolationist strategies, as major IR theories predict. Rather, the argument goes that China has designed a distinct strategy that rests on two main components. The one is diplomacy that aims to establish various partnerships with major powers and make China essential and necessary actor with its own interests that should not be violated by other states. The other is creating an "activist agenda", which gives Beijing the reputation of

responsible partner and mitigates others' worries about China's rise (Goldstein 2005, pp.29-30). China's current stance in CA manifests both components. On the one hand, China is advancing its policy in CA through partnership with Russia, without altering latter's role. On the other hand, China now is provider of "public goods" (investment, financial aid) for CA. This role makes China more attractive in the eyes of local states. In the mid 1990s due to the growing concerns about China's rise, Beijing decided to change its traditional bilateral approach to that of multilateral. In this sense, the role of "Shanghai Five" group and later Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) enable China to demonstrate itself as a responsible regional partner.

Evan Medeiros (2009) maintains that China has developed foreign policy strategy, which seeks to realize several distinct objectives. The first objective is to maintain secure international environment that fosters domestic reforms and development. In this sense, China's foreign policy seeks to maintain stability in peripheral territories so that its leadership would focuses more on domestic economic development (p.51). The second is that Beijing is trying to reassure its neighbors (particularly in Asia) and other states that China's rising capabilities will not disrupt their security and economic stability. In doing so Beijing tries to convince neighbors that China's rise is opportunity, not threat (p.52). Third objective is to reduce the willingness of China's Asian neighbors, unilaterally or collectively, contain its rise. China seeks to build multilateral cooperation that has limited US presence and China does so by avoiding direct confrontation with the

US (p.56). Finally, China's diplomacy seeks political relationships with oil-rich regions in order to diversify and maintain stable energy supplies (p.60).

Compared to above described authors, Fravel (2008) offers distinct account on China's behavior over border and territorial disputes with its neighbors. The scholar explains why China took cooperative and conciliatory stance in some disputes despite predictions of major IR theories and scholars that China would become "prone to muscle-flexing" in its foreign policy. Fravel's framework explains why and how states compromise in territorial disputes and outlines three basic strategies available for states. In particular, states can (a) do nothing and postpone settlement, (b) propose concessions and compromise, (c) threaten or use force (Fravel 2008, p.5). The author argues that states compromise when they face domestic or external threats to their security and when the cost of pressure for claimed land outweighs the cost of land itself. The likelihood of establishing alliance against the claimant state by its adversaries or armed rebellion makes state to change its aggressive stance and offer possible concessions. In this sense, this framework offers an important finding to assess China's behavior in border and territorial disputes with its neighbors in CA when China was facing domestic threats to its security. Another point that follows from this framework is the parallel between China's compliant behavior over territorial claims and the second component of its grand strategy that indicates Beijing's efforts to create an image of amicable partner. This point also proves the hypothesis that CA is important for the realization of China's grand strategy.

While above-mentioned authors provide views on China's overall strategy, Zhao (2007) offers detailed study about China's regional policy in CA. According to Zhao China divides its relations with outside world into three main ranks: great powers, neighboring countries and developing states. The main argument goes that CA is corresponded to China's "peripheral strategy", which aims to maintain security environment, improve China's strategic position and enlarge its international influence. China's foremost objective is to eliminate the concerns about "China threat" and to make its neighbors feel more secure by offering more aid and enable them to take advantage from its growth (Zhao 2007, p.153). Unlike traditional views, the argument goes that Beijing's foreign policy in CA is driven to satisfy China's domestic demands and not to establish exclusive sphere for influence. For this reason Beijing's approach is introverted, rather than expansionist (Zhao 2007, p.157). Zhao also states that China should avoid the stance that would challenge any external power in the region. If China is successful to develop long-term relations with CA, the region will become foothold in China's rise to global power. If China fails to do so, it may damage its peripheral policies (Zhao 2007, pp.153-156). In terms of Sino-Russian relations in CA, the author stresses how China pursues its interests in CA without altering those of Russia. Although China recognizes Russia's exclusive interests in the region, common objective for the two is to prevent unnecessary competition and conflict. Hence, this finding is another evidence that supports the argument about importance of CA for China's grand strategy. The next section of this chapter

provides a review of literatures, which offer “systemic-level” analysis of current relation in Central Asia.

### **2.3. “Systemic-level” approaches**

Rein Müllerson (2013) offers a comparative analysis of international relations in Central Asia by dividing them into two periods. The first period examines “Great Game I” that occurred in the 19th century. The second period explains “Great Game II”, which involves current relations in the region.

According to the author, today Central Asia is an area where China and Russia – significant players and potential competitors for dominance in world affairs – have their interests as well as vulnerabilities, and where the US has its strategic interests, too. The author argues that current relations in CA have signs of rivalry among external powers and labels such rivalry as “effectively containing a rising China” and “minimizing Russia’s strategic space”. Müllerson also points out opportunities for cooperation between powers, particularly in combating against global issues such as terrorism and drug trafficking. In general, whether rivalry or cooperation among China, Russia and United States prevails in Central Asia will depend largely on what kind of international order will eventually emerge from current world disorder.

Stephen Blank (2010) points out that geopolitical importance of Central Asia derives from its proximity to major world powers, the international threat of Islamic terrorism arising from Afghanistan and Pakistan, and its abundance in significant energy deposits. Another factor in Central Asia’s geopolitical importance is the increasing rivalry including not only the great powers such as

Russia, China and America, but also India, Turkey, East Asian states as well (Blank 2010, p.281). Weak regional cooperation also exacerbated this external involvement in the region. These problematic interventions, according to the author, should focus on searching stability and security in the region, rather than on competition and rivalry between outside powers. Along with geopolitical calculations, the engagement of other powers (Russia, China, India, Pakistan) is based on their domestic security demands, which are closely linked to CA (Blank 2010, p.287). For instance, only politically stable and economically prosperous Central Asia can ensure whether China is successful in its efforts to develop its Western provinces. China's current contributions in terms of cheap loans and huge investment ensures not only stable energy resources from CA, but also gives China advantages to demand from local states more active efforts to eliminate support to religious movements in Xinjiang (Blank 2010, p.291-292).

In another monograph, Stephen Blank (2014) develops analysis on Russia's latest initiatives in Central Asia. The establishment of regional bloc in Central Asia, such as Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) is crucial to the survival and durability of Putin's system and has roots in Russian feeling of "great powerness". As the author notes, the EEU gives Moscow an opportunity to present itself as a Eurasian major power that improves its self-esteem feeling and its stance in the eyes of international community (Blank 2014, p.21). The author also states that Russia's relations with Central Asia through regional project have two basic dimensions: first, the efforts to limit or thwart China's economic expansion in Central Asia; second, Moscow believes that "commanding" with such bloc gives

impression that Russia is Eurasian great power and ensures Russian voice in Central Asia. Therefore, Moscow's aim is to maintain its influence in CA thereby by limiting opportunities for other powers, in particular for China, who already has displaced Russia in terms of trade and investment (Blank 2014, p.22).

Alexander Cooley (2012) focuses on American, Russian and Chinese politics in Central Asia during 2001-2011. The central analysis of the piece covers dynamics of the interaction between the United States, Russia and China and their different strategic interests. It also identifies influence tools of the external powers, and provides assessment of their impact on Central Asia's political institutions and practices. In providing analysis, the author advances three main arguments. First, security goals and strategic goals of external powers in Central Asia are mostly different, which allows them to simultaneously pursue their interests in the region. At the same time they were able to do so without major confrontation. Cooley points that although Moscow longer enjoys regional primacy as it did centuries ago, compared to other powers Russia still has upper hand in influencing regional relations (Cooley 2012, p.51). Second argument is that interaction between Washington, Moscow and Beijing in Central Asia has intensified, but this "zero-sum" game and competition for relative gains during 2001-2011 were neither exclusive nor dominant form of power relations. Cooley points that efforts to export democracy into CA is the main reason for Washington's diminishing role in this region (Cooley 2012, p.164). Cooley finds China as the most benefited state among other powers and argues that Beijing's motivations in CA are twofold. One is to loosen Uighur separatism; another is to

extract energy resources (Cooley 2012, p.166). Third argument is that local states now have their own voices in great powers' interaction and their role should not be ignored. For instance, local governments have been successfully employing China's growing economic influence to break Russian monopoly on exporting energy resources to China.

Remainder of this research comprises findings and discussion. Chapter 2 explains Russian foreign policy, while Chapter 3 analyzes China's diplomacy in Central Asia.

### **CHAPTER THREE: NATIONAL IDENTITY OF RUSSIA AND ITS FOREIGN POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA**

For more than one century, Central Asia (CA) has been under the control of Russian Empire and later Soviet Union. The end of Cold War and dissolution of Soviet Union changed political order in CA and provided independence to five republics in the region. The collapse of Soviet state opened CA to the rest of world and the region has become geopolitically important for external powers. New reality in the region demanded Russia to pursue a foreign policy, which has been distinct from Soviet traditional approach. The history of Russia-CA relations during last two decades shows that Moscow's policy towards region was not free from fluctuations. At times, under the aim to integrate itself with Western world, Russia shunned CA and lost its influence there. Yet, it became apparent that Westernization policy had damaged Russian "great power" identity and diminished its influence in international affairs. Once Moscow realized those failures, it sought to restore Russia's "great power" status in world politics and therefore Moscow changed its hitherto policy over post-Soviet space, including CA. This chapter explains how Russian national identity influenced Moscow's decision to regain its stance in CA that had been lost during early post-Soviet years and argues that national identity still plays primary role in the formation of Russia's foreign policy towards CA. The first section briefly outlines the idea of national identity, Russian foreign policy traditions and each tradition's views on Russian national identity. Subsequent sections discuss three periods of Russian foreign policy towards CA; each period examines security, economic and

institutional cooperation. Through such periodization, chapter provides evidences of Russian foreign policy in CA in accordance with the change in Russian national identity and its foreign policy traditions.

### **3.1. National identity and foreign policy traditions of Russia**

This section briefly discusses what the “identity” is and how it influences on foreign policy of states. Then the section outlines foreign policy thinking of Russia under Russian national identity and its foreign policy traditions.

#### **3.1.1. Identity and constructivist perspective.**

The notion of identity is central category of the constructivist perspective of international relations (IR). For social constructivists two main fundamentals govern social relationships. The first factor is that structures, which involve human association, are established by shared views rather than material forces. Second, interests and identities of actors are not given by nature; instead, they are based on the shared ideas of social agents (Wendt, 1999). In this sense international system is not the space where military, economic and diplomatic capabilities compete, rather this system is shaped by the interaction of different structures of identities, which are core elements of state’s behavior under this system. Although constructivists agree that international system is anarchic, they claim that the way in which anarchy constraints states depends on how states conceive the anarchy and understand their own identity and interests (Wendt, 1992). Accordingly, constructivism maintains that states’ goals, such as security and material development or international recognition are formed by their social identities or how they view themselves in relation to other players in the world

community. Anarchy is composed of various social structures and arrangements and these structures are organized and determined accordingly with states' social identities (Griffiths & O'Callaghan, 2002). The ways that states frame their national interests and develop appropriate means to secure these interests are generated by their identities (Griffiths & O'Callaghan, 2002).

If realism maintains that anarchy is naturally conflictual and therefore forces states to compete for relative gains, for constructivists the anarchy cannot impose predetermined nature of affairs between states. Rather the system changes its "nature" accordingly to the interaction among various identities or as Wendt states "anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt 1992, p.132). The nature of anarchy may be conflictual if players behave in antagonistic way towards other states (Weber, 2010). The system may also have cooperative nature when states act cooperatively towards each other (Weber, 2010). Therefore, the anarchy has no predefined nature; its nature is defined by states themselves. To realize whether the nature of world politics is conflictual or cooperative, one should focus on states' behavior, which is driven by their identities and interests, rather than competitive nature of international anarchy. The most important thing is that *what states do depends upon what states' identities and interest are, and identities and interests change* (emphasis in original, Weber 2010, p.62). For constructivists the most important thing is to understand how identities and interests of states are constructed – how they are made or produced in and through specific international interactions (Weber 2010, p.62). Preservation or security of the self is main concern in the process of identity-formation under anarchy. The concept of

security varies depending on how the “self” is identified cognitively by the “other”; therefore, the distribution of power in the system depends on such cognitive variations (Wendt 1992, pp.399-400).

Constructivists insist that state interaction is not among fixed national interests, rather the process must be understood as an action that shapes and is shaped by different identities over time (Griffiths & O’Callaghan, 2002). Identities are not pre-determined either, but they are generated through interactions with other actors (Weber, 2010). Similarly, nation’s identity and interests are developed within the interactions between “Self” and “Other”. The interaction with the Other establishes significant context for Self’s existence. The Other’s actions towards Self may have decisive or destructive impact on the national identity of Self (Tsygankov, 2013). In turn, Self’s future actions (cooperative or antagonistic) depend on whether Self assigns these impacts as either approving or denying its recognition by the Other. Thus, national identity is the system of values that illustrates Self’s emotional, cognitive and evaluative position towards Other (Tsygankov 2013, p.15). Next section explains what Russian national identity is and how it influences on foreign policy of the country.

### **3.1.2. Russian national identity and its foreign policy traditions.**

It is hard to explain changes in Russian foreign policy only by assuming that national interest are about power or modernization. Russian national interest and foreign policy choices are best explained in the scope of Russia’s national identity and its relationships with the West (Tsygankov, 2013). It would be misleading if one understands Russian “Self” and its foreign policy as a new state that became

independent from Soviet Union in 1991. Rather, modern Russia's national identity and its foreign policy choices have close links with "Soviet", "Imperial" and "Tsarist" epochs within its history (Trenin, 2009). The patterns of relations between Russia's Self and the West (i.e. the significant Other) have been affecting Russian identity and its foreign policy traditions throughout Russia's history (Tsygankov, 2013). As it was mentioned above, Self may take either aggressive or amicable stance depending on the recognition of Self by the Other. Thus, at times when Russia wanted to integrate into Western system of values but the West left such actions unrecognized or opposed them, Russia followed hostile stance towards the Other. In other words, Western recognition encourages Russian liberals to maintain that Russia belongs to European community, while restraining such recognition enforces conservative identity, which insists on Russian great powerness and independence from the West (Tsygankov, 2012). At the same time, such decisions have domestic concerns. If Russia thinks that it is internally weak, then Moscow typically focuses on protecting its image of great power unless it reaches the degree of confidence (Tsygankov, 2012).

