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Russia and China in Central Asia: Cooperation or Partnership?

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Abstract

Great powers as the US, Europe and China always have conflict due to their uncommon interests and they try to spread own influence over small countries and increase their power positions. This research investigates great power relationships as well as possibilities of cooperation and conflict between them. Rising power like China always worry great powers with its rapid development and influential position in Asia. Russia is also the country which has significant role in post-Soviet countries lives. And both China and Russia have had problematic relationship with western countries. As sanctions and troubled relationship between the West on one hand and Russia and China on the other hand appeared, the world tends to say that these countries will get closer to each other.

After troubled relationship with the West, Russia and China want to increase influence in Central Asia. Central Asia has significant role due to its strategic location and natural resources deposits. Countries of Central Asia may become the focal point for both East and West with their energy potentials.

This research tries to define potential role of Central Asian countries in great power relationships and how small and rising countries of Central Asia can take benefit from great powers involvement in their territory.

Key words: Central Asia, great powers, cooperation of great powers, shared-neighborhood, geopolitics, great powers' partnership, great powers' issue, great powers' energy need, small powers.

Russia and China in Central Asia: Cooperation or Partnership?

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Introduction

Russia and China in Central Asia: Cooperation or Partnership?

Economic giants like the United States, China, Japan and some European countries have a big influence in lives of smaller or rising powers. The US is the most influential power and economy in the world and it does not want to lose its position of great influencer. The US has interference in the Middle East, in Asian countries and many countries are impacted by US policies. However, there is also one country that is rising which seemingly will replace the US as great power. Undoubtedly, China almost could catch up the US with its highly developing economy and took Japan's position of second biggest economy. Production, construction and trade of many Asian, especially Central Asian countries are tightly connected with China. But China is not the only country that is growing its influence in Central Asia. Russia as one of the biggest neighbors of China and Central Asia also has significant place in the lives of Central Asian countries.

Russia and China are among the biggest countries and have vast human resources. One is the largest producer and consumer with the biggest population in the world and second is the biggest country in the world with its advanced raw materials production trade. These two have longest border territory and partnership in different fields. Some scholars describe Sino-Russian relationship as strategic partnership. Nevertheless China is not Russia's biggest oil consumer, although it has significant role in Russia's oil trade and foreign policy.

Last three decades as Central Asian countries established their independence and Soviet Union collapsed, the countries of Central Asia had to establish partnership with many countries and conduct their foreign policy in a new way. Russia and China as neighbored countries have leading role in Central Asia.

So, how Russia and China will develop their relationship in the near future? How this relationship will evolve in Central Asian region? Will Central Asia keep its important strategic position in Sino-Russian cooperation?

Kazakhstan is the biggest country of Central Asia and it has many common projects with Russia and China as these countries are actively involved in Kazakhstan extractive industry and other spheres. Both Russia and China have influential position in Kazakhstan. So how can Kazakhstan get benefit from Russian and Chinese involvement in its territory?

Main Body

Literature review

The topic we are writing on and making research is popular for many reasons to Central Asian countries and to Russia and China. The topic itself is related to shared-neighborhood as Russia, China and Central Asian countries are bounded by geography. That is why we use books on shared neighborhood and great powers relationship to clarify the topic. The *purpose of this literature review* is to give brief information about literatures that were used during research.

To clarify the topic and relationship between great powers, we need to define their tactics and purposes of cooperation with other powers. Basic explanation of great powers relationship is discussed in, American political scientist, John Mearsheimer's book 'The Tragedy of Great Power Politics'. In this book the author writes why countries always try to increase their own power and why there are always enemy countries. According to Mearsheimer, great powers always want to acquire hegemonic position because they do not want other rival countries to have more influence and power than they do. There are several reasons why great powers want to acquire hegemony and they always have rival relationships with other countries: there is no higher authority which sits above countries and which can protect them if there happens any violence between countries; states always have military capability which threatens others and states can never be certain about other states intentions, says Mearsheimer. Great powers as the US do not want to lose their position and there is always one rising power like China which may threaten the greatest powers with its extremely rapid growing. Except rising powers possible hegemony, great powers always threaten each other because they suspect each other and anticipate danger from each

other. From the opinion of one great power, he says, any other great powers are potential dangers. That is because great powers try to save their hegemony at any cost.

Yan Xuetong, Dean and professor of the Institute of International Relations at Tsinghua University, a Chinese scholar gives image of China and the US relationship development and reasons of instability between two great powers. He says that the problematic side of the US and China relationship is in their conflicting interests rather than shared ones. Undoubtedly, these two great powers relationship is really important, however each of them seeks for their own interests¹.

Liselotte Odgaard claimed that as any country, China seeks for benefit for their own country and due to this fact all countries try to support peaceful coexistence. For Odgaard, the US foreign policy since Cold War involves ensuring strength of international peace, security and prosperity. But, China showed itself as a developing state that pursues for peaceful coexistence². So, does China and the US have common interests to develop their relationship to a new level? Why China wants coexistence but not the alliance? Coexistence will allow China to coordinate their national interests without jeopardizing international peace and stability. China's strategy is designed to maximize its nation's interests.

Bordachev T. analyzed origins and reasons of troubled relationship between Europe and Russia where he asserts that Russia is not the main focal point for Europe.

There are many scholarly works which analyze dynamics of Russia - China relationships in Central Asia. Nevertheless, opinions of scholars are controversial. Some point to positive dynamics while some others point to drawbacks.

For authors like Korolev and Sharyshev Russia and China can create alliance. For them, Russian and Chinese alliance is possible due to their strained relationship with Western countries. Sharyshev says, that the US and EU are becoming hostile to Russia and their sanctions and pressure make Russia turn its

¹ Yan, X. (2010). *The instability of China-US relations*. The Chinese Journal of International Politics, 3(3), 263-292.

² Odgaard, L. (2013). *Between Integration and Coexistence: US-Chinese Strategies of International Order*. Strategic Studies Quarterly, 7(1), 15-39.

interests to Asia. China is rising its dominance in Asia and it already could surpass Japan and took second place among the most developed economies. And the fact that both of these powers have troubled relations with the West, make many scholars write about their future alliance creation. Sharyshev says that there are two main factors of Chinese and Russian possible alliance. First, they need each other in energy sphere. Second factor is global governance. These two powers share the same interests and they are able to withstand global threats and shape the existing world order. And this is the main reason to continue and expand Chinese and Russia relationship in the future³.