Understanding Russia as newly established post-Soviet state with newly formed foreign policy traditions is inaccurate. For understanding the formation of overall Russian foreign policy and its evolution, one should consider three traditions of Russian foreign policy and how they define Russia's national identity. Throughout its history, Russia has developed three distinct traditions in foreign policy thinking - Westernist, Statist and Civilizationist. All these traditions have presented Russia's national identity based on their historically

established visions of the country and reactions from outside world (Tsygankov, 2013). Historically, foreign policy choices of each group have been formed as a response to Western reactions, which derived from those decisions, and these interactions influenced Russia's diplomacy in CA. The history of Russia shows that it defines European values as the orientation for Russian identity and it has been core objective for foreign policy (Tsygankov, 2013). At times when Russia feels unappreciated, it takes an aggressive stance and wants to show how great it is. To regain these losses in its foreign policy Russia seeks to enhance its identity of "great powerness" by improving its relations with Asian and post-Soviet countries. In this sense, CA – the region where Russia enjoys capability of power projection, appears to be a critical component in the formation of Russian foreign policy.

Since Peter the Great's period Russian leadership has been facing dilemma how to fit Russia into Western system of values. Some of Russian leaders preferred close relationships with West; others wanted Russia to have limited Western engagement. Yet, there were some who led Russia through neither integration nor limited engagement with Western world, rather they preferred Russia to create its own system of values based on Slavic identity.

The identity of Russian Europeanness is core component for Westernist foreign policy school, which maintains the similarity between Western and Russian identities. For Westernizers the West is the most viable and progressive world civilizations, thus Russia's Self has been striving to be recognized by the West as the part of European community. Under the identity of Europeanness

Russian leaders have highlighted the importance of integration into Europe for political, strategic and economic reasons (Lo, 2002). For instance, for Gorbachev the idea of mutual security with the West became essential. He maintained revolutionary agreements on arms-control with the US and supported Soviet troops' withdrawal from European continent (Tsygankov, 2013). Gorbachev also highlighted the similarity of Russian and Western identities. During his speech in 1984 Gorbachev stated that Russians were Europeans foremost and argued that Soviet Union had to adopt idea of "common European home" and promoted the integration between Russia and Europe, which would rest on the principles of European social democracy (Lo 2002, p.15-16). In early post-Soviet period, Russia embraced the idea of the integration with Europe even closer. Liberal Westernizers under Yeltsin were cautious about relations with Soviet era allies and they assumed that Russia could overcome its economic and political backwardness only by establishing Western liberal institutions based on values of democracy and market economy (Tsygankov, 2013). Later these perceptions of close economic and political relations with the European countries transcended to the understanding that Russia's involvement in Europe is "critical to its sense of self-worth". Yeltsin administration expected that Western assistance in rebuilding post-Soviet Russia and its recognition of Russia as global power would have legitimizing effect on both domestic and foreign policies (Lo 2002, pp. 15, 44-45).

Another foreign policy school is Statist tradition and it is likely the most influential thinking line in Russian foreign policy. Statists maintain that Russia

has Eurasian identity and it is foremost great Eurasian power (Lo, 2002). In contrast to liberal Westernizers, Statists appreciate the ideas of power, stability and sovereignty more than the values of freedom and democracy, and the most critical is concept of external threat to Russian security. As Hopf (2002) has found this type of Russian identity has been produced through the interaction with Other states, rather than being formed through domestic identity. Eurasian identity is not strictly anti-Western, however it strives for the Western recognition by enhancing economic and military capabilities (Tsygankov 2013, p.5-7). Such unique identity assigns Russia the ability to accomplish the things that is not achievable for other countries, or even the group of countries (Lo, 2002). Main among these is that Russia is the guarantor of stability on Eurasian landmass. At the same time, Eurasian identity is not limited to regional affairs. The “great powerness” certainly implies that Russian foreign policy has global perspective on world politics and necessitates Russia to deal simultaneously with the main international powers. Finally, Eurasianism has produced the belief that Russia is the bridge between East and West - the idea through which Russia sought to increase its international prestige in managing various issues, such Middle East peace talks or Korean nuclear problem (Lo, 2002).

In post-Soviet era, there appeared the so-called liberal statist, who avoided a single-party state and started to apply market economy and political democracy. They believed that Russia was still subject to external threats and thereby it should maintain great power status with the “right of involvement” in any case that it deemed vital to Russian interests (Lo, 2002). The main argument of Statists

is that Russia should be treated as a power, without which world affairs cannot be managed (Lo, 2002). Primakov and Putin are the proponents of this tradition, yet they followed distinct policies to obtain great power status. There is a significant difference between foreign policy of Primakov and Putin. The former advocated to contain the US via strategic alliances and tried to restore Moscow's influence in ex-Soviet space, whereas the latter supported Russia's relationships in its periphery and acknowledged the partnership with Western countries and wanted to achieve their recognition through the cooperation in fighting against international terrorism (Tsygankov 2013, p.8).

Finally, Civilizationist tradition, which refers to Russia's Slavic identity, claims that Russian values are different from those of Western. Civilizationists viewed the West hostile to Russian national interests and opposed efforts of integration with Western world (Lo, 2002). In order to withstand Western expansion, Civilizationists wanted Russia to create its own empire of cultural unity beyond its southern and eastern borders (Tsygankov, 2013). Although thaw in relations and alliance between Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in 1955 had geopolitical calculations, the two countries achieved alliance thanks to the fact that "a common Slavic identity made the two countries more similar (Hopf 2002, p.113). Later, during late and early post-Soviet periods in Russian Duma some proponents of this identity organized groups against those of liberals. They criticized liberal policy for its overly close relations with the West, which undermined Russia's national interests and its Slavic identity. During 1994-95 Nationalists claimed that Russia was becoming excessively dependent on Western

loans and blamed Kremlin was losing control over Russian national economy for its inconsistent foreign policy (Tsygankov, 2013). Rather they called Russia to establish the union with Belarus and Ukraine under Slavic identity. The central idea for Civilizationists is that Russia cannot be judged through the norms accepted elsewhere in civilized world and therefore it must pursue its own way of political and economic development (Lo, 2002).

In sum, Westernist, Statist and Civilizationist traditions have different perceptions on Russia's national identity. Each group's views on Russian identity have influenced its foreign policy choices in building relationships both with Western and post-Soviet countries.

Remainder of this chapter explains of Russian foreign policy in Central Asia through three phases. The first includes early post-Soviet period from 1991 to 1995, the second phase covers the period from mid 1990s to 2000, and the third one discusses the period of 2000s. Each of the following sections explains in detail how aforementioned Russian foreign policy traditions and their views on its national identity influenced Russia's foreign policy in Central Asia.

### **3.2. First period (1991-1995)**

This section's main argument is that Russia's foreign policy in post-Soviet space during the early years after the dissolution of Soviet Union was inconsistent and paradoxical. The discussion of this stage maintains that overall Russian foreign policy was characterized by traditions of Westernism and therefore under such identity Russian diplomacy could not develop clear views toward ex-Soviet states.

To ensure Russia's transition into Western values, Kremlin sought to relieve Russia from post-Soviet legacy. This idea became popular in late Gorbachevian era, when Yeltsin used this idea as an argument in his campaign against Gorbachev. Supporters of Westernist vision (then-head of Cabinet Gaidar, and then-foreign minister Kozyrev) considered CA as 'appendix', which would create obstacles for aspiration of economic reforms and inclusion of Russia into Western economic and political system (Ferguson 2006, p.207). There was a conviction that Russia was suffering from being "internal colony" of Soviet Union, as it had to carry burden of other members. Yeltsin himself criticized the burden of southern republics, viewed them economically "backward" and politically conservative for having halted Russia's modernization and therefore prompted them to grasp "maximum sovereignty" (Laruelle, 2010). Moreover, among Russians there were feelings of nationalism and "islamophobia", which regarded Central Asia as a dangerous zone of cultural threats to survival of Russians (Laruelle 2008, p.45). The views mentioned above prompted Moscow's policy of abandoning from the political responsibility in relation to CA republics.

### **3.2.1. Institution building.**

During early post-Soviet time what linked Russia and Central Asia was the framework of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The CIS itself, which initially included only Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, never expected to be an organization that would facilitate cooperation. Rather, it was projected by Yeltsin to defeat Gorbachev and finalize the separation of all ex-Soviet members (Tsygankov, 2013). During early 1990s after Gorbachev's resign, Yeltsin and new

Russian liberals sought for “little Russia” which let borderlands go for independence without any strings with Russia. Therefore, the administration under Yeltsin started to eliminate the fundamentals of soviet state legacy that linked Russia with post-Soviet countries.

Under the view of Westernism Russia could not formulate a clear policy towards former Soviet states, in particular concerning CA. Although Moscow claimed everywhere that relations with former Soviet states were vital, the administration was unable to set well-coordinated agenda related to CIS (Lo, 2002).

The first issue was to define whether CIS should be a “space” for disintegration of former Soviet Union states or should it be a ground for those states’ political and economic integration with new framework. Some supported the idea that CIS integration had to be primary objective for Russian diplomacy due to long-term political, economic and cultural association that existed between Russia and other former soviet states within Russian empire and later Soviet Union. At the same time, among Russian decision-makers there was no accord on how much Kremlin should spend on reviving CIS. As Yeltsin then put it, “the integration of Commonwealth must not be detrimental to Russia itself or involve the overstraining of our forces and resources, both material and financial (as cited in Lo 2002, p.74). Some of Yeltsin’s advisers believed that reintegration would cost Russia vital resources that otherwise could be used for its own domestic needs. Meanwhile, for others CIS was priority for Russia to serve its long-term interests (Lo, 2002).

Another issue was over the nature and identity of CIS as an institution. There was no precise vision whether CIS should be a commonwealth of equal states or an institution through which Moscow could reassure its influence over post-Soviet space. In reality, however, CIS became a mechanism for peaceful disintegration of new states, which effectively prevented the conflicts over the distribution of Soviet Union's assets (Lo 2002, p.72-73).

There was another difficulty in forming coherent policy towards CIS. It related to the question of policy implementation mechanisms whether Moscow should realize its policy on case-by-case or region-by-region approach. Here too Moscow lacked well-coordinated policy. While Kremlin prioritized relations with Trans-Caucasus, given its proximity with Russia's Muslim-populated regions, Moscow's approach to Muslim-populated CA was less obvious (Lo, 2002). Some were advocating the repatriation of Russian population from CA, while others warned that Russia could meddle into conflicts in CA against its own interests (Lo, 2002). The proponents of limited relations with CA believed that Islamic threat emanating from the region was overly exaggerated and there would be no serious threats for Russian security in long-term. In other words, the outcome of conflict between imperial identity and liberal foreign policy thinking of Russian elite was "hegemony on the cheap" (Lo 2002, p.77).

### **3.2.2. Security and military policy.**

In 1992 Russia announced itself as a successor of Soviet Union, thus it had to follow the obligations of agreements, particularly those signed between Soviet Union and Afghanistan in 1978 and Collective Security Treaty (CST) signed

between Russia and CA states in 1992. However, Yeltsin's Russia stopped assisting to Kabul and left Afghanistan alone with civil war (Paramonov et.al, 2008). Once being without support, government of Afghanistan under Najibullah lost the control over country and collapsed in 1992. Further escalation of conflict turned Afghanistan to home for extremist groupings (Paramonov, et.al, 2008). In the sphere of security, Kremlin planned gradually to withdraw Russian troops from the region. In solving security issues and conflicts, Moscow sought to rely on international organizations. For instance, Yeltsin ordered to recall CIS troops from Nagorno-Karabakh, at the same time, for peacekeeping objectives in the region, Kremlin sought to deploy UN or NATO troops (Tsygankov, 2013). Although there were only small number of Russian troops in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan along with international borders with China, Afghanistan and Iran, Moscow reduced military cooperation with CA, which left intentions of creating collective security system unrealized (Paramonov, et.al, 2008).

In general, then-Kremlin administration tried to distance Russia from Central Asian events. Moscow's presence in CA became only formal, and thus Moscow was unable to take serious actions in stabilizing civil wars in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Additionally, Russia did not take any attempts to form a unified approach when NATO launched its "Partnership for Peace" program in Central Asian region and obtained an observer status in Central Asian Union (Lo, 2002).

### **3.2.3. Economic policy.**

Along with the issues discussed above, Yeltsin administration had no coherent plans of economic cooperation between Russia and CA. Kremlin's domestic economic policy was committed to "shock therapy" and rapid transition to market economy. Moscow announced the reduction of state subsidies, rapid privatization of land and industries and strict monetary policy for peacekeeping objectives there. To unify its own currency system, Russia decided to withdraw unilaterally from the ruble zone. The common economic space was no longer available. The collapse in communication and transport networks led to the economic decline. During the first half of 1990s, economies in CA fell to 40-60 percent of their 1989 level (Dittmer 2007, p.12). Despite Moscow's earlier obligations to consult with former Soviet republics in terms of economic policy and claims from CA to preserve common payment system, Moscow ceased money supplies to them, which created crisis in CA (Swanström, 2011). Moscow also ignored results of March 1990 referendum in CA, where 90 percent of votes called to preserve the Soviet Union (Dittmer 2007, p.12).

The exclusion of Central Asian economies from common trade system resulted a sharp decrease in trade relationships with Russia. During 1992-1993, Russia-CA trade volume shrunk sharply and accounted \$6 billion compared to that of \$60 billion in 1991 (Laruelle 2010, p.155).

In the sphere of cultural relations, Kremlin also preferred to isolate Russia from relations with CA. Moscow acknowledged no responsibility for ethnic Russians outside of Russia. Once then-foreign minister Kozyrev claimed,

“Russians outside Russia did not constitute a special problem for the Russian government” (Tsygankov 2013, p.83).

Eventually, Western countries did not appreciate the concessions that Russia made for pursuit of Western-style reforms and did not accord the status and role that Russia expected (Lo, 2003; Tsygankov, 2012). First, Yeltsin’s Russia could not become an integral part of the Euro-Atlantic community and domestic reforms were not successful and did not lead to “the Russian economic miracle”. Furthermore, Moscow lost the opportunity to have any serious influence on policies of Western countries. Second, Kremlin’s chaotic and contradictory foreign policy in mid 1990s destined to “lose hold” of Central Asia, not only politically, but also in the military and economic spheres (Laruelle 2010, p.156). Third, in most Central Asian countries there was a feeling of alienation towards Russia and the policy of escaping from “burden” of CA provoked the outbreak of anti-Russian sentiment in the region (Syroezhkin, 2002).

#### **3.2.4. Outcomes.**

No significant effort from West to support Moscow's integration into the Euro-Atlantic community increased irritation within analytical and scientific circles in Russia (Paramonov, et.al, 2008). Opponents of then administration had conviction that Russia’s weakness came to advantage for major Western powers and they were no longer considering Russian interests. Subsequently, Western countries’ behavior to establish a unipolar world order where Russia would have a marginal role became unfriendly for Moscow. Likewise, too close identification with Western values became as subordination of national identity and interests

(Tsygankov, 2013). In addition, there were views that Russia would never become an equal part of the West with latter's terms, it could only remain as major global power as long as it preserved distinct identity (Lo 2002, p.58-59).