As Russia and China have hostile relations with the Western countries, it is quite possible that they will expand their dominance in Asian countries. Especially, in Central Asian countries which receive considerable investment from China and Russia. According to statistics, Central Asian countries trade with Russia and China is rising. This leads to increase of Russian and Chinese influence in the region.. At the same time, Central Asian countries despite investments of these influential powers look skeptically to their presence in their region.

Liselette Odgaard in her work 'Beijing's Quest for Stability in its Neighborhood: China's Relations with Russia in Central Asia', criticizes the thesis on possible Chinese-Russian alliance. For her, China looks for strategic partners but not for allies. Russia and China have common interests and these common interests can push them closer to each other without necessarily leading to an alliance creation. China has other priorities in its foreign policy like pushing back the US dominance and draw more attention to Asia-Pacific region. Countries are always responsible not only for keeping their state system but they also have to protect basic rights of individuals and international stability. Seeking these purposes, countries try to keep stable system in their territory. China could increase and make more or less stable system. China's rapid development, during last 40 years, is based on its traditional, domestic and economic dynamics⁴.

³ Sharyshev, A. V. (2016). *Strategic partnership between Russia and China: importance and sustainability of bilateral relations. Сравнительная политика*, (2 (23)).

⁴ Odgaard, L. (2017). *Beijing's quest for stability in its neighborhood: China's relations with Russia in Central Asia*. *Asian Security*, 13(1), 41-58.

Russian and Chinese common interests exist in Asian countries, especially in Central Asian and both of them want to cut West's dominance from Asia. Central Asian countries have same roots, similar language but they have very different policies. Their international and domestic policies and attitudes to Russian and Chinese presence in their territory vary. Mostly it depends on region's economy says Odgaard. Kazakhstan comparatively is richer than others and due to this the country conducts more independent policy than for example Tajikistan which is weakened by civil war. However in general Central Asian countries are relatively weak in terms of economy, military sphere, etc. and as any other weak countries, they need support of great powers in order to stabilize their own states. If Russia and China can coordinate their actions in Central Asia, it may help Central Asia to control potential conflict cases. According to Odgaard, currently, the US is not involved in Central Asia as Russia and China, that is why Russia and China have more possibility to establish their dominance. However in recent years, the US interests to Central Asia is rising and it can worry Russian and China. Central Asian countries, Russia and China are members of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), an organization that seeks for common security and cooperate in many other fields.

Renata Mantel analyzes Central Asian countries role not only for Russia and China but also for the West. The main fact that attracts Western countries, Russia and China is natural resources. Especially, Kazakhstan with its huge amount of natural resources attracts interests of many countries. European and American investments usually concern Caspian basin in the West of Kazakhstan. Energy issue is priority for Europe and to meet its energy issue Europe wants to get stable relationship with Central Asia because it is the way to be independent from Russian and Middle East deposits. Scholars say controversially about Russian presence in Central Asia for a long time. It may show, they say, stability or contemporary conflict. So, the fact is that Russia may continue its influential role in Central Asia in the future and there is no justified reason to say about hostility future of neighbored countries⁵.

⁵ Mantel, R. (2015). *EU-Central asia relations in the energy sector with a special focus on Kazakhstan*. *L'Europe en Formation*, (1), 55-71.

Methodology

This research uses qualitative research method. As the theme touches shared neighborhood and great powers relationship, first, we collected data on great powers relationship issues and described their relationship development and the cases where they have troubled situations. To define the exact reasons of great powers' conflicts, we collected data of both Western and Eastern authors in order not to look at the situation from the one side.

Research tries to answer three main questions and to answer them, it is necessary to analyze and compare the opinions of scholars from different countries and statistical data is also important to define the level of major countries involvement level in small powers territory.

By collecting and comparing data we defined that scholars' opinion about Russia and China relationship future is different. Some scholars suppose that China and Russia will stay as other geographical neighbors and will not develop their cooperation into advanced level while others think that they become allies in near future.

Research tries to define the reasons of possible alliance creation between Russia and China. And to define it we collected data of Russia and China cooperation with Western countries. Scholars tend to advance claim about Russian and Chinese alliance creation due to their troubled relations with the West.

As Russia and China have strained relations with Western countries, it is possible to develop and strength their position in Asia. By collecting statistical data on trade and educational sphere of Russia, China and Central Asian countries relationship, we come to conclusion that China and Russia are important to Central Asian countries development and Central Asia is also has significant role in Russian and Chinese policy due to their strategic location and natural resources reserve.

Research questions

This research tries to investigate and answer the following questions:

- What are the main fields and targets of Russian and Chinese partnership?
- What is the role of Central Asia in Sino-Russian cooperation?
- How Russian and Chinese may influence future development of Kazakhstan?

Hypothesis

After having read materials on great powers relationship and great powers involvement in territories of small and rising powers, we come to following possible hypothesis:

- Russia and China will have relationship mostly in natural resources sector. Their close economic and trade relationship will not necessarily lead to strategic alliance creation;
- Central Asia will become main focal point in Sino-Russian cooperation because it has good strategic location;
- Central Asian countries look skeptically to great powers involvement in their territory;
- Kazakhstan as a country which connects two great powers will get more significant role and get positive benefits for its economy by strengthening its foreign policy with Russia and China.

Discussion

1 Game of Great Powers

1.1 Comparison of Great Powers relationship: the US and China, Russia and the US, Europe and Russia

Great powers always have influence and effect in the lives of other small countries and they always try to maintain their dominant position, so most international issues depend on great powers. Small countries depend on great powers because the great powers may be their investors or bridge to market of other countries and chance to improve their socio-economic situation. But one great power cannot exist as the greatest power for a long time. Another great power can replace great power's position and rising powers may become more powerful. When one great power has ability to replace another great power there appears struggle between them for dominant position. None of great powers would want to lose their influential position on world arena. Great powers always fear each other and compete. The goal of each great power is to gain more power at the expense of other states. The ultimate goal of each great power is to acquire hegemony⁶.

China is a powerful state and there is only one country that is more powerful than China and it is the USA. The US is number one economy in the world. And struggle between the US and China will never end. It is not a war, it is a rightful struggle of great powers to acquire more influential and more powerful position. Chinese and American, Chinese and Russian or American and Russian relations have become one of the top discussed issues of last 10 years. Ukraine crisis that led to different American and Russian sanctions, American weapon sells to Taiwan that caused Chinese discontent or Chinese and Russian relations to get better position in Asia are examples of great power competition in real life.

China and the US are powerful countries whose activities and involvement in economy are very important. And it is necessary to have good relationship with China and the US not only for small powers

⁶ Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001). *The tragedy of great power politics*. WW Norton & Company.

but also for the US and China it is essential to maintain bilateral cooperation despite some controversy things. The US and China signed joint statement in 2009 during Obama's visit in China. The purpose of statement is to reach an advanced level in Chinese and American relations⁷. Former Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in 2008 in New York said that the US and China had never had so many common interests and the countries are not competitive states but cooperative partners which can become friends (Yan, 2010).

Officials of both China and the US made a concept that Sino-American relationship is the world's most important relationship and their common national interests based on their mutual relations. Being enemy and having bad relationship would never make positive impact on the lives of both countries. So, the main purpose of their relations is to make positive cooperation, being cultural friends, becoming strategic business partners (Yan, 2010).

Notwithstanding China is seeking peaceful rise and they usually mention about it, other Asian countries take Chinese rise as a danger. It is an usual case, when there happens transition of powers while one great power can replace another great power. So, the rising power always challenges the position of dominant power like China is doing such attempts to the US. And it is obvious that the US is worrying about China as China is now catching up to the US. Great powers which seek dominance are always opposed and defeated by the counterbalancing efforts of other states⁸.

The factor of China's rise makes the US try to maintain the position of only superpower. Due to China's rise world power center may change from Europe to East Asia. There is also one more power that is rising in Asia and it is Japan which is saving its role as one of the world's biggest economies. The US sees all these powers' rise and certainly wants to strength its position in East Asia⁹.

⁷Yan, X. (2010). *The instability of China-US relations*. The Chinese Journal of International Politics, 3(3), 263-292.

⁸Layne, C. (2008). *China's challenge to US hegemony*. CURRENT HISTORY-NEW YORK THEN PHILADELPHIA-, 107(705), 13.

⁹Xuetong, Y. (2013). *Strategic cooperation without mutual trust: a path forward for China and the United States*. Asia Policy, 15(1), 4-6.

In terms of relationship with the other parts of the world the US gets more benefit than China. For example, the US even has about 50 military partners while China has 0 said Yan Xuetong in 2011¹⁰. But the case has changed. China could already establish military base in Djibouti, East Africa, which was opened in 2017¹¹. Is China becoming a threat to the US by constructing its military bases? The Diplomat says about China's military base in Africa that China created military base over the US objections¹². China is also operating in Central Asia and according to CACI Analyst Stephan Blank, it is operating a military base in Tajikistan¹³. From the point of China it is just potential protection measures, but from the US point, it is a potential threat.

Certainly these two powers have a lot of common purposes and interests as counteracting terrorism, getting more mutual benefit from reciprocal relations. But each of great powers seek own purpose that may make benefit for their nation. China is doing peaceful coexistence with every country and certainly peaceful coexistence designs maximum its national interests to being great power from a weaker power¹⁴. China wants coexistence while others want cooperation. However, there is also one more problematic case – the US weapon sell to Taiwan. Arms sell to Taiwan makes the US and Taiwan unofficial allies and gives to Taiwan a military defense against China's growing military threat¹⁵. The US makes worse its relationship with China by selling arms to Taiwan and making support against China's growth. The US deteriorates ties between Washington and Beijing by demonstrating support for Taiwan says Horton (2019).

China's rise as a great power and its transition position that mostly is understood as intended to replace American hegemony has two sides. As any world issue this also has two sides - attitude of people of

¹⁰Xuetong, Y. (2011). *How China Can Defeat America*. New York Times, 20

¹¹Guardian staff and agencies. (2019). *China will build string of military bases around world, says Pentagon*. Guardian.

¹²Headley, T. (2018). *China's first overseas military base provides an interesting test case for its global ambitions*. The Diplomat.

¹³ Blank, S. (2019). *China's Military Base in Tajikistan: What Does it Mean?*. CACI

¹⁴Odgaard, L. (2013). *Between Integration and Coexistence: US-Chinese Strategies of International Order*. Strategic Studies Quarterly, 7(1), 15-39.

¹⁵ Horton, C. (2019). *Taiwan Set to Receive \$2 Billion in U.S. Arms, Drawing Ire From China*. The New York Times

different countries to Chinese hegemony and the US dominance. To say the truth, it is not important which country will get the highest position, it is important how small powers can develop and get benefit from hegemony change.

Nationalism problem in China is rising and mostly it is understood as anti-Americanism. But due to the history there is also a problem between Japan and China and some people understand China's nationalism as anti-Japan reaction¹⁶. And China's rise is accepted as a threat not only in the US but also by other great powers and many other small countries. Some states are afraid of Chinese rise and they support the US. The US for them is a security guarantee that can protect and may be against rising Chinese power¹⁷.

China is the fastest growing power and it is quite normal when great powers and the greatest power are worried about their positions on the world arena.

Russia is the biggest country by its territory and China's neighbor on the North and it also belongs to the countries that are worried about China's rise. Russia and China are neighbors by nature, they share common boundary and they have active involvement in the territory of the same countries as Central Asian. They are members of organizations like SCO. And both China and Russia last years have some intense relationship with the US. Nevertheless China and Russia do not have common boundary with the US, it is still the country that can effect to their neighbors and intervene to their relations with other countries. Russia is a country that shares border with many other countries as the biggest territory on the world. And it also has some problems with its neighbored countries.

Russia has been problematic neighbor for Western countries historically and now it seems nothing has changed. Western countries like the US and EU countries find Russia as a difficult neighbor. However there is nothing enigmatic about Russia, it is still the country that is rising and challenging some other states with its international policy¹⁸.

¹⁶Johnston, A. I. (2013). *How new and assertive is China's new assertiveness?*. International Security, 37(4), 7-48.

¹⁷Odgaard, L. (2007). *The balance of power in Asia-Pacific security: US-China policies on regional order*. Routledge.

¹⁸Sakwa, R. (2008). *New Cold War 'or twenty years' crisis? Russia and international politics*. International affairs, 84(2), 241-267.