In addition, Yeltsin administration received harsh internal criticism from opposition forces that were skeptical about Atlanticism and called for independent foreign policy (Bogaturov, 2006). Failures of administration increased resentment among public and majority of elites towards Western countries. During 1993-1995, for example, the number of people who viewed the US as a threat increased from 26 to 44 percent, and that of elites from 27 to 53 percent. The number of people who deemed that control over Russian economy was in foreign hands reached 75 percent in 1995 (Tsygankov 2013, p.26). Outside Russia, Yeltsin's inability to react against the enlargement of NATO to East Europe and to prevent emerging ethnic conflicts in CA and Caucasus, as well as Western opposite reactions to the expectations of Moscow altered Russian foreign policy priorities that soon would become consistent with Statist thinking line. Thus, then-administration in Moscow who victimized Russian national priorities to gain recognition from West and failed to do so, had to make significant adjustments into its domestic and foreign policies.

In general, under the identity of Westernism Moscow's foreign policy sought to relieve itself from what it perceived as "burden" of CA. The reality, however, was opposite to Moscow's expectations - Russia was not granted the status it strived for, rather Russia found itself marginalized within a unipolar system. Relations with CA and other post-Soviet states were not priority of

Moscow, within elite itself there was no accord about Russia's CIS policy. Due to the domestic and external pressures and failures in foreign policy, Russia sought to regain its "great power" stance under Statist traditions. Next section of examines second period of Russian policy toward CA.

### **3.3. Second period (1996-2000)**

This section examines Russian foreign policy under Eurasian identity and its impacts on CA in terms of security and economic cooperation. The discussion of the previous section shows that Russia's efforts to embrace Western values did not receive recognition from the "Other". Once Russia realized opposite Western reaction, the country switched its policy to traditional Statist thinking. In CA Russia pursued more assertive approach and thereby wanted to restore its "great powerness" which was weakened under Westernism policy.

Re-establishment in Moscow's foreign policy started after the appointment of Primakov as a new foreign minister. As the new foreign minister followed policy of restoring great power status, Russia's foreign policy changed in accordance with Statist views. According to Primakov's views, Russia was weak and could not have independent voice in international affairs in a unipolar world, and thus, Russia had to serve its own interests to become an independent power by proclaiming a multipolar world. Not confronting with the EU, balanced approach with the US and maintaining geopolitical equilibrium and resisting any hegemonic ambitions were the core objectives of Primakov's policy (Tsygankov, 2013). Such objectives required Russia to form flexible alliances in Asia and organize secure post-Soviet space (Tsygankov, 2013). Unlike Westernizers who

promoted relations with West, Statists underlined Russian interests in improving relationships with China and India, Middle East and reintegration of post-Soviet region. That is why the “Primakov doctrine” as a part of Russia’s strategy to regain great power prestige, involved Moscow as a center of influence over post-Soviet space (Laruelle 2010, p.157). To achieve such goal Moscow sought to enhance political and economic integration within CIS.

By the time when Primakov became a foreign minister, Russia was facing outside threats from instabilities and conflicts in Moldova, Caucasus and CA. In Primakov’s emphasis, the vital role of CA was in defending against the threat of radical and expansionist Islam (Lo, 2002). In addition, Kremlin sought for military and security cooperation with post-Soviet space. Moscow also tried to use its monopoly over Soviet pipelines network to transit Central Asian energy resources to foreign markets (Paramonov et.al, 2008). Russia, which was suffering from fragile economy and weak finances assumed that control over energy exports from CA was less costly compared to restoring full economic links between CA and Russia. Since the rapid privatization during shock therapy, large companies no longer played significant role in Moscow’s foreign policy (Laruelle 2010, p.155).

In general, since the mid 1990s Russian foreign policy was showing signs of realist stance by focusing on multilateral approach. Although Russia’s new balancing approach was close to realist views, one can hardly attribute such assertiveness to state’s material capabilities, as realists assume. The period when Primakov assumed his post, Russian economy had been facing sharp economic

crisis with average decline of 12 percent every year during 1990-1995 (Tsygankov, 2013). What changed however, was the Russian identity of “great powerness”, which re-emerged under two major factors. The first was Western opposite attitude to Russia’s aspirations to gain the status recognition as the power with Western values. Second factor was liberal foreign policy’s negative effects on domestic economy and Russian identity (Lo, 2002).

### **3.3.1. Security and military policy.**

In the second half of 1990s, Moscow acknowledged more importance to stability and security in CA. This happened due to increased links between Russian domestic extremism and external radical Islam that was arising from CA (Laruelle, 2008). After the defeat of Northern Alliance forces in 1996, the radical Islamists were almost completely controlling Afghanistan. After the withdrawal of Russian troops in 1995, extremists in Russia’s Chechnya were establishing strategic relationships with Afghan radicals (Trenin, 2007). Furthermore, radical groups invaded the Fergana valley, established bases there and launched regular attacks to Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Afghan Taliban supported by Pakistan conquered Kabul and began to threaten Tajikistan, which was hosting Russian troops. In this circumstance, a natural reaction to such threats was Russia’s desire “to be stronger” or at least to put an end to “losing ground” everywhere, especially in CA (Bogaturov, 2006). Thus, given the rise of terrorist activities and the escalation of North Caucasus conflict, Moscow decided to eliminate relationships between the extremist forces operating within Russia, Afghanistan and some Central Asian countries. Moscow's significant achievement at that time

was a settlement of civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1997) by employing its 201st Motorized Division there. In Tajik civil war that was between de facto “communist” leaders and Islamist opposition Moscow embraced the former as an ally and Russian troops on imposed peace that gave total victory to one side and gave a share to the opposition in Tajik parliament (Trenin, 2007).

Moscow’s interest in tightening security relations with post Soviet region had partly derived from the deterioration of Russia-NATO relations and NATO bombings of Belgrade in 1999. Unilateral decisions of NATO strengthened fears in Moscow and made Kremlin to turn to its allies in Asia, where both Russia and China were sharing common concerns with separatist activities (Trenin, 2007).

### **3.3.2. Economic cooperation and institution building.**

Unlike his predecessor, Primakov sought to enforce domestic economy by reducing country’s dependence on Western financial institutions. In his thought, Russian had to recover its economy by supplying energy resources to world market. To cover its budget deficits since 1992, Russia had no option but to borrow from International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the negotiation process was usually traced with political issues (Tsygankov, 2013).

Period of the 1990s illustrates failures in attempts to re-integrate economic space in ex-Soviet space. More importantly, economic activity between CIS members fell sharply as they saw new opportunities offered by outside parties. In the second half of the 1990s too there was no significant improvement in economic cooperation with the countries of CA. The only exception was Customs Union created by Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan in 1998. However,

by that year the amount of trade between Russia and CA decreased approximately twofold compared to the first half of 1990s, (from USD 7.2 billion to USD 3.7 billion).

As mentioned above, Russia sought to use its monopoly over energy deliveries from CA to European markets. Kremlin tried to set control over oil and gas transit from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Such efforts hardly attributed to economic cooperation, rather to political advantages of Moscow over CA (Laruelle, 2010). For instance, Moscow's efforts to block Kazakh oil exports during 1995, resulted foreign currency disruptions and prevented Kazakh oil refineries from full operation. In fact, Russia signaled Kazakhstan and its Western buyers that there would be no access to energy shipment unless they recognize Russian energy interests in the region (Blank, 1995). Similarly, Russia was buying and reselling Turkmen gas to Turkey at much higher prices. When Moscow felt competition from Western companies over Turkmen gas, Russia cut off Turkmenistan's gas exports to Europe (Blank 1995, p.12-13). Moscow assumed that transit of Central Asian energy deposits solely through Russian territory and blocking the construction of pipelines bypassing Russia would strengthen its position in the region.

### **3.3.3. Outcomes.**

In general, Russia had success in ending war in Tajikistan and preventing the spread of extremist movements to Russian Muslim-populated regions. However, Kremlin's Central Asian foreign policy remained dubious, since official discourse inclined to create Euro Atlantic alliance. Moscow's approach to

international relations continued to reflect an overriding Westerncentrism. As such, it was the result of Yeltsin administration's half-hearted attempts through Primakovian multipolarity, to pretend a multi-vector foreign policy, and the worldview of the elite remained overwhelmingly Westerncentric *in practice* (emphasis in original by Lo 2003, p.101). In terms of prioritizing foreign policy direction, then-Russian elite still was divided into two major groups: “Westernizers” and “Eurasianists”. The main contradiction occurred in defining whether Russia’s future and main interests lie in Europe or in Asia. In contrast to the supporters of Western model, Russian Eurasianists believed that Russia should advocate its influence in Asian continent and such division prevented a coherent Russian foreign policy, particularly in CA (Bogaturov, 2006; Müllerson, 2009). Moreover, there were some other factors that limited Russia’s attempts to recover its role in CA: first, most state-owned companies were privatized and state had no financial resources to advance its foreign policy in this region; second, Russia was suffering from economic crisis, which deepened in 1998. Such a weakness prevented Russia to give the CIS integration more economic nature. Although Primakovian “great power balancing” strategy received strong public support for its independence and concentration on security issues in former Soviet Union, it failed to improve the welfare of Russians (Tsygankov, 2013). Its opponents criticized that CIS-centered integration was heavily concentrated on security problems and undermined economic development and the integration process became too costly.

Meantime, external factors also reduced Kremlin's objectives to regain its positions in post-Soviet territory. First reason was due to the activity of the United States to set up anti-Russian feelings in some post-Soviet states (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova). Second, due to efforts of the EU to move eastward and to integrate Baltic states (Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia). Third, some other economic players such as China, Turkey, Iran and Japan became active in tying relationships with CA (Laruelle, 2010). Such competition over influence in post-Soviet republics came as a surprise for Moscow, which regarded the entire region as its exclusive preserve, but had no resources for much of the 1990s to back its claims for exclusivity within CIS (Mankoff, 2009; Trenin, 2009). Moscow's another defeat became clear when the U.S. backed the construction of pipelines from Caspian Sea to Europe that bypassed Russia. Although Russian energy companies benefited in CA, they provided no support to government's integration efforts there, as they did not want to supply local states with cheap energy in exchange of their loyalty to Moscow.

In terms of institution building with CA, there was no serious effort and the cooperation was limited within CIS, which was only formal body. For instance, there were more than 700 hundred intra-CIS agreements. None of these documents seemed to work properly and they were in no way indication of Russia's commitment to the CIS (Lo, 2002).

Next section analyzes Russian foreign policy in CA within the context of Global War on Terror (GWOT) and "color revolutions", as well as Russia's

efforts to enforce its “great power status” through establishing security and integration institutions in CA.

### **3.4. Third period (since 2000)**

This section argues that shifts in Russian policy towards Central were twofold. The first factor was Russia’s search for broader cooperation with Western community, including mutual actions to combat against terrorism in CA. The second factor was Russian perceptions that it did not receive recognition for offered cooperation and therefore assumed more assertive stance in CA. In other words, these two factors enforced contradiction in Russian feelings of Self and Other. Although Putin’s stance in CA was close to Primakovian “multipolar world” concept, the difference between those views was that Putin placed key emphasis on post-Soviet Eurasia’s “advantage on the scale of global economic competition” rather than geopolitical dimension. In Putin’s statement, no other state was going to fight with Russia and therefore Russia had to promote its economic interests and “not overstretch itself in world political affairs” (Tsygankov 2013, p.137).

Fundamental shifts in Russian foreign policy became possible when Putin administration strengthened the institutions of Russian state and focused on recovering its economic power, especially by regaining government control over energy resources (Cooley, 2012). Coherent and articulated domestic policy, favorable world prices for main Russian exports (primarily oil and gas) were critical to manage domestic issues. Such factors allowed Russia to employ financial resources to realize new foreign policy objectives, to confirm its major

power status and defend its interests in world politics (Trenin 2007; Tsygankov 2011). Compared to Primakov who saw CIS integration within geopolitical dimension, Putin wanted such integration to be consistent with Russian domestic economic interests and accompanied with Russia's integration with global economy (Tsygankov, 2013). In 1999 speech, Putin acknowledged region's critical place in Russian national strategy and stated that Russia was foremost "Eurasian power" (Ferguson 2009, p.210). The objectives of Russian foreign policy became apparent as Moscow strengthened policy to recover its lost regional positions, primarily in the post-Soviet territory. Russian policy in CA after 2000s is often regarded as "resurgent" and its agenda for Central Asian diplomacy included cooperation on counterterrorism, gaining access to Central Asian resources, promoting political stability, building a common security and economic space (Cooley, 2012).

#### **3.4.1. Security and military policy.**

For Putin, the emergence of international terrorism and the need for cooperation against it became an agenda to foster political and security cooperation with the West (Lo, 2003). GWOT declared after 9/11 attacks had the effect on Kremlin's calculations to accelerate its engagement especially in CA. By reassuring Washington in Russia's commitment against global terror, Putin offered a broad set of practical measures to assist the US-led operations in Afghanistan and CA, including the possibility of establishing US military bases in CA. In this sense, some of Putin's advisers argued that the idea of sharing intelligence and allowing the U.S. bases into post-Soviet space would undermine

Russian role in this region (Lo, 2003). However, Putin himself was decisive by saying that he was “more concerned with the presence of terrorist training camps in northern Afghanistan who send guerrillas to the Caucasus” than any possible “redrawing of spheres of influence” in CA (as cited in O’Loughlin et.al 2004, p.15). Thus, Putin went to convince Central Asian presidents to locate the U.S. troops in their territories.

In doing so Putin believed, that Russian foreign policy would get multiple benefits. First, the U.S. forces would eradicate increasing Taliban threat that Moscow viewed as networking with Chechen radicals and militant groups in CA. Second, campaign with the U.S. in CA would allow Moscow to frame its actions in Chechen war as a part of campaign against global terror. Such rhetoric would provide strong argument that Russia and US were fighting common Islamist enemy. Third, campaign with the U.S. in Afghanistan would enable Russia to demonstrate its importance in the region as a major power. In Kremlin’s view, Washington would appreciate cooperation with Moscow and eventually would recognize Moscow as the mediator in the US-CA relations (Cooley, 2012). Moscow-Washington accords on the U.S. military presence in CA provoked regular laments from Chinese commentators. However, Russians initially counted on the U.S. presence there as a temporary placeholder. In Kremlin’s calculations, the temporary presence of the U.S. in CA would keep the region from falling into Beijing’s dominance, which was becoming more permanent. Moreover, the U.S. presence would give Moscow time to recover its strength so that it could promote its own interests more actively and effectively vis-à-vis China in CA (Trenin,

2007). It was another significant point that laid behind the ambitions of Kremlin's foreign policy in CA. However, some scholars argued that it was not Putin's "strategic choice", rather it was "strategic opportunism" that Kremlin effectively used "an extraordinary set of circumstances" to achieve some objectives that were difficult to fulfill had Russia tried by its own (Lo, 2003).