Russia and EU have an agreement and relations in different sphere and the main purpose of their cooperation is to develop cooperative relationship and lead their mutual relationship to integration. They had agreement on their relations and defined legal basis in 1994, since then the legal basis has been renewed automatically. However, the situation that happened to many countries happened also with Russian and European relations like crisis in 2014 that brought some negative factors. But parties could build new model of their relationship. Potential integration of European Union and Russia has always been among top discussed issues. To look straight at truth – European and Russian relation will not be like European countries relations just because Russia is not a part of EU, it is their neighbor. EU's main task is to provide best conditions to the parties which are the part of EU¹⁹. However, Russia and EU have never needed absolute integration and it will not be the most vital issue for them. Their main task is to get maximum benefit from cooperation and provide equal advantages in their cooperation for all.

Relationships of Russia and EU have fallen down due to some reasons like Ukrainian crisis and problems inside Europe that led to reformation (euro-zone crisis and migration crisis). Europe had to welcome millions of people who left their motherlands and made reformation. And while facing problems there were even no conditions for Russia and EU to think about further integration and cooperation. Bordachev says there is no vital need for EU and Russia for further integration (2019).

EU and Russia relations are mostly connected with energy. One of them is energy importer and one of them is energy supplier. Economic crisis and Russia's intervention in Ukraine and Georgian issues made tension in bilateral relations and made worse energy trade. So, EU and Russia had been building strategic partnership in economy, education, culture, trade, security, counteraction terrorism and nuclear nonproliferation, conflict resolution in the Middle East. But due to Ukraine crisis and Russia's intervention in Syria relationship between EU and Russia faced tensions. As Russia faced problems in relations with EU and the US there started economic recession²⁰.

¹⁹Bordachev, T. (2019). *Russia and Europe: Between Integration and Diplomacy*. Russia in Global Affairs.

²⁰Fact Sheets on the European Union, European Parliament. 2020 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/177/russia>

Last years, Russia's relationship with Western countries, especially with the US was the axis that paid attentions of many countries and millions of citizens but it will no longer be the point of discussion. And the new regime and new leaders of the countries will lead their relationship to new level and make less sharp said Sakwa (2008). But the fact is that Russia and the US still have tense relation.

When speaking about Russia-US relations, it is important to note that Russian and American relations started in 19th century but it was interrupted by some historical situations. Full constructive relations were established after the collapse of Soviet Union. Cooperation between countries deteriorated after Ukraine and Georgia crisis. The US made some sanctions and showed their position to Russia's violation of Ukraine and Georgia sovereignty. Since 2014, the United States and European and G-7 partners imposed sanctions on Russia for its aggressive actions in eastern Ukraine, occupation of Crimea, and interference in U.S. elections. Sectoral sanctions have reduced Russia's ability to access financing in the financial, energy, and defense sectors, as well as limited its access to certain technologies in those sectors. And due to sanctions Russia faced regression in 2015 and only in 2016 and 2017 it could make economy better as oil prices rebounded. Russia stays as a member of UN Security Council and member of Council of Europe although it interfered in Ukraine sovereignty and has troubled relationships with many Western countries²¹. Russia in its turn made response to Western countries by its counter-sanctions. As European Parliament information says Russia could recover from recession that it faced after EU and the US sanctions, by benefiting from increasing revenues from oil and commodities exports.

Before tensions in relationships Russia and the US were countries which worked together to counteract terrorism, violent extremism and provide security in some regions as Middle East. And perhaps the situation between two powers will become better and they continue acting together against rising terrorist powers as they could begin air campaign in Syria in 2015.

Will difficult relationship with West make Russia and China closer? After stressed relations with West it is obvious that Russia wants to get closer to Asia and establish its dominance. China which also has some

²¹ US Relations With Russia, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs. 2019 <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-russia/>

misunderstanding and problem with West wants to develop its relationship with Western countries but also has troubled neighbors in East Asia. So, Central Asia is the best place to work and integrate during this difficult time. Both Russia and China are rising powers which may worry West and they can also be allies which have powerful position in Asia and Central Asia.

1.2 Russia and China partnership: cooperation fields, relationship development, predictions about future cooperation

In globalized world there is a tendency that superpowers are getting more and more important place in the lives of small and weaker countries. Even if the countries have big natural resources and human resources, it is very difficult to get higher position and pushback influence of superpowers.

Russia is the biggest country in the world with its size of 17 million km² and it has population of 146.2 million people and enjoys huge reserves of natural resources²². And it is remaining as one of the most important partners of some European and Post Soviet countries. Its oil and gas sector is very important to many countries and also it has a considerable political influence in some CIS countries.

China is the richest country for human resources with its population of 1.39 billion people (in mid 2018)²³ and it is the world's second largest economy (2018)²⁴. China is also the world's largest producer for food (2019)²⁵ and it is staying as the largest product consumer of the world.

Both Russia and China have a big influence in Asian countries and they can be great partners of future. Asian countries in some cases and ways are dependent on Russia and China due to their role on the world arena and their influence to Asian economy.

²² Российское Инвестиционное Агентство
<https://www.investment-in-russia.com/site/page?view=ROSSIYA-V-CIFRAH>

²³ Statista <https://www.statista.com/statistics/262879/countries-with-the-largest-population/>

²⁴ FOCUSECONOMICS <https://www.focus-economics.com/blog/the-largest-economies-in-the-world>

²⁵ Investopedia <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/100615/4-countries-produce-most-food.asp>

Scholars' opinions are divided while they discuss Sino-Russian relations and partnership. Sino-Russian relationship has been analyzed from two camps. First group of scholars believe China and Russia will create an alliance and will develop their partnership to high level. Second group of scholars believe that China and Russia will not have a good relationship and they predict emergence of serious tensions in their future cooperation.

So, what scholars say about Russia and China relationship and their presence in Central Asia?

David Kerr says that China appeared in Central Asia to cut the US hegemony²⁶. And his opinion is justified because the US is keeping its position as the world's biggest power and economy, and it has an influence not only in Central Asia but also even in everywhere nowadays. He says about China's relationship with Russia that China mostly worries about its relations with South-East Asian countries and draws more attention to them than to Russia but China never downgrades Russia's position and significance unlike the US and Europe. He also touches the theme about Central Asian countries relationship with China and says that some years ago the idea that China and Russia would have a focus on Central Asian countries seemed almost unlikely but four of Central Asian countries could reach border settlement agreement and opened their frontiers for commercial and provincial development measures. Despite all relationship development there appeared some political and military threat (Kerr, 2010).