However, cooperative relationships in CA did not last long and deteriorated soon following disagreements in Russo-American relations. Among those were U.S. withdrawal from Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and deploying missile defense system in East Europe and decision of NATO to admit Baltic States as new members. In CA Washington went on enhancing bilateral relations and direct security cooperation with regional states individually, thereby ignoring Russia's interests in the region (Cooley, 2012).

At the same time, Russia had perceptions that "color revolutions" was occurring under Western rhetoric as support for democratic transformations. Such political turmoil happened next to Russian borders, for instance, in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005). In CA, Moscow feared that Washington would push Russia out from the region but could fail to do so by eventually leaving the region in chaos. In Kremlin, there was a conviction that revolutions were conspiratorial. In Kremlin's view, upheavals had aims to topple Soviet-era leaders and establish pro-Western ones, thereby limiting Russian power in the region. At worst, in Moscow's view Washington would export a revolution into Russia by establishing a "liberal-puppet regime" in Kremlin

(Trenin, 2009). In Moscow's understanding, these were symptoms of Western rejection or Western response to the cooperation offered by Kremlin.

In response to aggressive promotion of pro-Western regime transformations in post-Soviet region, Russian policy-makers took counter-measures in CA against revolutionary threats. Now Russia shifted its foreign policy from pragmatic approach to that of assertive (Tsygankov 2011; 2014). For this reason Moscow initiated the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a multilateral forum, which was transformed in 2003 from Collective Security Treaty under CIS. CSTO is considered the only institution with actual military dimension and conflict management in CA, as well as a potential tool for Russian planners for re-creating security dependencies with Central Asian states (Laruelle 2010; Colley 2012). CSTO engages Russia, Armenia, Belarus and Central Asia (except Turkmenistan) on security issues. Uzbekistan joined CSTO in 2006, however terminated its membership in 2012 upon the adoption of new Foreign Policy Concept, which restricts Uzbekistan's participation in any military blocs and deployment of any foreign military bases on its territory. Under auspices of CSTO Kremlin was able to revive the cooperation between military industries of Russia and CA. In addition, CSTO's 2011 agreement prohibits its members to locate on their territories non-CSTO military units and bases without mutual consent. In fact, this agreement gives Moscow the right of veto over future basing deals in this region (Cooley, 2012, Blank 2013). In addition, Russia claimed that a third-party military presence would be possible if it meets Russian security

interest there and specifies a reasonable period for withdrawal of the potential unit (Trenin, 2007).

Further, within the framework of CSTO, Moscow established its own airbase in Kyrgyzstan's Kant city, in 2003. It was projected to resist expansion of American influence in CA and to benefit from Central Asian leaders' disappointment that American presence there had not provided them more benefits (Mankoff, 2009). Similarly, Russia enforced its presence in CA by showing its support to Uzbek regime, which was under strict criticism of Western democracies for use of force against insurgents during Andijan massacre in May 2005. Russia supported Uzbek government as the two signed Treaty on strategic cooperation in 2004, which gives each side the right to use military facilities located on their territories. In 2005, the two signed another agreement – Treaty on allied relations, which gives Uzbekistan the right to receive Russian military assistance in case of outside aggression.

In 2006, Moscow signed an agreement with Bishkek, under which the latter would provide rent-free base exploitation in exchange for receiving Russian military equipment. In 2012, Russia and Kyrgyzstan signed another package of agreements. According to the document, Kyrgyz government prolonged rent for Russian military base until 2032, whereas Moscow promised \$1.5 billion in military assistance (Engval, 2014). In addition, Moscow pledged to write off Kyrgyzstan's debt, which amounted \$489 million (Oliphant, 2013).

In Tajikistan, Russian military unit that served as border guard since Soviet period was reduced in numbers during Yeltsin administration. However, 2012

agreement allowed Russia to employ its 7000-troops there for 30 years. In exchange, Tajikistan received \$200 million worth of Russian weapons and about \$5 million to Tajikistan's national drug enforcement agency (Engval, 2014). Thus, Russia has effectively positioned itself as the regime backer against "color revolutions", as well as supporter of Central Asian region security against radicalization and destabilization by Islamists. In general, these efforts show how Moscow under Statist foreign policy tried to restore its image of "great powerness" once its Self received ignorance from Western community. Next section discusses Russia's energy interests and explains how Moscow sought to restore its monopoly over the energy of CA.

#### **3.4.2. Energy policy.**

Along with security policy, Moscow has been striving to enhance its influence through energy cooperation and institution building in CA. Since 2000, cooperation in energy sector with CA is another aspect where Russian foreign policy has reached notable results compared to mid-1990s. Stable and secure access to CA's energy deposits for Russian energy companies and transit of resources through Russia's territory have been priorities for Kremlin's policy in CA.

Due to Kazakhstan's biggest ownership of Caspian oil reserves, Moscow is striving to increase the access of Russian companies in oil production of Kazakhstan. In doing so Moscow's primary concern has been to prevent construction of any pipelines from CA to Europe that would transit energy bypassing Russian territory. In order to get control over oil exports, Moscow

sought to increase the shipment of Kazakh oil through Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) from 28 million to 67 million tons annually. However, the expectation was not realized as Kazakhstan decided to diversify its oil exports to Europe via Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline (20 million tons), which is the competitor of CPC. Later in 2005, Kazakhstan opened another pipeline, which pumps its oil to China's Xinjiang province. Moreover, Moscow's price policy on oil transits for Kazakh oil companies, that pay as twice much as those of Russian, gave another impetus for Kazakhstan to diversify its oil exports (Trenin, 2007).

Although, Russia owns enormous gas reserves, its deposits are located in distant regions, so that the exploitation of those reserves becomes too costly. In order to satisfy its foreign contract obligations, Russian Gazprom has to buy additional gas from CA. For this reason Kremlin decided to tie Turkmenistan's gas to Russia, keeping Turkmen gas market from other potential competitors. In 2003, Russia's Gazprom signed an agreement with Turkmenistan, which provides Gazprom with monopoly over purchasing Turkmen gas around 80 billion cubic meter (bcm) annually and the right to re-export this gas to Europe (Laruelle, 2008). In doing so Moscow was successful to prevent the direct deal between Turkmenistan and Ukraine, which makes the latter dependent on Moscow for energy supplies (Trenin, 2007). In 2007, Kremlin's energy diplomacy was successful in reaching a contract with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan on new pipeline construction passing alongside of the Caspian Sea. This agreement would give Moscow more chance to monopolize the export of gas from CA and reduce

the influence of European and American projects such as Trans-Caspian pipeline (Laruelle, 2008).

In addition to competition from Western companies over Caspian oil, Moscow faces competition from China over access for gas in CA. As mentioned above, Moscow's aim has been to prevent the construction of any additional pipelines from Turkmenistan to Europe and ensure transit of Turkmen gas exclusively through Russian territory. To some extent, Moscow realized this aim when it achieved an agreement with Ashgabat in 2005 on purchasing gas for the next twenty-five years. However, Moscow accepted silently the fact that China also entered into gas market in CA and constructed its own pipeline from Turkmenistan. For Moscow, it seems preferable to see China in Turkmen gas market, rather than allowing Western energy companies to pull out gas purchases from Kremlin's control. Moscow is seemingly better off from allowing China in, while Western companies out from Turkmen gas market, because such arrangement gives Moscow advantage in keeping European market dependent on Russia-led pipelines (Blank, 2013).

By 2006, Russia was the main trading partner of both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Trade between Russia and Kazakhstan valued \$10 billion, while Russian-Uzbek trade was close to \$ 3 billion, which represented more than a quarter of Uzbekistan's total foreign trade. Increased trade volume between Russia and these two countries was due to the gas and oil exports. The share of hydrocarbons in Central Asian total exports to Russia in 2003 represented 32 percent, and reached 56 percent in 2006 (Paramonov et al, 2008). In 2011, overall

trade turnover between Russia and CA was \$27,3 billion, and the pattern of trade did not change significantly. The main export products to Russia are still raw materials and energy resources, whereas Russian exports to CA are manufactured goods (Oliphant, 2013). Next session explains Moscow's achievements in the sphere of institution building

### **3.4.3. Institution building.**

Since the Primakovian era, the idea to create an integration process within post-Soviet space has been critical for Russian leaders. The first step of integration established Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) between Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Russia. EEC was to facilitate the process of creation of Customs Union and Single Economic Space between members. After successful establishment of Customs Union in 2010 and Single Economic Space in 2014, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia launched EEU, which has merged its successor EEC in January 2015. As such, creation of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and its component Customs Union has been "flagship" under Putin administration (Weitz, 2014). Kyrgyzstan is the member of EEU since August 2015, while Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are not members yet.

Since the announcement the creation of EEU, there emerged debates warning on Russia's neo-imperial ambitions in "re-Sovietizing of region" (Weitz, 2014). To some extent, such skepticism seems has a ground to exist. If it is true, such ambitions can be related to views that prompt Russia to establish exclusive sphere of influence. It appears that under current leadership such views has been marginal and Russian elite hardly wants to return to imperial mode, rather than to

consolidate power in Russian “sphere of privileged interests” (Tsygankov 2013; Cohen 2013).

The process of integration into a certain space has both advantages and constraints. The skeptics of integration within post-Soviet space state that Russia dominates the decision-making process in Customs Union of EEU. They point to unequally distribution of votes that favors Moscow. On the other side, there are proponents of integration, who argue that it might be favorable for landlocked countries of CA, so their goods and services can access bigger markets of member states. Some others say that Putin’s policies towards Asia are pragmatic and best understood as serving the purpose of modernizing Russia’s economy, rather than developing strategic alliances or deep cultural affinities (Tsygankov, 2013). Also, there is an argument that Russia does not aim to build a Eurasian super state or another version of Russian empire, yet Moscow wants to ensure favorable conditions for economic expansion in former borderlands and high degree of political influence, which guarantees loyalty from local states (Trenin, 2007, Blank 2013). One may consider cases showing that Moscow’s integration intentions are pragmatic, rather than imperialistic. For example, Kyrgyzstan’s entry to the EEU gives more privileges for Kyrgyz workers in Russia, simplifying the procedures for receiving documents for the status of migrant. The removal of customs and administrative barriers for trading within EEU gives more incentives for Kyrgyz business. Another example is that, after the meeting between Putin and Karimov in Tashkent, December 2014, Moscow agreed to write-off Tashkent’s debt of \$890 million in exchange to create a free-trade zone between

Uzbekistan and EEU by 2018. In addition, Russia and Kazakhstan established a special assistance fund of \$10 billion that can be used as assistance for new members of EEU in order to foster their integration within the institution. It is unlikely that Kremlin simply forces local countries to join Moscow-led regional projects; rather it offers to do so by seemingly “win-win” formula.

### **3.5. Conclusion**

Since the early post-Soviet period until recent times, Russian policy towards CA has undergone three main shifts. Since the collapse of Soviet Union, Russia under liberal Westernizers sought to integrate itself into Western system of values and thereby acquire Western recognition for its aspirations. In order to achieve that objective Kremlin decided that Russia had to relieve itself from the post-Soviet burden and therefore ignored relations with post-Soviet republics. Although Kremlin was claiming that CIS was priority, it did not have any coherent policy towards CIS. Soon after Moscow found itself within both domestic and external problems and it became clear that Moscow’s early Westernization strategy was miscalculated. Russia then tried to revive its both domestic and international stance under Statists who perceived world through balancing against Western hegemony and promoting multipolar system. In such conditions, Moscow sought to build alliances in Asia and regain its influence in post-Soviet space, particularly in CA, which was lost under Westernist foreign policy. However, this policy overly concentrated on geopolitical calculations and became too distant from dealing with domestic issues of Russia. The results came to show that Primakovian great balancing approach was too expensive for Russia,

who was already in economic crisis. Although Putin's vision had some similarities with previous strategy, his approach received pragmatic stance. Main shift under Putin is that Moscow no longer considers CA region as "all-inclusive and exclusive sphere of influence" as notion from Soviet times, instead CA serves as the zone of "interests" which is more specific and identifiable (Trenin, 2009). Kremlin's current approach to CA is realistic enough to recognize the local states' links with outside players. Russia accepts foreign investment and economic competition in CA. What it wants now is to make sure that its interests in CA prevail and it aims to construct kind of "protective integration" that serves its interests in creating a multipolar world. One of the highlights of the Russian foreign policy strategy is to maintain the status of a great power, recovery of lost economic and geopolitical advantages after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Promotion of such initiatives is mostly to maintain Russia's leading role and interests in the region, which it views as "backyard", rather than recreating in any form of a single state.

As the theory of identity predicts, relationships between Self and Other are based on their perception of each other. The characteristic of their relationships depends on the extent to which Self receives recognition from Other. The discussion showed that relationships between Russia and Western community has been both cooperative and conflictual. Depending on these perceptions, Moscow's foreign policy in CA has been either ignorant or assertive. By maintaining the capability of power projection in CA, Russia's Self has been striving for the recognition from the West.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: GRAND STRATEGY OF CHINA AND ITS FOREIGN POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA**

Some scholars argue that initial relations between China and Central Asia (CA) dates back to 138 BC when Chinese Han dynasty sent its envoy to CA for making alliance against Hun nomads who lived in Northern China (Zhao, 2016). Since then China and CA maintained long time political, economic and cultural relations mostly through Silk Road. Relations between the two disrupted in nineteenth century when CA became an integral part of the Russian Empire and later Soviet Union. For over last century China perceived the region only in the context of Sino-Russian and Sino-Soviet relations. Due to Moscow's tight control over political relationships within the region, during Soviet times China-CA relationships were almost non-existent. The breakup of Soviet Union has changed geopolitical order in CA, too. In the order that they emerged, new republics in CA did not have independent statehood before the Soviet Union. In addition to the altered geopolitical order in CA, the loss of region's patron led to the intra-regional issues such as economic crisis and religious radicalism. Rising geopolitical importance and regional issues of CA altered China's concerns about this region. Since the independence of the region, China has been mainly interested in maintaining border security and combatting religious radicalism. Eventually however, China manifested itself as an important player in the region in maintaining regional security and economic development. China also could develop the network of gas and oil pipelines that ships energy resources from CA to Western China. Moreover, Beijing successfully institutionalized its engagement

in the regional affairs through Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). So far, Beijing could establish itself as a major actor in CA without threatening its relations with Moscow, who considers CA vital for its own ambitions. In general, Soviet Union's dissolution required China to develop entirely new policy in CA. Objectives of its policy has been to prevent new threats and employ new opportunities in this region. The main argument of this chapter is that now CA has become important for China's grand strategy. In chronological order, this chapter explains how Beijing has been realizing foreign policy towards CA. The chapter is developed throughout the discussion of three main periods and each period is comprised of sections that cover various aspects of Chinese policy in CA such as security, economic and energy policies.

The reason for focusing on grand strategy framework is due to the absence of officially issued document that specifies Beijing's diplomatic strategy and gives a systematic explanation of its approach in regards to CA. This estimate makes China's involvement in CA somewhat hypothetical; therefore, China's policy towards CA is best explained by focusing on Beijing's overall strategy (Zhao, 2007).

The remainder of this section outlines theoretical framework and then provides empirical study.

#### **4.1. Theory of grand strategy**

Theory of grand strategy explains how state uses military, political and economic means to reach its objectives or ends in setting of independent choice within the constraints of international system (Goldstein 2003, 2005).

Traditionally the notion of strategy along with that of tactics mostly referred to military actions of states. In words of Clausewitz “Tactics is the art of using troops in battle; strategy is the art of using battles to win the wars” (as cited in Kennedy 1991, p.1). Later strategists differentiated strategy from traditional understanding that viewed it as an instrument of warfare. They analyzed and explained strategy at grand levels and argued that states design strategies not only to win warfare, but also to maintain long-term peace. For instance, Edward Earle – one the founders of modern grand strategy theory, noted that “...as war and society have become more complicated, strategy has of necessity required increasing consideration of nonmilitary factors, economic, psychological, moral, political, and technological. Strategy, therefore is not merely a concept of wartime, but it is inherent element of statecraft at all times” (as cited in Martel 2015, p.26). In this sense, grand strategy implies to the policy, which employs all military and nonmilitary elements ensuring the preservation and enhancement of nation’s long-term interests given both domestic and international constraints (Kennedy, 1991; Rosecrance & Stein, 1993). More precisely, grand strategy is the art of conforming desired ends and available means (Feaver, 2009). Grand strategy is the collection of plans and policies that includes state’s purposeful efforts to employ political, military, diplomatic, and economic means together to realize that state’s national interest (Feaver, 2009). It is also important that grand strategies are formed based on deliberate actions – what leader recognizes as constraints while making calculations and what are leader’s feelings that shape his worldview (Feaver, 2009).

One of the most recent accounts suggests that grand strategy is the “multi-level plan” of different elements, such as concepts and distinct policies, which should interact in a coherent way. Each of these elements under different temporal scope (short-term to mid-term) serves to reach state’s highest political end in the long-term (Martel 2015, p.30). States must articulate their strategies according to the unity of their objectives so that the realization of the strategy should maintain the peaceful environment and lead the state towards the most favorable outcomes in its foreign and domestic policies (Kennedy, 1991). Yet, why do states need a grand strategy? To formulate the answer to such question, one should keep in mind that grand strategy carries out state’s long-term objectives and can be understood in terms of what it should accomplish (Martel, 2015). Thus, states need grand strategy not only to develop plans for short run perspective, but states do so in the context of systemic pressures where they must foresee possible responses of other actors, whose actions may oppose or facilitate their efforts in the long-term (Goldstein 2005, p.18). Foreign policy in its turn, realizes state’s principal and highest objectives defined and articulated by its grand strategy (Martel 2015, p.30). Thus, the above-developed discussion leads us to five general features of grand strategy (Finklestein 2009, p.1-2):

- First, strategies are designed to obtain defined aims in specific circumstances
- Second, strategies need the development of “ways” (concepts, approaches and distinct policies) to achieve those objectives

- Third, strategies require the development of “means” (capacity) to make those policies and concepts operate and support them

- Fourth, strategies need coordination of “ways” and “means” to achieve desirable ends. Without well-established coordination, the strategy is likely to fail

- Fifth, strategies must adjust once circumstances change or when approaches prove ineffective and means become insufficient.

#### **4.1.2. The grand strategy of China.**

China’s foreign policy is critical tool to the realization of its grand strategy, which ensures China’s rise to great power stance within the uncertainties of international relations (Goldstein, 2003). The core objective of its grand strategy is to maintain the environment necessary to China’s economic and military modernization. Moreover, it is designed to prevent the establishment of anti-Chinese opposition by states that view China’s current increasing capabilities as threat that must be opposed (Goldstein, 2003; Medeiros, 2009). The grand strategy of China is composed of two components. The one is diplomacy which focuses on building relationships with major actors, and works so that these relations make China essential participant of international system and whose interests cannot be ignored by other key players. The second element is an international “activist agenda” that provides China with the reputation of responsible member of international community and prevents states to join coalitions against China (Goldstein, 2005; Medeiros, 2009).

In general, grand strategy as an “end-ways-means equation” is coordination of the ways (concepts, approaches, policies) and capacities (means) designed to

achieve specific objectives (ends) in a specific and often changing circumstances (Finkelstein, 2009). Concerning the ends of China's grand strategy, there is a consensus that Beijing seeks three main strategic objectives. The first objective is to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The second is to promote economic and military modernization as core drivers behind its “comprehensive national strength”. The third aim is to earn international respect and maximize, or at least maintain status as a great power (Medeiros 2009, xvi; Heilman & Schmidt 2014, p.9). “Peaceful development”, “win-win solutions”, “harmony and diversity” are concepts of China’s strategy (Cabestan, 2010). By following them China wants to allay perceptions of “China threat” among its neighbors, particularly in CA. China tries to assure local states that it does not seek to interfere in domestic affairs and its growth will not undermine neighbors’ economic and security interests (Medeiros, 2009; Cabestan, 2010). At the same time, China wants to convince Russia that Beijing has no intention to a hegemonic role and it recognizes Moscow’s privileged stance in CA (Cooley 2012; Weitz 2013). Beijing prefers cooperation rather than confrontation with Moscow in CA and therefore seeks not to provoke any discontent in Moscow (Zhao, 2007). These are the manifestation of how above mentioned two elements of Beijing’s strategy work in CA – dealing with major powers and yielding the reputation of important partner.

Concerning China’s primary objectives in CA, scholars and experts propose different opinions. Some scholars argue that China’s primary interest is to ensure security and stability of Xinjiang, which neighbors with CA (Clarke 2010, Blank

2010). Some others claim that China is foremost interested in energy of CA. However, there is a broad consensus among them that China's policy in CA is the reflection of its strategy to global world (Kuchera, 2012). In sum, CA is important for China and its grand strategy for several reasons. First, cooperation with CA gives China opportunities to overcome internal constraints of territorial integrity and domestic security of Xinjiang. By promoting economic cooperation between its Muslim populated provinces and CA, China wants to alleviate concerns emanating from Muslim minorities, who historically regard themselves as independent nationalities. Second, CA is strategically important as it provides China with an alternative ground route to maintain trade relations with Europe – Beijing's largest trade partner. The route is designed to stimulate trade between China's relatively less developed Western periphery and Europe through CA, thereby fostering development of peripheral provinces. Stability in CA is of strategic importance for China; the more stable CA the more chances for China to concentrate on other primary concerns (Zhao, 2016). At the same time, for China, CA is important source of energy resources and relatively safe route that reduces Beijing's dependence on risky sea routes to transit oil and gas from Middle East and Africa. Moreover, China's CA policy through the framework of SCO is a manifestation that Beijing no longer merely reacts to the external environment, rather it shows Beijing's efforts to shape external environment (Finkelstein, 2009). Finally, the degree of Sino-Russian mutual understanding in CA is likely to affect overall strategic partnership between China and Russia (Zhao, 2016).

Remainder of the chapter analyzes China's diplomacy in CA through three main stages. First stage covers the beginning of the 1990s. This period has associations with settlement of border problems inherited from the Sino-Soviet relations. Second phase includes the mid and late 1990s and 2000s and characterizes the formation of regional mechanisms and institutions in CA with the participation of Beijing, as well as the expansion of China's economic presence. Third phase begins after 9/11 events. This stage shows unprecedented increased activity and assertiveness of Chinese foreign policy in CA. During this period, China has become source of financial aid and investments for some countries in CA.

#### **4.2. First phase (1991-1996)**

This section explains the early security issues such as settlement of border disputes between China and its CA neighbors, the emergence of “East Turkestan Movement” in Xinjiang and China's efforts to cooperate over these problems.

In the early 1990s, China faced a number of challenges for its domestic and foreign policy. Frosty relations with the West after Tiananmen Square events in 1989, the fall of communist regimes in Eastern countries of Europe, particularly territorial dissolution of Soviet Union and the death of communist regime in Moscow threatened Beijing (Scobel, Ratner & Beckley, 2014). Therefore, the main purpose of Beijing's foreign policy in the early 1990s was to create the “zone of stability” along China's borders in order to ensure security of political regime, the success of the Chinese reforms and domestic integrity. Stability in CA is vital for China, so that any instability in the region could spill over to China's

Xinjiang and Uighur riots could use CA to prepare attacks on China. At the same time, China was not too reactive with respect to the internal events in CA and took the time until the situation in the region becomes clear, so that Beijing's decisions would be less cost-effective under uncertainties (Laruelle & Peyrouse, 2009).

The unexpected appearance of new independent states next to China's borders and negligence of those states by Russia became a complete surprise to Beijing (Swaström, 2011). Civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1997) and instability in neighboring Afghanistan predefined China's primary strategic interest until 1997. Primary objective of China was to maintain security and stability along its borders with CA (Zhao, 2016). Therefore, China sought focus on the settlement of border issues that Sino-Soviet relations had been unable to solve.

At the same time, the linkages between extremist Uighur Diasporas that live both inside and outside of China (mainly in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) were increasing significantly. China wanted assurances from new states in CA that they would not be home to extremist groups that could support Uighur separatist movements in Xinjiang province (Lanteigne, 2010).

#### **4.2.1. Uighur separatism in Xinjiang and search for security cooperation.**

Soon after establishing diplomatic relations with new states in CA, in 1992 Beijing initiated negotiations over issues such as high-level military presence along borders, trans-border disputes and Uighur separatism.

The most important aspect of China's internal security is intertwined with Uighur minorities in its Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Province (XUAR), which has borders and historically close relationships with CA. For China, the issue has existential concern because it derives from the aspiration of ethnic minorities in XUAR to revive their independent state - the so-called East Turkestan. XUAR has always been home to secessionist, rebellious forces and caused problems for China's integrity since the Han Dynasty (Fravel, 2008). This issue strongly affects the perception in Beijing that continued rule of China's Communist Party (CCP) is indivisible from unity and territorial integrity of China. Its leadership is seriously concerned about unrest and pursuit of independence by ethnic minorities who live in remote and economically backward Western provinces (Scobel, Ratner & Beckley, 2014).

Russian expeditors first used the term of "East Turkestan" in the mid eighteenth century to distinguish the parts of CA belonging to China. The rest of CA was called "West Turkestan" (Zhao, 2007). Until the seizure of East Turkestan by Qing dynasty in the eighteenth century, each part existed integrally under Turkic khanate since 7-8<sup>th</sup> centuries (Eivazov, 2010).

As a modern movement, "East Turkestan" first appeared in early 1900s. In 1933 there was initial attempt to establish East Turkestan Republic on the basis of Sharia laws and the movement was significantly influenced by Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism ideologies of that period (Zhao, 2016). Soviet leadership, who tried to reunite East Turkestan with the rest of CA, supported the second attempt. In 1944, Uighur rebellions proclaimed East Turkestan Republic in Xinjiang. The

state existed until Soviet government suspended its support in June 1946 (Zhao, 2016). Eventually, Xinjiang was reverted under the authority of Chinese central government in 1949. Since then, the central political objective of “East Turkestan Movement” has been to establish an independent state in Xinjiang by causing violence and terrorist movements.

China’s Xinjiang, the population of which is constituted of Turkic Muslim Uighurs (42 percent) and Chinese Han people (39 percent), is probably the most vulnerable province to separatists and radical Islamist groups (Harris 2014, p.86). Total number of Uighur diaspora is estimated around 11 million people, majority of them i.e. 10 million live in XUAR, whereas between 300,000 to 1 million Uighurs live in CA (Scobel, Ratner & Beckley 2014, p.9).

Anti-government sentiments, terrorist-style attacks and armed conflicts between insurgent groups and government forces in Xinjiang were spreading significantly since Tiananmen events in 1989. Dissolution of Soviet Union and emergence of new independent states in CA to some extent intensified those movements, so that Uighurs living in and outside Xinjiang were inspired by the possibility to establish their own independent “East Turkistan” state (Dwivedi, 2006; Fravel, 2008). Moreover, by 1990s radical groups settled in some parts of CA were actively supporting their members in Xinjiang through ideological literatures and financial resources that were delivered from countries abroad. During his visit to Xinjiang in 1990, Jiang Zemin warned about external threats to region’s stability and stated “stability and calm in Xinjiang will have a decisive influence on the stability of entire nation” (as cited in Fravel 2008, p.155). In

terms of external support, Turkey was considered as one of the most important centers for Uighur diaspora and source of funding for separatist activities in Xinjiang (Eivazov, 2010). World Uighur Congress, after its meeting held in Istanbul in December 1992, decided to provide East Turkestan Movement (ETM) with arms, as well. The considerable portion of arms transit came through the territory of CA republics (Paramanov et al, 2008). Therefore, maintaining stability in Xinjiang and settlement of border issues with states in CA were primary concerns for China.

#### **4.2.2. Territorial and border disputes settlement.**

Decisions between China and its CA neighbors over territorial disputes were made through bilateral meetings. At the working level, sides used joint delegations format, which included Russian representatives, too. The reason for that was that the Russian troops were still allocated along borders in CA and Russian experts possessed expertise and historical knowledge on current borders, which historically were part of Sino-Soviet borderlands (Zhao, 2007; Fravel, 2008).

In case of negotiations over border security and acceptable demarcation lines between China and its neighbors in CA (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan), Beijing adhered flexible positions, notably with Tajikistan. Border negotiations between China and Tajikistan included three disputed sectors, the longest of which along with the Pamir Mountains. Then ongoing then civil war in Tajikistan postponed first negotiations until 1997. Talks over the status of Pamir Mountains on Sino-Tajik border ended as the two neighbors signed a bilateral

agreement in 2002. According to this agreement, Tajikistan ceded 1000 square kilometers (sq.km.) (Dwivedi 2006, p.147), while Beijing agreed on significant concessions and accepted to keep only 4 percent of more than 28,000 sq.km of disputed area (Lanteigne 2010, p.168; Fravel 2008, p.164-166). At the same time, the two assured to support each other against national splitters and religious extremism.

Between China and Kazakhstan, there were approximately 2,240 sq.km. of disputed territory. The fact that Kazakhstan is China's most Uighur populated neighbor and has 1,740 sq.km long borderline with Xinjiang was critical for Beijing to secure its Western province. The two sides fully resolved all disputes by signing three boundary agreements. In addition to border settlements, both states claimed strong support to each other and accepted mutual measures against the spread of separatists and radical groups. In general, China made considerable concessions and received only approximately 34 percent of the claimed land (Fravel 2008, p.160-163).