Trassy N. Marketos writes from the perspective of China's energy geopolitics and notices that Central Asia has significant importance in Western China and she says that after Soviet occupation some Central Asian countries were left in trouble but due to their natural findings and strategic locations Central Asia is keeping its position and the position is increasing. After Soviet Union collapsed and Central Asian countries became independent again in 1991, China is paying more attention to the different sectors of these countries. So, Marketos suggests that the creation of SCO is a positive and expected development

²⁶Kerr, D. (2010). *Central Asian and Russian perspectives on China's strategic emergence*. *International Affairs*, 86(1), 127-152.

and it shows Chinese and Russian shared security interests in the area of Central Asia (Marketos, 2008)²⁷.

Or may be China's interest for Central Asia is rising because it wants to meet its energy needs?

Philip Andrews-Speed from National University of Singapore says that Russia and China develop their cooperation via Central Asia because they have trade in natural resources (oil and gas) and China is willing to provide and get the resources via land pipelines than imports by sea. And this gives to Central Asian States an access to and growth in market²⁸. So, China and Russia will have relationship in Central Asia because it is efficient to import crude oil through Central Asian countries than to construct them in the sea.

Alexander Lukin suggests that Russian and Chinese relationship will develop and they will be close to each other. Because Russia and China have some dissatisfaction with Western policy and if it continues, Russia will move closer to China, India and other Asian countries with which it has fewer problems²⁹. Lukin's opinion is similar to the group scholars who think Russian and Chinese possible developed relationship is caused by their troubled relationship with the West.

Samuel Charap and colleagues write that Russia is more enthusiastic now to have better relationship with China and China also wants to develop and is interested in relationship with Russia but China does not want to make Russia its main focal point in foreign policy³⁰.

Lee Kuan Yew says there are some myths about Russia and China relationships that worry people. Some say that Chinese overpopulation and Russian under-population in the area of their boarder may cause vast

²⁷Marketos, T. N. (2008). *China's Energy Geopolitics: The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Central Asia*. Routledge.

²⁸Eder, L., Andrews-Speed, P., & Korzhubaev, A. (2009). *Russia's evolving energy policy for its eastern regions, and implications for oil and gas cooperation between Russia and China*. *Journal of World Energy Law & Business*, 2(3), 219-242.

²⁹Lukin, A. (1999). *Russia's image of China and Russian-Chinese relations*. *East Asia*, 17(1), 5-39.

³⁰Charap, S., Drennan, J., & Noël, P. (2017). *Russia and China: a new model of great-power relations*. *Survival*, 59(1), 25-42.

migration to Russia and it may lead to Russian national identity lose. And there may be some dependence to China if Russia increases its raw materials export³¹.

Alexander Sharyshev suggests that Russia is becoming China's good ally because it can conduct aggressive foreign policy towards West and China is not willing to do that because China has strong ties to West and conducts less aggressive and more moderate policy³².

Ariel Cohen says both Russia and China have long boarder and vast human resources and they are able to solve and manage problems until it threatens security interests of third parties like the US, India and Japan. However, he says, Sino-Russian relationship development may become Anti-American or Anti-Western in case if Eurasian powers feel that the US threatens their interests³³.

According to Stronski China is developing its commerce and competitiveness of Chinese organizations are increasing on global scale in Russia. And the threat to the West is that Sino-Russian partnership tries to adjust international system to their advantage. Now China and Russia are increasing foreign policy initiatives and West should come to the terms that their partnership is going to stay³⁴.

Elizabeth Wishnick says in Russian and Chinese official statements they highlight that they are not willing to create alliance but they share positions on some major global issues. And Russia now is improving military and energy relations with Chinese difficult neighbors and some see it as Russian position against Chinese hegemony rise. She also supposes that as China is the world's largest consumer and the most populated region there appears increased needs to oil and gas which can make Sino-Russian cooperation important³⁵.

³¹Korolev, A. (2015). *The strategic alignment between Russia and China: Myths and reality*. Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy Research Paper, (15-19).

³²Sharyshev, A. V. (2016). *Strategic partnership between Russia and China: importance and sustainability of bilateral relations*. Сравнительнаяполитика, (2 (23)).

³³Cohen, A. (2001). *The Russia-China Friendship and Cooperation Treaty: A Strategic Shift in Eurasia?*. The Heritage Foundation, 18.

³⁴Stronski, P., & Ng, N. (2018). *Cooperation and competition: Russia and China in Central Asia, the Russian far east, and the arctic* (Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 14). Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

³⁵Wishnick, E. (2017). *In search of the 'Other' in Asia: Russia-China relations revisited*. The Pacific Review, 30(1), 114-132.

Keun-Wook Paik says about Sino-Russian strategic partnership: European market is lucrative for Russia's oil and gas but Russia wants to get closer to Asia to export its raw product. So, Sino-Russian cooperation is strengthened due to Chinese need to maximize its crude supply on based pipelines and it will help to reduce the dependence on seaborne oil supply³⁶.

So, scholars' opinions on Sino-Russian relationships are divided. While some scholars speculate on possible emergence of Russia-China alliance, others see Russia-China relationships as an ordinary bilateral relationship.

China as the largest producer has close trade relations with many countries and it does not focus on one certain country and does not take some regions as a focal point. However, it is much more important and lucrative to have close relations with big countries. Last years, it was seen substantial increase in Sino-Russian trade. According to Russia Briefing bilateral trade between Russia and China in 2019 grew to US \$500 million a month (2019) and they say Chinese Customs Administration showed that trade reached US \$70.59billion first eight month of 2019. As Russia Briefing writes both sides China and Russia are willing to reach US \$200billion in bilateral trade every year³⁷. According to WITS China takes number one place among Russia's important top 5 export and import partners³⁸.

As Russian and Chinese relations are developing, the numbers of students who study in the territory of these countries are also growing. Some years ago, students' number from both China and Russia were not high as it is now. According to Russkiy Mir in 2017-2018 academic year 30 thousand Chinese students were studying in Russia. And it is for 10% higher than it was in previous academic year. Chinese students study in 85 cities of Russia and mostly they study for engineering, economics and construction fields³⁹. And according to Chinese Ministry of Education in 2018 there were 19 thousand Russian students who

³⁶Paik, K. W. (2015). *Sino-Russian Gas and Oil Cooperation—Entering a New Era of Strategic Partnership?*.

³⁷ Russia Briefing <https://www.russia-briefing.com/news/russia-china-bilateral-trade-growing-us-500-million-month.html/>

³⁸ WITS <https://wits.worldbank.org/countrysnapshot/en/RUSSIA>

³⁹ Информационный портал фонда «Русский Мир» <https://ruskiymir.ru/news/258249/>

were studying in Chinese Universities⁴⁰. As in 2019 China and Russia celebrated 70th years of anniversary of diplomatic relations, it is quite possible that students exchange between Russia and China will grow next years.

To conclude the idea of China and Russia relations it is important to note that most scholars say the reason of the dragon and the bear integration is mostly because of threat from and unstable relations with West. Both the US and Europe see Sino-Russian relations as threat for them. Sanctions of last years from the side of the US and harsh relations of Russia with Ukraine, according to Western people, may push China and Russia to create an alliance and act as hedging countries in the area where Western countries are leading. So, Russia and China are developing their cooperation in different fields and they do not have exact aim to create an alliance or to take the role of hegemony or stand against Western countries but as the world's one of the biggest and powerful countries they are willing to save a good relationship with each other and have goals to increase their bilateral trade. Nevertheless, these two powerful countries may not lose their role on the world arena and if it is necessary they are able to do everything that depends on them to make their countries' condition better and status higher.

1.3 China versus Russia: Which country is more influential in Central Asia?

Central Asian countries have historical connections with both Russia and China and there are many citizens of Central Asia who live in the territory of Russia and China, moreover a lot of Russian and Chinese people also live in Central Asian countries. The thing that connects Central Asia and Russia is Soviet Union. During the Soviet Union periods people from different countries lived, worked together and even after the collapse of Soviet system, people still have strong ties with other nationalities and they have relatives in different countries. One more thing that connects Central Asian countries with Russia and other post Soviet countries is language, many countries, as a result of Soviet politics, can speak Russian. Mitchell says: 'Through the millions of ethnic Russians who still call Central Asia home, as well as the ubiquity of the Russian language and satellite television programs, the Kremlin has been able to

⁴⁰ XINHUANET http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-10/20/c_138487196.htm

maintain a cultural beachhead in former Soviet Asia at little cost'⁴¹. And Mitchell's words are completely justified, indeed, Central Asia and Russia have strong ties because of the language. Besides, Russia has a big position in these countries as strong foreign partner and it has a big influence on the lives of younger generation. According to some statistics there are 2.5-4.3 million people who take part in work migration from Central Asia to Russia⁴².

China is the country which sends thousands of workers to Central Asia to build strong economic connections. And now it is also popular to study in China and many Central Asian students are choosing to study in Chinese universities and Chinese language is becoming popular from day to day. In 2013, more than 20 000 students from Central Asia studied in China. China started providing scholarship for students from Central Asia since they established their independence⁴³. There appeared Confucius Institutes in Central Asian countries and with the help of this institute China is attracting many students with its scholarships. In 2018, the number of Confucius Institutes was 12 (Li, 2018). China is attracting people of Central Asia and investing for Central Asia by education and more.

So, to say the truth both China and Russia have very strong positions in Central Asia and definitely none of these countries want to lose their leading positions in the region.

To say about Central Asia and China's relationship it is necessary to start from that they are first of all neighbors who share 3.3 thousand kilometers of common boundary. They are bound by nature. So, they can have common interests in the terms of trade and economy as they can be the path which can connect each other with more important and strategic partners. For example, if Central Asia is a corridor that connects China with Europe and establish overland communication, China can be the country which gives

⁴¹Mitchell, G. (2014). *China in Central Asia: the Beginning of the end for Russia?*. Slovo, 26(1), 18-31.

⁴²Чеховских, Т. Д. (2019). *Миграция населения стран центральной Азии в Россию: проблемы и пути решения*. Международный научно-исследовательский журнал, (4 (82) Часть 2), 128-132.

⁴³Li, A. (2018). *"One Belt One Road" and Central Asia: A New Trend in Internationalization of Higher Education?*. International Higher Education, (92), 14-16.

Central Asia safe, secure passage to the Pacific Ocean⁴⁴. Maybe Central Asia and China do not give high priority to each other in terms of international strategy but they are bound to each other by nature. Zhuangzhi says about China's policies on Central Asia and what does it include and describes it as follows:

- Peaceful, good-neighborly relations;
- Cooperation on the basis of mutual benefit and common prosperity;
- Respecting the choices of the Central Asian people and non interference in the internal affairs of other nations; and

Respecting independent sovereignty as well as promoting regional stability.

So, China and Central Asia have a long common border and due to that they have common interests to ensure security cooperation and defend regional stability. China is definitely appearing as one of the most influential players in Central Asia and Russia has to accept this reality (Stronski, 2018). China is increasing its trade not only in Central Asia but also in Russia's Far East and the Arctic⁴⁵.

Central Asian countries have same roots, their languages are similar, most of them support one religion and they have many spiritual and historical connections. But they the same time are very different. Their economy, politics, social lives are quite different from each other. Central Asian states look differently to Russia and China involvement in their territory.

Russia's main partner in integration with Central Asia is Kazakhstan. Other Central Asian countries look skeptically to Russia's leading role, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan mostly closer to China than to Russia. Uzbekistan has its own ambitious in regional leadership and much skeptical to Russia-led integration efforts says Jeffrey Mankoff⁴⁶.

⁴⁴Zhuangzhi, S. (2007). *The Relationship between China and Central Asia*. Eager eyes fixed on Eurasia, Sapporo, Japan: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 41-63.

⁴⁵Stronski, P., & Ng, N. (2018). *Cooperation and competition: Russia and China in Central Asia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic* (Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 14). Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

⁴⁶Mankoff, J. (2013). *The United States and Central Asia after 2014*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Infrastructure and trade are China's main push into Central Asia. China already constructed oil pipeline from Kazakhstan, from Turkmenistan across Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to its Western province Xinjiang. As the result now China imports more Turkmen gas than Russia does. China is also willing to construct new railway across Central Asia. Infrastructure development leads to economic and political growth between Central Asia and China. Trade volume of China with Central Asian countries also become higher and it surpassed Russian trade with these countries. Russia will try to keep the US influence in Central Asia to minimum, now it worries more about Chinese politics in Central Asian countries (Mankoff, 2013).