Disputed area between China and Kyrgyzstan included 3,656 sq.km, with the majority being under the latter's control. First boundary agreement of 1996 resolved six out of seven disputed sectors. Additional boundary agreement signed in August 1999 settled the last sector of dispute. As in the case with Kazakhstan, here too, China decided to compromise, and received only about 1,208 sq.km or 32 percent of all claimed land (Fravel 2008, p.163-164). These examples explain China's flexibility on trading its concessions over border disputes. It has been Beijing's direct strategy to make concessions in exchange for the acceptance of

China's demands by its neighbors in CA. In doing so China sought to prevent the spread of radical groups and limit external support for separatists in Xinjiang from the territories of neighboring countries (Fravel 2008, p.151; Swanström 2011, p.6). Leadership in Beijing believed that internal threat of separatism and the need to integrate weak economy of Xinjiang as the central part of Eurasia outweighs the value of contested land.

To facilitate further border talks, the members of joint delegation sought to institutionalize their meetings. The idea came to power during the meeting in Shanghai, where China's neighbors in CA, in part to suppress region's own separatist sentiments, showed their renewed support for Chinese policies in Xinjiang (Sheives, 2006). In April 1996 China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed the Treaty on deepening military trust in border regions. This treaty established "Shanghai Five" group. The "Shanghai Five" agreement was significant to loosen military posture along the borders and to resolve pending disagreements between members (Sheives, 2006). In addition, the agreement opened the door for China's multilateral engagement in CA (Zhao, 2016). Soon after, based on "Shanghai Five" treaty, members established Mutual Military Confidence-Building Measures (MMCBM), which prohibited provocative military exercises along borders. The members agreed on strategic-information sharing and intensifying military contacts. These two agreements are of key significance in guaranteeing security of 7,300 km. long borders between China, Russia and the CA states. Moreover, these agreements enabled China to focus more on economic cooperation (Zhao, 2007).

In 1999, the five countries established a joint verification team to observe force reductions along the borders and to monitor confidence-building relations. This group promoted further bilateral Sino-Russian military contacts, including inspections and Beijing's arm purchases from Russia. These Sino-Russian accords provided mutually beneficial effects such as minimizing pressures on their long-disputed borders and enhancing both states' diplomatic and persuasive influence in CA (Lanteigne, 2010). Next section discusses initial economic relations between China and CA.

#### **4.2.3. Economic cooperation.**

Prior to the dismemberment of Soviet Union, the trade relations between Chinese border provinces and Soviet republics in CA were nonexistent due to the strict control over Sino-Soviet borders. Although there were some tentative trade agreements between China's XUAR and Soviet republics in CA, no single trade route between them was established; the inhabitants of borders towns who wanted to cross the borders were required special permits and were objected to strong controls; both Russian and Chinese administrations regarded them as disloyal (Peyrouse, 2007). During the era of Mao, government considered Xinjiang as an impediment to Beijing's integration objectives. On the one hand, it was due to Xinjiang's remoteness from Chinese heartland. On the other hand, it was because of historical and cultural proximity that linked Uighurs in Xinjiang and other Muslims in CA. Therefore, Mao's government sought to integrate Xinjiang by isolating it from economic and cultural relationships with CA (Clarke, 2010b).

In contrast to his predecessor's policy, Deng initiated "reforms and opening up policy" and Xinjiang no longer was an obstacle to integration, rather the province became an important instrument to achieve it (Clarke, 2010b). In 1992, Xinjiang was included in China's "opening up" national campaign. The same year China and Kazakhstan established a border post that facilitated relations for traders. Cross-border trade with cheap consumer goods became a primordial cooperation with neighboring countries and shuttle trade turned to a source of income for Chinese Uighurs. By 1995, the overall trade volume between China and CA states accounted approximately \$490 million (Paramonov et al 2008, p.45). By providing more economic incentives to local ethnic people, Beijing sought to sustain its control over borderlands occupied by ethnic minorities, over whom no Chinese empire had direct control in the past. At the same time, by providing more economic incentives, Beijing wanted to improve relations between Han and non-Han people (Fravel 2008, p.6, p.157). In Xinjiang, for instance, Beijing's pursuit for the policy of integration aims not only to incorporate region's non-Han people into the "unitary, multi-ethnic" Chinese state, but also drives Chinese policy for broader involvement in CA (Clarke, 2010b). Mutual visa exemption at that time was another factor that intensified the border trade and alleviated travels for traders. During economic difficulties triggered by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, cheap consumer goods from China became the main source for daily consumption in CA. Such massive spread of cheap goods in CA provided unexpected political effects and later would become a sign of China's presence in CA (Zhao, 2007). Although by early 1990s

China did not have any coherent economic policy towards CA, Beijing's primary goal at the long-term would be to transform Xinjiang into a "Eurasian Continental Bridge" by promoting economic cooperation with neighboring countries, investing in infrastructure projects and fully developing region's capabilities (Clarke 2010, p.137).

In resolving the disputes, despite its relatively strong position comparing to those of newly emerged republics in CA, China adhered cooperative and flexible stance, rather than strict behavior. In exchange for such cooperative stance, China sought assurance that its neighbors would fight against radicals who supported rebellions in Xinjiang. More importantly, China and its CA neighbors reached several important agreements that prohibited the provocative employment of troops along their mutual borderlines. The countries established grouping that monitored the implementation of agreements thereby enhancing mutual trust between signatories. In terms of economic cooperation, although between China and CA there were no trade patterns during Sino-Soviet relations, China was able establish trade relations with new states in CA. Eventually, cheap consumer goods turned the source of income for Chinese Uighurs, who benefited shuttle trade between Xinjiang and CA.

#### **4.3. Second phase (1997-2001)**

Despite notable achievements in border issues settlement, China continued to take further steps in security management in CA. Within this period, China took leadership in establishing regional institution to fight against "three evils". In addition to security measures, China became a major player in economic relations.

This section turns to the discussion of China's policy to fulfill above-mentioned steps.

In the second half of 1990s, there were two major impacts on China's foreign policy shift. The first was threat of increasing terrorism to China's Western borders from CA, where weak regional states were facing increased activity of religious extremist and terrorist organizations. Particular concern for Beijing was the growth of Uighur separatism. Uighur extremist structures became broader; they were establishing links with Al-Qaeda and receiving support from radicals in CA (Müllerson, 2013). Second factor was energy resources. Gas and oil reserves confirmed in the Caspian Sea and CA increased the value of the region in terms of energy cooperation. Given the growing needs of the Chinese economy for raw materials, Beijing sought to diversify its energy supplies from CA. Moreover, China hoped to implement the national program stimulating economic growth of Western regions and CA would become attractive market for Chinese products.

#### **4.3.1. Security cooperation.**

Although cooperation over borders demilitarization and confidence-building mechanisms were successful, Afghanistan, where Taliban forces began to export extremist ideologies throughout the region, was another threat in the region (Lanteigne, 2010). Additionally, Beijing was aware about growing linkages between Uighur separatists and other radical groups within the region of CA (Swanström, 2011). For instance, vice-premier of State Council of China in November 2000 stated that around one thousand Chinese Muslims were trained in

Al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan and Pakistan. After returning to Xinjiang, they were engaged in rebellions against Chinese authorities, as well as acted as instructors in training camps created in remote areas of China (Eivazov, 2010).

Furthermore, during 1996-2000 CA became home to various extremist groups such as Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Islamic Party of Turkestan (IPT) and Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HuT). After series of bombings by these groups in Uzbekistan in February 1999, invasions into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in August 1999, August 2000 and July 2001, the waves of violence moved to China's Xinjiang. The members of IMU and HuT claimed their objective to topple the secular regimes and to establish an Islamic Caliphate in CA that would include Xinjiang, too (Dwivedi, 2006). The incidents in CA followed by unrest and violations in neighboring Xinjiang. Although Chinese government blamed "hostile foreign forces" in destabilizing China's borders, series of uprisings and bombings in Xinjiang were partly the results of domestic problems related to "Strike hard" government campaign launched in 1996. The campaign's primary goal was to fight against "illegal religious activities". It also supported migration of Han Chinese into Xinjiang and increased control over free religious and cultural expressions of minorities and caused massive arrests of suspected separatists (Clarke, 2010; Fravel 2008). Beijing's efforts to assimilate Han and non-Han people focused on the policy of "the three inseparable ties" which meant "the Han Chinese cannot live without the minority groups, that the minority groups cannot live without the Han Chinese, and that no one minority group can live without the other minority groups" (as cited in Cooley 2012, p.76).

Meanwhile, Russia's Chechnya also became space for separatist and extremist groups that had loose alliance with Afghan Taliban and radicals in CA (Trenin, 2007). To legitimize its actions in Chechen War, Moscow was seeking cooperation from republics in CA in exchange for Kremlin's backing of their struggle against Islamists in the region (Laruelle, 2008).

In 1998, members of "Shanghai Five" and Uzbekistan as an observer in this group, for the first time released joint statement and claimed that none of them would allow to use their territories for actions to damage the sovereignty, security and social order of another member (Zhao 2007, p.141). However, notwithstanding mutual efforts, Uighur radicals organized series of assassinations in Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000 that killed some Chinese officials and Han people (Clarke, 2010). These incidents urged China to demand even closer security cooperation between members to fight against what Beijing called "three evils" (terrorism, separatism and extremism). In June 2001, "Shanghai Five" welcomed Uzbekistan as a member, and the group established Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). By China's insistence, combatting against "three evils" became the core language of SCO's Convention. Thus, SCO became the first institution originally initiated by China.

The establishment of the SCO symbolized reconsideration of Chinese interests in CA. The organization provides "a security guarantee, an institutional channel that enables China to participate in Central Asian affairs, and a general platform for cooperation between China and this region" (Zhao 2007, p.161). By taking active role in the formation of SCO, Beijing sought to show embrace for

multilateralism and to create an image of China as an actor that must be represented in institutions of regional and global importance. By adhering to a multilateral approach, Beijing hoped to accrue the reputation of actor with responsible behavior that would help to mitigate growing concerns of “China threat” (Goldstein 2005, p.119-121). At the same time, the SCO would enable Beijing to have its voice in Central Asian relations without opposing Russia and threatening states in CA (Scobel, Ratner & Beckley 2014). In sum, these foreign policy objectives are core elements of China’s grand strategy, which has two components: one is maintaining partnership with major powers, second is alleviating other states’ concerns about China’s growing capabilities.

For Russia, the SCO became a regional foundation that facilitated Moscow’s return to Central Asian affairs (Clarke, 2010). Russia’s presence in the SCO enabled Moscow to keep a watchful eye and monitor Beijing’s intentions in the region (Swanström, 2011; 2014). Moreover, the SCO created a platform for China to back Moscow in Chechen campaign, while Moscow and CA could show their solidarity with Beijing’s policies in Xinjiang and Taiwan (Laruelle, 2008).

Some analysts argue that despite achievements of more economic strength and integration into global economy during 1990s and 2000s, China does not feel more confident and secure. Rather such progress increases the sense of vulnerability and raises concerns in Beijing to protect trade routes and secure the access for energy deposits. China’s remarkable economic growth triggered disparity in wealth between its eastern and western provinces, making western parts more prone to internal and external threats. To overcome these issues,

according to analysts, China successfully employs framework of the SCO and pursues the so-called “Empty Fortress” strategy. This strategy refers to China’s efforts “to skillfully project an image of great strength and outward confidence to mask extreme weakness and inner insecurity” (Scobel, Ratner & Beckley 2014, p.48)

The significance of SCO for CA was twofold. First, as official documents and statements indicate, the organization emphasizes non-interference in members’ domestic affairs. These features made SCO more preferable compared to Western institutions. Western institutions were less attractive because of their requirements to adhere human rights. Second, the SCO offered support to resist the US-hegemony in CA. Through SCO members pushed Washington to withdraw its military bases, that initially were welcomed in 2001 under Global War on Terror (GWOT) to topple Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

The next part explains China’s achievements in building economic cooperation with CA.

#### **4.3.2. Economic cooperation.**

As Chinese engagement in CA within security issues steadily improved, so did its economic relations with CA. In 1999 Chinese government initiated “Great Western Development” (GWD) campaign and Xinjiang became the part of program. In addition, Beijing expected that promoting economic development in Xinjiang with simultaneously tightening economic cooperation with CA would help to avoid social destabilization in its periphery and potential political tensions with CA (Peyrouse 2009, p.3-7). Aforementioned campaign, as Jiang Zemin once

noted “presented a long-term development strategy to maintain unity of ethnic groups, national unification and social stability” (as cited in Fravel 2008, p.157). Under this program, during 2000-2005, Beijing poured more than \$48 billion into Western provinces, including \$8 billion to improve infrastructure in Xinjiang. Moreover, under this campaign millions of Han people migrated to Western peripheries (Peyrouse 2007, p.17). In contrast to the initial stages of cooperation when Uighurs dominated shuttle trade with neighboring countries, during the second phase Muslim minorities had no longer leadership in trading with CA. In trade relationships, Uighurs were replaced by Han people, who moved from Zhejiang province, notably from city of Wenzhou, which is famous for export-import activities. For instance, by early 2000s in Xinjiang, there were 80,000 traders from Wenzhou, and almost half of them were involved in trade with CA (Raballand & Andréy 2007, p.245). By balancing the role of Uighurs in trading with CA, Beijing wanted to prevent these relations to reinforce political and cultural links between Muslim minorities of Xinjiang and those of CA (Peyrouse, 2007).

Beijing’s “Great Western Development” campaign played crucial role in interconnecting economies of Xinjiang and CA. Under this program, Chinese central government provided Western provinces with the same preferences and privileges as those of coastal areas. These incentives led to the boom in trade with China and CA. Particularly, trade volume increased from \$465 million in 1992 to \$7,7 billion by the end of 2005, and 80 percent of total turnover was conducted through Xinjiang. To facilitate trade further, Xinjiang administration established

17 special zones and 3 free trade zones. Along borders in Xinjiang, China and its Central Asian neighbors established 12 border posts that facilitated trade activities. Moreover, under the framework of SCO, Beijing announced the allocation of \$900 million in preferential loans for countries in CA to improve their infrastructures (Swanström 2007, Medeiros 2009).

Since China's joining World Trade Organization (WTO) in December 2001, Kyrgyzstan enjoyed trade with Xinjiang and became specialized in re-exporting of Chinese goods. Kyrgyz government established two regional trade centers (Dordoi and Karasuu), and about 75 percent of all imported Chinese goods were re-exported to other parts of CA (Peyrouse 2007, p.27-29).

Trade relations between China and CA witnessed further boom. By 2011, trade with China reached almost \$30 billion and surpassed CA's traditional trade partner - Russia, whose trade turnover with CA was approximately \$27 billion by the same year. By 2013, China-CA trade turnover accounted \$50 billion (Cooley, 2015). Although trade with CA constitutes slightly more than 1 percent of China's overall trade, for China this region is nationally important as the primary source of Xinjiang's development (Zhao, 2016).

Although mutual trade witnessed significant growth, overall trade between China and CA is hardly diversified. For instance, in 2004 overall China-CA trade accounted approximately \$5,9 billion, and around 75 percent of this volume constituted trade with Kazakhstan only (Raballand & Andrésy 2007, p.250). With closer examination, it becomes clear that the structure of China-CA trade is also not diversified. For example, 85 percent of overall Chinese exports to CA consist

of cheap manufacture goods, whereas 85 percent of CA exports to China is comprised of raw materials (Clarke, 2010).