China's hegemony is inevitable nowadays because China is appearing as a major power not only in Central Asia but also in many countries of the world. China is one of the biggest economies and consumer societies. Currently China uses almost 20% of world's energy and the numbers are increasing in incredibly high speed. So, as energy consumption is growing there is also a need to new sources and China considers Central Asia as a source that can meet their energy need. That is why China is constructing new gas and oil pipelines in the countries as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to make them its energy nexus (Fazilov, 2013). China will develop its energy diplomacy to ensure its energy security. Kazakhstan as the biggest country of Central Asia has close relations with China and their cooperation in energy field will depend on oil exploration of the shelf areas of the Caspian Sea⁴⁷.

The biggest country in Central Asia is Kazakhstan and it seems attractive to foreign investors as a country which has a lot of natural resources. Despite the country has big territory and a lot of natural resources, there are not many population in the country and also it does not have direct routes to sea. But these factors are not deterrent to China. China can develop oil production in a short time with high speed. Kazakhstan in its turn should try to get benefit from such close neighbor and do not make it enemy⁴⁸. China is a great powerful neighbor for Central Asian countries.

⁴⁷Fazilov, F., & Chen, X. (2013). *China and Central Asia: A significant new energy nexus*.

⁴⁸O'Neill, D. C. (2014). *Risky business: The political economy of Chinese investment in Kazakhstan*. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 5(2), 145-156.

Asian countries have different capabilities and geographic locations and Beijing can be a catalyst in joining these different parts. But there is possibility of Sino-centric hegemony. China has already become the largest public goods provider⁴⁹.

Trade is also booming between Central Asia and China since the beginning of the century. Central Asian export to China mainly includes natural resources while China's export is very diverse. It includes from consumer goods to different machinery and agro products. China started to increase economic development with Central Asian States since 1992⁵⁰.

Garrett Mitchell from George Washington University supposes that China's progress in Central Asia gives a mature thought that China is able to dislodge Russia from its significant and traditional position that it earned and built with its southern neighbors since the collapse of Soviet Union⁵¹.

Russia was maintaining its dominance in Central Asia, however in terms of material capabilities it is facing increasing Chinese presence in Central Asia. Russia conceded its control over Central Asia in order to take Chinese support on global issues. This did not cause conflict between China and Russia. And this situation of Russian and Chinese interaction points to similar conditions of cooperation. Although China's presence in the territory of Central Asia and its capabilities in the shared neighborhood increasing, Beijing offered Moscow benefits on broader agenda. In the result of this situation Moscow engaged into a policy of hedging, taking the benefits of cooperation in other spheres and providing soft resistance in the region. Another important side of this cooperation is instability. It is possible that any change in the case, even in minor factors involved in the process of interaction may lead to conflict and escalation says Vsevolod Samokhvalov⁵².

⁴⁹Contessi, N. P. (2016). *Central Asia in Asia: Charting growing trans-regional linkages*. Journal of Eurasian studies, 7(1), 3-13.

⁵⁰Raballand, G., & Andr esy, A. (2007). *Why should trade between Central Asia and China continue to expand?*. Asia Europe Journal, 5(2), 235-252.

⁵¹Mitchell, G. (2014). *China in Central Asia: the Beginning of the end for Russia?*. Slovo, 26(1), 18-31.

⁵²Samokhvalov, V. (2018). *Russia and its shared neighbourhoods: a comparative analysis of Russia-EU and Russia-China relations in the EU's Eastern neighbourhood and Central Asia*. Contemporary Politics, 24(1), 30-45.

After the collapse of Soviet Union there were opinions that Russia will not have a strong influence in the lives of Central Asia and will leave these states at all. But Central Asia and Russia are strongly connected not only by history but also by economy and politics. Despite, Ukraine crises that appeared between Russia and Ukraine, Central Asia did not cut their ties with Russia. After the sanctions from the parts of Western countries, Russia became much closer to Asia. Central Asia has big potential and it is rich for natural resources but natural resources cannot be insurance for future stable development. The fact that Central Asia is selling its natural resources to Europe and developing its oil production system may worry Russia more than Central Asian oil sell to China taking into account the Western Sanctions⁵³.

Security is the issue that brings together Russia and China and their Central Asian partners. Terrorist attacks, drug smuggling and troubled situation in countries, as Afghanistan and Pakistan that are geographically close to Central Asian countries, worry great powers. Through Central Asian countries drug trafficking and terrorist threat can spread to Russia and China. That is because these two great powers draw more attention to security in their neighbored countries in Central Asia⁵⁴.

Both China and Russia are undoubtedly very powerful countries and they have influential position in Central Asia. One is developing its trade, constructing and investing, second is giving open labor market for many Central Asian countries. Both Russia and China's positions are accepted differently in each state of Central Asia. There are different positive and negative opinions on Sino-Russian hegemony. The thing that should try to do all Central Asian countries is not to compare positions and influence levels of Russia and China, but to get maximum benefit from the relationship of with two great powers and try to keep and increase bilateral turnover in different sectors.

⁵³Laruelle, M. (2010). *Russia and Central Asia*. In *The New Central Asia: The Regional Impact of International Actors* (pp. 149-175).

⁵⁴Odgaard, L. (2017). *Beijing's quest for stability in its neighborhood: China's relations with Russia in Central Asia*. *Asian Security*, 13(1), 41-58.

2 Influence of Sino-Russian relations to development of Kazakhstan

Central Asian countries are comparatively poor but some of them are rich for natural resources that make them strategically important for the US, China, Russia and other great powers. China has appeared in Central Asia as a significant geopolitical and economic actor and it has a purpose to expand its position in economic and political fields. China has been investing energy sector of Central Asia as it supplies 20 % of China's energy and China wants to increase energy supply in the future. In this regard, China will continue developing pipeline network in the region of Central Asia⁵⁵. Russia is also playing important role in the development of region, however in comparison with Chinese investment Russia's investment and role in the development seems modest (Rumer, 2016).

21st century is a time of expansion in trade, energy and investment. China is a huge actor that is increasing its ties with CIS countries and its strategy is to establish trade and financial relationships with Southern Africa, Southeast and Central Asia and the developing region Kazakhstan⁵⁶. If we discuss about Sino-Kazakh relationship, we can say that bilateral trade and Chinese presence in the economy sectors of Kazakhstan increased. China is not the only external partner of Kazakhstan however it still stays as one of the biggest partners. According to data, the amount of Chinese goods imports to Kazakhstan was USD 8,192.7 million or 17% of total imports in 2013. Major goods imported from China to Kazakhstan are mostly electronics, metal good products, footwear and furniture (Ziyadin, 2017).