In general, within this period the establishment of the SCO has become a major shift in China's CA policy, which initially was concentrated on border disputes. By actively promoting this institution, Beijing expanded and institutionalized its involvement in CA affairs. Within the SCO Beijing sought to alleviate rising concerns about its growing ambitions. Moreover, the SCO became an institution where China and other members backed each other in fighting against "three evils". In addition to the institutional cooperation, Chinese government actively supported domestic investment in Xinjiang, which encouraged trade with CA and eventually turned China into the main trade partner of the region.

#### **4.4. Third phase (2001 to present)**

This section examines how US presence in CA since the launch of Global War on Terror (GWOT) altered Chinese interests in the region. Then it explains China's energy policy and Beijing's role as the provider of "public goods". The section also briefly explains China's engagement in Afghanistan, as well as Beijing's latest initiative to establish a ground route that aims to link China's Western periphery and Europe through CA.

In the case of China, the presence of US bases in Uzbekistan (Khanabad K-2 airbase) and Kyrgyzstan (Manas airbase) made Beijing feel uncomfortable, as Washington became "main power broker in Beijing's strategic backyard". Such a feeling was also exacerbated by the fact that US established patron-client with

Pakistan, which is China's partner. In addition, Washington was seeking strategic partnership with Beijing's competitor - India (Rumer 2007, p.45). Washington's role as new security manager in CA marginalized growing ambitions of Beijing in this region and the impact of US-led war on terror triggered Beijing's perceptions that Washington was seeking a strategy of "encirclement" of China (Rumer 2007; Clarke 2010). These perceptions interconnected with Beijing's goal to integrate Xinjiang through economic and infrastructural links with Eurasian continent as the component of "peaceful rise" strategy. In Beijing, there was a fear in strategic realm too. If tensions between Beijing and Washington over Taiwan dramatically increase simultaneously with major problem in CA, in the worst case China would find itself in two fronts (Zhao, 2007).

#### **4.4.1. Security cooperation.**

To the decision to establish US military bases in CA, Beijing's official reaction was uncertain. There were three reasons why Beijing stayed silent to this question. First reason is that Chinese policy about the presence of US in CA is not clear. For China it became difficult to formulate its vision on Washington's precise role in CA, especially towards China itself (Zhao, 2007). Second reason lies in the difficulty to formulate a common China-CA approach towards US role in the region. While CA wants to benefit from closer relations with Washington in terms of receiving economic and military assistance, as well as ensuring regional and domestic security, it is not in Beijing's interests to have US troops in China's rear. Therefore, it became complicated for Beijing to formulate a policy on the role of US considering its own interests and those of CA simultaneously (Zhao,

2007). Third factor is in the contradictory nature of interests of both China and the US. They seem to share common interests in non-traditional security that is cooperating and fighting against global terrorism, as well as in CA. In this sense military presence of the US in CA might be reasonable (Zhao, 2007). On the other hand, such a presence contradicts with Chinese long-term interests and it triggers concerns of Beijing in terms of traditional security. In case of intensification of issue over Taiwan, Chinese feared that Washington's military presence in CA could become permanent and would certainly deter Beijing. In addition, there were concerns, that US could use its presence to destabilize Xinjiang and cut off Beijing's energy supplies from CA (Cooley, 2012).

Yet, China received undeniable benefits from US-led anti-terror campaign in CA. The campaign provided Beijing with opportunity to expand security operations against separatists in Xinjiang and Beijing employed norms of GWOT to frame its own campaign in Xinjiang. According to the report published by Chinese government in 2002, Beijing blamed Al-Qaeda in supporting Uighur separatists in anti-state activities and claimed that ETM was responsible for over 200 terrorist incidents in Xinjiang, killing 162 people of all ethnic groups (Dwivedi 2006, p.143). In 2002 Washington supported Beijing in the UN to list ETM as an international terrorist organization and Uighur separatism, which was China's domestic issue, thus became priority of GWOT (Cooley, 2012).

#### **4.4.2. China's engagement in Afghanistan.**

Meantime, Beijing's contributions to anti-Taliban campaign in Afghanistan were limited. For instance, Beijing rejected Washington's 2009 proposal to

establish supplementary logistic route to Southern Distribution Network that would transit non-lethal military supplies to Afghanistan through China's Xinjiang and connect it to Northern Distribution Network. In addition, it was in China's interest to limit its engagement in campaign, otherwise for Afghan and other leaders Beijing would appear as plotting with the US in the occupation of Afghanistan (Scobel, Ratner & Beckley, 2014). In addition, in Beijing there was a conviction that by participating in US-led campaign would turn China into a greater target for extremists (Zimmerman, 2015). Instead, China preferred bilateral relations with government in Kabul in terms of investment. In words of Chinese foreign minister, China believes that "the peace and stability of Afghanistan has an impact on the security of western China, and more importantly, it affects the tranquility and development of the entire region" (as cited in Zimmerman 2015, p.13-14). For example, as of 2008, China invested \$3 billion in copper mines in Afghanistan's Logar province and there were 33 Beijing-sponsored infrastructure projects with total value of \$480 million (Swanström 2011, p.44). Moreover, Beijing has been active in working with post-Taliban government. Upon the request of Afghan government, China has been assertive to use its influence over Pakistan to bring Taliban to the negotiations and facilitated trilateral dialogues of US, Pakistan and Afghanistan. In 2014, Beijing pledged to provide Kabul with assistance of \$327 million, as well as investment and training of 3,000 Afghan officials for coming five years (Zimmerman, 2015).

#### **4.4.3. Impacts of “color revolutions”.**

Series “color revolutions” in Eurasian continent (Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan) brought new geopolitical changes into region. The “tulip revolution” in Kyrgyzstan (March 2005) and Andijan rebellion in Uzbekistan (May 2005) broke US-CA relations. Local governments claimed that Western states under rhetoric of promoting democracy, were supporting anti-government and illegal forces to overthrow secular regimes in CA. Chinese argued that the presence of US forces and NGOs could be used to move those revolutions into China’s Muslim-populated Xinjiang (Medeiros, 2009). Washington’s desire to advance democracy and regime changes in CA turned into powerful shocks and had opposite effects (Rumer, 2007). As Walt simply put it “if the effort to penetrate is viewed by the target state as subversive or illegitimate, it is likely to react by moving away from the state seeking to enhance its influence and the penetration will therefore be counterproductive (Walt 1985, p.31).

Both Russia and China had fears that anti-government movements would spread into their territories and they supported Uzbek government to fight against “three evils” and suppress the riot in Andijan. Dramatic changes in US-CA relationships came to favor of both Beijing and Moscow, as they were seeking to counter Washington’s excessive influence in CA. In the SCO’s 2005 Astana summit, member states made joint statement and called Washington to set a timetable to withdraw its military bases from CA. It was an indication that Russia and China have considerable voices against US hegemony, while local countries

demonstrated that they appreciate Beijing and Moscow (Rumer, 2007). American troops vacated bases in Uzbekistan in November 2005 and in Kyrgyzstan in 2013.

#### **4.4.4. Energy policy.**

This section explains China's energy diplomacy in CA.

Two basic issues define China's energy security: volatilities in energy prices and security of stable energy supplies. China is insecure in both aspects and these feelings are shaping its overall diplomacy (Medeiros, 2009). Rich energy deposits of CA and access to these resources have been another priority for Beijing's strategy in the region. In 2008, China imported about 45 percent of its crude from Middle East and 22 percent from Africa (Medeiros, 2009). These regions are considered as politically unstable, while transportation routes are long-distance and subject for accidental and deliberate risks, and therefore it is important for Beijing to prevent disruptions by diversifying its supplies. Geographical proximity and current oil and gas reserves of CA, which make 8 percent and 4.3 percent of world reserves respectively, offer Beijing stable and secure supplies (Cabestan, 2011). By having access to hydrocarbons of CA through direct ground pipelines, Beijing also wants to reduce its dependence on sea routes, for instance Malacca Straits, through which China transports almost 60 percent of its oil supplies (Peyrouse, 2007). Construction of land-based oil and gas pipelines from CA would reduce China's dependence on international tanker companies, which ship 90 percent of China's oil supplies (Medeiros, 2009). All these factors explain CA's strategic importance for Chinese energy security.

Beijing's engagement in hydrocarbons of CA began with the purchase of Kazakh Aktyubinsk Oil and Gas Company by Chinese National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) in 1997. Next major purchase occurred in 2005, when CNPC fully purchased a second major oil company in the region - PetroKazakh, by investing \$4,18 billion. This investment is China's largest overseas energy investment (Zhao 2007, p.166-168). This purchase assured Chinese control over 12 percent of Kazakhstan's total oil production (Cooley 2012, p.91).

Currently two major pipelines deliver oil and gas from CA to China. One of them is China-Kazakhstan oil pipeline. With the total cost of \$700 million and length about 3,000 kilometers (about 2,818 kilometers run in Kazakhstan and about 270 kilometers in China), pipeline came to full operation in 2011 and mainly ships Kazakhstan's Caspian oil to Xinjiang. At the same time, this pipeline links Kazakhstan's another continental oil fields that are purchased and exploited by Chinese oil companies. The pipeline with the current capacity ships 20 million tons of oil annually, however its potential could be doubled by 40 million tons per year, which may secure about 8-10 percent of China's total oil imports (Laruelle & Peyrouse 2009, p.45). According to the latest estimates, China's stake in Kazakhstan's total oil production reached 21 percent and surpassed by 2.5 times that of Russia, which has been considered as traditional owner of oil fields in Kazakhstan (Kim & Blank, 2013). In 2013 Kazakhstan supplied 11.98 million tons of oil or 4.2 percent of 282,1 million tons China's total oil imports that year (Zhao 2016, p.179).

Second major source of China's energy supply is China-Central Asia gas pipeline, which was completed in 2012. With total cost of \$7,31 billion, this pipeline connects three countries – Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan (lines A, B and C respectively) and finally joins into China's West-East pipeline network. This pipeline has been successful for China, as Beijing convinced these states to sell gas jointly, without constructing separate lines from each country (Laruelle & Peyrouse, 2009). The line with 180 kilometers length starts in Turkmenistan, then follows Uzbekistan's 500 kilometer part which links to Kazakhstan's line of 1,300 kilometers length. By the end of 2015, the pipeline was expected to deliver 55 bcm of gas or 20 percent of China's annual gas consumption. An additional "D" part is under construction. It will transit additional 30 bcm gas to China through Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan simultaneously providing the latter with Turkmen gas. Such arrangement makes CNPC both regional distributor and exporter of Central Asian gas (Cooley 2015, p.2-3). Currently Turkmenistan is China's largest gas exporter and supplies 46 percent of total Chinese gas imports (Zhao 2016, p.179). Beijing's aggressive entry into energy market of CA effectively broke the Russian monopoly over transportation and offered additional market for local countries to diversify their energy exports.

As argument goes, economic diplomacy is one of the Chinese statecraft tools, which fosters China's diplomatic goals by using trade, investment and notable financial instruments (Medeiros, 2009). Among the latter there are some dimensions such as outward direct investment and foreign aid. In this sense

Beijing has effectively positioned itself as source of investment (mostly in energy sector and infrastructure) and financial aid for CA. For Kazakhstan, China has become fourth largest lender after the Netherlands, the US and the UK. Chinese investment in Kazakh economy increased from \$4 billion in 2008 to \$7,9 billion in 2009, and the figure is expected to reach \$20 billion in few years (Kim & Blank, 2013). Beijing was active in providing financial aid too. In 2009 China's Export-Import Bank lent Kazakh state-owned Development Bank \$5 billion. The same year, Kazakh state gas company Kazmunaigas received a \$5-billion loan from CNPC (Kim & Blank 2013, p.783). During 2008-2009 financial crisis due to the financial shortages Turkmenistan faced financial problems to construct its part of the pipeline. Beijing was quick to provide financial resources and Turkmenistan received two emergency loans from China's Export-Import Bank with the total amount of \$8 billion (Cooley 2015, p.3). Currently China is the biggest creditor of Tajikistan. As of 2015 Beijing's share in aid-dependent Tajikistan's external debt constituted 43 percent (\$ 0,9. billion). Moreover, in 2014 China pledged to allocate a \$6-billion investment during next three years, the number which equals to two-thirds of Tajikistan's annual GDP and 40 times more than annual inflow of foreign direct investment into the country's economy. Moreover, \$ 1,2 billion or 35 percent of Kyrgyzstan's external debt also belongs to China (Farchy, 2015). By the end of 2015, Chinese loans in Central Asian economies totaled \$30 billion; Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are the biggest receivers, with the share of 43 and 40 percent, respectively (Mordvinova, 2016).

#### **4.4.5. Silk Road initiative.**

Another importance of CA for Beijing is that the region offers a supplementary trade route Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) that is component of China's grand initiative One Road One Belt (OBOR). During his visit to Kazakhstan in September 2013, president Xi introduced SREB for the first time. The route will link China's Western peripheries through CA, West Asia and Middle East to Europe. The project comprises railway networks within the continent. Another component of OBOR is 21st century Maritime Silk Road (MSR), which was announced by Chinese president in October 2013. The project is designed to boost investment and collaboration between China, ASEAN countries, Oceania and North Africa through maritime route in Indian Ocean, South Pacific Ocean and South China Sea. To realize the OBOR strategy Beijing launched institutions that will finance these projects. \$40 billion Silk Road Fund and \$100 billion Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) are major providers of funds for building infrastructures along with SREB and MSR routes. In addition to financial resources, Beijing announced the establishment of think-tank to study OBOR initiative. The institution, which is co-funded by China Development Bank, Tsinghua University and the Silk Road Fund, will take a role in strategic research and preparing suggestions for policy-making.

With the announcement of the SREB, analysts expected that Beijing's initiative would undermine Moscow-led EEU, which is projected to foster integration in CA (Blank, 2015). They also predicted that both Beijing and Moscow would oppose each other and find themselves in strict tensions in CA.

Scholars argued that Moscow's EEU is much more politically oriented and designed to create political and economic association with Moscow in center. EEU would serve Kremlin's aim to create "Eurasian pole" as the balance against Western hegemony in a multipolar world (Mankoff, 2015). Yet, China's SREB focuses on creating trade and transit routes which would facilitate Chinese exports to Middle East and European markets. In contrast, Beijing's idea is designed to link CA with global economy and not to isolate it around China's orbit only (Mankoff, 2015). Beijing itself had a concern that Moscow, uneasy about its own diminishing status in CA, would consider Beijing's intentions as encroachment into Moscow's spheres of influence and therefore would push CA states to reject SREB (Gabuev, 2015).

Yet, there were some skeptical views about success of SREB initiative. Although these views do not doubt its significance for CA given region's needs for vast investment, they argued about two main obstacles for the project. The first is that Russia's participation in Chinese initiative would demand Moscow to resign itself as "junior brother" vis-à-vis Beijing that seemed not acceptable for Moscow (Blank, 2015). However, it seems that such a factor is no longer justified. Moscow was able to convince Beijing not to advance its project relying on bilateral relations with CA, which would undermine Moscow's stand in the region. Instead, Kremlin proposed its own project as a ground for cooperation, which would ensure Kremlin's voice in Chinese initiatives in CA. Another reason is the lack of integrity among Han people and Muslim minorities in China itself. Any destabilization in Xinjiang that is considered as "Eurasian Continental

Bridge”, not only undermines the project, but also might destabilize CA itself (Blank, 2015). However, Beijing was surprised, as Russia did not regard the initiative as a threat, rather acknowledged it as an opportunity to foster integration with EEU. During Xi’s visit to Moscow in May 2015, Chinese and Russian leaders announced about cooperation between SREB and EEU; they also claimed that Russia and China would collaborate in creating “Eurasian common economic space”. In short, it appears that both China and Russia need stable and peaceful CA, therefore they are seeking to reach a “labor division” in this region. Moscow, with its closer relationships with CA in security and military spheres, seems to remain hard security guarantor. On the other side, China with its abundant financial resources and stronger economic ties with CA will hold the role of main driver for economic development in the region.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

China was not among the participants of old “Great Game” in CA during 19th century. Now China is one of the key partners of CA. China’s engagement in the region has shifted several phases. China was able to resolve all border issues with post-soviet states after the collapse of Soviet Union. China received assurances of cooperation in securing its Muslim-populated Xinjiang province, combatting against “three evils” and establishing a multilateral institution. China has become major player in Central Asian market of hydrocarbons. In addition, China is the largest trade partner of Central Asia. Chinese government has effectively linked economies of Western peripheries with Eurasian continent.

In regards to the SREB, the latest Chinese initiative, which includes CA, several objectives of the project have links to China's grand strategy. First is economic components and possibility of removing excessive industrial capacities to the neighboring regions. This would bring more opportunities of development for neighbors thereby assuring these countries that China's growth is opportunity, rather than threat. Second explanation is Beijing's aim to reduce its reliance on maritime trade routes. Washington's "rebalance" strategy towards Asia made Chinese policy-makers worry about Washington's ambitions to contain China's growing. In the case of conflict in the South China Sea, China will need alternative ground routes to maintain its trade relations. Currently, China conducts trade with Europe (its largest trade partner) through a 26,000-kilometer sea route, which takes about 45 days. Alternative route through CA would decrease distance to 6,379 kilometers and delivery time to 11 days, saving approximately 30 percent of transportation cost (Swaström 2014, p.8). Finally, third objective is diplomatic. The project implies to Chinese soft power through investment to improve infrastructures and commerce along with the route. Through this opportunity, Beijing seeks to alleviate growing concerns about Chinese ambitions. This is especially important for CA, contiguous to the restless Xinjiang. It is in China's interest that better multilateral relationships would secure its own borders and will ensure success of its ongoing domestic reforms. Beijing's diplomacy in CA primarily rests on economic cooperation, as it seeks stability through economic development and gain access to critical energy resources. Economic diplomacy of China would rather contribute an international image of Beijing as a benign

neighbor, who focuses merely on providing security and stability in CA. As discussed in the theoretical part, a state designs grand strategy to develop its long-term objectives by using its military and non-military capabilities. Ultimately, grand strategy ensures the realization of state's national interest given both domestic and international constraints. China, a potential major power, faces opposition from some actors, who perceive China's growth as a threat to their security. At the same time, China engages with other major powers and demonstrates that China is essential participant of multipolar international system. The study of China's grand strategy demonstrates that China advances its interests in CA region without deteriorating its relations with Russia, a former hegemon in CA, who has its own ambitions in this region. Meantime, China has already turned into a public goods provider for some countries in CA, thereby promoting its interests mostly through economic diplomacy.

## CONCLUSION

This research has explained Central Asian policy of two countries - Russia and China, through national identity and grand strategy approaches.

In case of Russia, the paper found that the main driving force of Russia's foreign policy in CA is Russian national identity. There are three traditions of Russian foreign policy, and each of them has presented Russia's national identity in distinct ways. The identity of Europeanness considers Russia as the part of Western community and wants Russia to integrate with Western values. The identity of Eurasianism views Russia foremost as great power in Eurasian continent, and strives for Western recognition in terms of power balance in Eurasia. Finally, Slavic identity considers Western community as hostile to Russian interests and wants Russia to create union with Belarus and Ukraine on the basis of Slavic values. At times when Russia finds its co-operative stance ignored by Western community, such tendency results perception of hostility, which leads Russia to aggressive semi-isolation stance towards the West. In such case, the feeling of "great powerness" which is central idea of Russia's Eurasianism identity shapes Russia's foreign policy. In this context, CA provides Russia with the space where it can satisfy the need to restore its "great powerness" and to realize the capability of power projection. By doing so Russia shows the status of great power, which in Russia's view should be recognized by Western community and ultimately wishes to shape international order equally with Western powers.

Perception of Russian identity – Slavic, European, Eurasian - have been central question to the debate about Russia's role in post-Cold War period,

whether it should rebuild itself as a “modern” power or continue to emphasize its traditional advantage of military power and improve its international influence. Such multiplicity of views explains failures in foreign policy during the first post-Soviet decade. Such issues had especially strong impacts on balance between policy in post-Soviet space and the priority of integration with the Western community. During the whole post-Soviet period Russian policy towards Central Asia has been paradoxical. Yeltsin’s Russia sought to distance itself from CA (observed in early 1990s). Once Moscow realized failures of Westernism foreign policy, Russia decided to regain its lost influence by promoting active integration process with post-Soviet states, including CA (as observed during late 1990s). This process, however, was overly concentrated on security issues and became too costly for Russia, which already was in deep economic crisis. By early 2000s as Putin assumed power in Russia, its foreign policy in CA became more coherent and attained pragmatic approach. In CA Putin’s foreign policy was successful in terms of establishing common economic and common security spaces, which enables Moscow to reassert its regional primacy and more importantly, to fulfil the sense of “great powerness”.

Moscow’s bilateral relations with Washington have affected Russian foreign policy in CA too. Russia’s efforts to transcend its influence and leverage in CA to closer cooperation with Western community had short-time success. This success allowed Moscow to have a common agenda to fight against global terror. However, when Moscow realized that its role had not met assumed recognition as Washington started dealing with regional states ignoring Moscow’s mediation,

Russia tried to compensate these losses by showing capabilities of power projection in CA. Such reaction from the West came as challenge to Russian Self. Deterioration of relations with the US after “color revolutions” had impacts on Moscow’s perception that relations in CA were geopolitically intensified.

Yet, it is not to say that Russia’s foreign policy in CA is driven only by its identity and free of other interests. Security, economic and energy interests also drive Moscow’s policy in the region. Security concerns implies Russia to prevent the spread of religious radicalism to its Muslim populated regions. In the sphere of energy, Russia wants to prevent the construction of pipelines that would bypass Russian territory and eventually link region’s hydrocarbons to European continent. In Moscow’s view, this would undermine its role in the region as well as its relative role as hegemon gas supplier to Europe. In terms of economic interests, it seems that Russia accepts its weaker position compared to China, and relies mostly on its “hard power” rather than economic capabilities. After 2000s, Russia was able to regain its hitherto lost influence in the region and established its own institutions like CSTO and EEU. Both institutions give Moscow an opportunity to present itself as a Eurasian major power that improves its self-esteem feeling and its stance in the eyes of international community. If Russia wants its foreign policy in CA to be effective, Moscow should avoid to block regional countries’ relations within Moscow-led projects like CSTO or EEU. Such “limited” relationships are likely to bring opposite results – they will push local states to search ways to distance themselves from Russia, which in turn may bring tensions between Russia and the region. On the other side, such tensions will

trigger Russia's aggressive feelings towards other major actors in CA. If Russia deals with CA as the region under hegemony or showcase of its "great powerness" and desire to receive Western recognition for such status, its foreign policy towards CA is likely to prove inefficient and counter-productive because such policy will damage Russian prestige and credibility. Although Russia is major outside power for the region, Moscow needs to accept that CA is no longer under monopoly of Russian "great powerness". Instead, Moscow needs to offer more options to cooperate with both local states and other actors, who already have gained influence in Central Asia. In other words, Moscow should treat the region not as the zone of "exclusive influence", but rather "sphere of interests". In short, Russian foreign policy in CA should not be shadowed by nostalgia of "imperialism".

The research also found that driving factor of China's Central Asian diplomacy is its grand strategy. The findings showed that China's grand strategy is designed to ensure its peaceful rise and prevent other states from opposing China, thereby asserting that China's rise is opportunity for other states, rather than threat. In terms of "ends" China's grand strategy has three main strategic objectives such as sovereignty and territorial integrity, promotion of economic and military modernization and maximizing or at least maintaining status of great power. Chinese diplomacy manages external relations of China through three main ranks like great powers, neighboring countries and developing countries. CA falls under the category of "peripheral strategy". In terms of ends, the importance of CA for China's strategy can be summarized as follows. First, CA is significant

for maintaining domestic security and economic development of Xinjiang. The more incentives for economic cooperation between China's Muslim populated provinces and CA, the more chances for China to maintain peace in its Western peripheries. Second, CA is strategically important to advance SREB, which is to stimulate trade between China's relatively less developed Western periphery and Europe through CA, thereby fostering development of peripheral provinces. Stability in CA is of strategic importance for China; the more stable CA the more chances for China to concentrate on other primary concerns. At the same time, for China, CA is important source of energy resources and relatively safe route that reduces Beijing's dependence other energy-rich regions, which are distant and unstable due to geopolitical risks.

Since the collapse of Soviet Union China has developed its policy in the region steadily. In the initial stages of relationships with the region, China initiated negotiations over border and territorial issues with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The analysis showed that in territorial and border disputes settlement China's stance was cooperative and in most cases Beijing offered considerable concessions to its Central Asian neighbors. Another issue that altered China's policy towards CA in initial stage was Uighur separatism in Xinjiang. This problem has been central concern for China's territorial integrity since the last century. By offering concessions in territorial disputes, Chinese government sought to receive assurances from Central Asian countries in mutual cooperation against separatist movements. After the settlement of border problems, China and its Central Asian neighbors along with Russia established

“Shanghai Five” group, which facilitated further measures for cooperation. By the end of 1990s, members of “Shanghai Five” faced growing threats of religious extremism, which was emanating from Afghanistan under Taliban regime. In 2001 with the leadership of China, “Shanghai Five” members and Uzbekistan reformed the group into Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Thanks to the leadership of Chinese government, combatting against “three evils” became central agenda of SCO. To some extent, the organization became a showcase of China’s adherence to multilateralism, which would present China as responsible actor both in international and regional politics. Another importance of SCO is that it provides a side benefits in calming regional fears about China’s growing capabilities and enables China to advance its diplomacy without altering Moscow’s role in this region. In sum, within last two decades the establishment of the SCO has institutionalized China’s engagement in political and economic relations of CA. Security and stability both in Xinjiang and Central Asia is likely to remain core objective of SCO for coming years.

At the same time, the economic backwardness of Xinjiang is another issue that drives China’s policy towards Central Asia. Chinese government’s initiatives to launch of economic development programs in Western peripheries, has effectively turned China, notable Xinjiang, to the major trade partner of CA. By promoting domestic programs in Xinjiang, China sought to facilitate trade with Muslim minorities of Xinjiang and Central Asia, thereby alleviating discontent within minorities with simultaneously connecting economies of Western peripheries with Central Asian markets. Although trade turnover between China

and CA has increased significantly, the pattern of trade is hardly diversified. The long-term objective is to transform Xinjiang into “Eurasian Continental Bridge”, which is expected to link China’s Western peripheries with Middle East and Europe Europe through CA under Silk Road Economic Belt.

Energy deposits of CA and access to them has been another objective for China’s CA strategy. Within last decade China was able construct two main pipelines, which deliver gas and oil from CA to China’s Xinjiang province. The policy of energy diversification and growing energy demands brought China into enter energy market of CA. Since late 2000s, China was able to purchase two major Kazakh oil companies with the biggest shares in oil production of Kazakhstan. These deals have provided China with direct access to Kazakhstan’s Caspian oil reserves and now China is one of the biggest owners of oil fields in Kazakhstan. Furthermore, China has constructed China-Central Asia gas pipeline, which gave access to energy of gas-rich countries (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan).

Although the establishment of the U.S. military bases in CA caused laments from Beijing, US-led GWOT was beneficial for China. By the help of the US and under the rhetoric of combating global terror, China could frame its domestic policy against rebellions as fight against religious extremism and terrorism. Moreover, China was able to reach accord in the United Nations to list ETM as international terrorist organization. Yet, Beijing’s contribution to GWOT was limited. It was due to the perceptions that active participation in GWOT would cause China more extremist threats.

In terms of realizing foreign policy objectives, Beijing has mostly relied on powerful economic diplomacy. By providing financial aid and cheap loans, now China has become major provider of “public goods” in CA. Chinese loans gained considerable shares in the construction of Central Asian infrastructure projects.

In sum, what has enabled China to *gain* its voice in Central Asia is its grand strategy, and what moves Russian desire to *regain* its influence in this region is Russian national identity. In doing so, it appears that Beijing and Moscow have consensus over “labor division” in Central Asian relations – Russia assumes military supremacy, while China holds upper hand in economic influence.

Although the thesis has analyzed Russian and Chinese foreign policy in CA through two different perspectives (national identity and grand strategy), the part of conclusion that the two sides have reached “labor division” in realizing their interests in CA leads us to the implication that in a single neighboring region two major powers may act in “harmony”, rather than “zero-sum” competition. The two states have mutual objective, which is to promote multipolar international system. Meantime, they have different ways to realize their objectives. Russia, for instance, wants to regain (at times, aggressively) its previous prestige and wants to be treated as a “great power”; while China’s growing capabilities (military and non-military) are to ensure its “peaceful rise” to great power status. It seems, that Moscow and Beijing understand that their different roles in CA are complementary and mutually beneficial for each side. China benefits from Russia’s upper role in maintaining regional security in CA. Such role secures Chinese projects in CA and to some extent, prevents the spread of radical Islam to

Xinjiang through CA. Nevertheless, China's economic leadership (trade, investment, financial aid) also brings peace and stability to CA – Russia's "backyard", and serves Russian interests, too. Meantime, such "labor division" between Moscow and Beijing has advantages for Central Asian states. Such a division might imply to the theory of hegemonic stability and hypothesis that a single region might be under two hegemons at the same time. If Russia and China successfully link and further develop their projects (EEU and SREB) by simultaneously maintaining their relative roles in Central Asian affairs, the implication that two major powers may act in "harmony" type of interaction is a topic that needs to be addressed in further studies.

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