Kazakhstan is not a rich country but in comparison with other Central Asian countries, it has been developing fast due to its natural resources and citizens of other Central Asian countries that are poorer come to Kazakhstan and makes it a place of migrant workers. The number of migrants arriving in Kazakhstan estimates from 200 000 to 1 million per year. Kazakhstan accepts this migration flow and

⁵⁵Rumer, E. B., Sokolsky, R., & Stronski, P. (2016). *US policy toward Central Asia 3.0* (Vol. 25). Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

⁵⁶Ziyadin, S., Suieubayeva, S., Kabasheva, N., & Moldazhanov, M. (2017). Economic rationale for the investment attractiveness of China at present. *Economic annals-XXI*, (163), 35-40.

wants to legalize work of migrants but large number of migrants work illegally⁵⁷. So, among the post Soviet Republics in the region of Central Asia Kazakhstan is the largest and probably the richest in terms of energy and mineral resources, and it is not the region without problem. Corruption still stays as one of the biggest problems of Kazakhstan⁵⁸. Kazakhstan's energy resource in the region of Caspian Sea is attracting attentions of the US, Russia and China. And this situation makes Kazakhstan the region of great significance to both Asia and Western countries. Since Soviet times Caspian region oil and raw products were supplied to Russia and it was an important place through others could supply crude oil products. Currently, there are also some Russian companies that rule oil production in Caspian region. However, Kazakhstan does not want to depend on Russia in the field of oil production and could construct oil pipelines with China and with Azerbaijan to supply oil through Caspian Sea (Smith Stegen, 2015). Chinese-Kazakh relationship was developed by different agreements and documents. China is Kazakhstan's leading trade partner and Kazakhstan is China's leading partner among post Soviet countries.⁵⁹ About 22 energy companies are active in Kazakhstan with Chinese participation. Chinese share in Kazakhstan oil sector may exceed 40% (Smith Stegen, 2015).

Kazakhstan has more important role in the foreign policy of Russia and China among Central Asian countries due to its natural resources. According to SCO framework Kazakhstan is continuing its energy policy and its cooperation with participant states. American and European scholars say that Russia and China are not cooperating in Central Asia, they are competing. Nevertheless, China and Russia have great ambitions in the territory of Kazakhstan in energy sphere, policy and security. China has leading role in Central Asia due to its rapid development. Kazakhstan possess huge amount of hydrocarbon and has second place among former Soviet countries by its natural resources, that is why energy is important factor for Kazakhstan⁶⁰. Probably, Kazakhstan attracts attentions of Great Powers because of its energy

⁵⁷Kuchins, A. C., Mankoff, J., & Backes, O. (2015). *Central Asia in a Reconnecting Eurasia: Kazakhstan's Evolving Foreign Economic and Security Interests*. Rowman & Littlefield.

⁵⁸Mantel, R. (2015). *EU-Central Asia relations in the energy sector with a special focus on Kazakhstan*. *L'Europe en Formation*, (1), 55-71.

⁵⁹Smith Stegen, K., & Kusznir, J. (2015). *Outcomes and strategies in the 'New Great Game': China and the Caspian states emerge as winners*. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 6(2), 91-106.

⁶⁰Yesdauletova, A. (2009). *Kazakhstan's energy policy: Its evolution and tendencies*. *Journal of US-China Public Administration*, 6(4), 31.

resources. And Kazakhstan itself has multi-vector policy that includes cooperation with both Western and Eastern countries. Since Kazakhstan established its independence, after the collapse of Soviet Union, it could establish good cooperation with other Central Asian countries, however none of them are in the same importance as Russia and China⁶¹. Even geographically Kazakhstan has an interesting and quite important location with its neighbors as Russia, China and distance neighbors as Iran and India. Both big neighbors have important role in Kazakhstan and Kazakhstan continues its multi-vector policy to support cooperation with others.

Central Asian countries after the collapse of Soviet Union had to solve border problem and by Chinese initiative Shanghai Five meeting were organized that showed very fruitful results and due to it countries have decided to continue their relationship in economy, politics, diplomacy, trade, security and other spheres. And since that time countries relationship got new level⁶². Kazakhstan and Chinese relationship mostly develop in the sphere of energy resources and countries have some joint projects.

China is an important trade partner to many countries and for Kazakhstan undoubtedly China is a powerful and key partner. Russia is also key partner due to common historical background of all post Soviet countries. According to Inbusiness.kz Kazakh and Chinese trade was estimated to USD 11.7 billion in 2018⁶³. 12.3% of all Kazakh trade turnover was realized with China in 2018. China and Kazakhstan celebrated 25th years of cooperation anniversary in 2017⁶⁴ and leaders of countries always touch the theme on importance of their cooperation.

⁶¹Mostafa, G. (2013). *The concept of 'Eurasia': Kazakhstan's Eurasian policy and its implications*. Journal of Eurasian Studies, 4(2), 160-170.

⁶²Azarkan, E. (2009). *The Relations between Central Asian States and United States, China and Russian within the Framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization*. Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations, 8(3), 1-21.

⁶³ INBUSINESS.KZ <https://inbusiness.kz/kz/last/bylytyr-kazakistan-men-kytajdyn-sauda-kolemi-11-7-mlrd-aksh-dollar-yn-kuragan>

⁶⁴ KAZINFORM https://www.inform.kz/kz/kazakistan-kytay-sauda-aynalymy-18-mlrd-dollarga-zhetti_a3145784

Kazakh- Russian trade turnover also is getting higher. In 2017 trade amount between two countries was USD 16 billion and Russian experts say that by 2020 Kazakh-Russian trade will reach USD 24 billion⁶⁵. What should be concluded is that Russia and China undoubtedly take really important role in Kazakhstan development.

As it was mentioned Kazakhstan with other Central Asian countries, Russia and China are members of Shanghai Cooperation Organization(SCO) that aims at ensuring peace, security and has partnership in political, economic, energy, logistics and other fields. Kazakhstan is the biggest country by its size in Central Asia and it is a member of SCO that joins 3 billion people on Earth with its members and observer states.

Kazakhstan and China have dry port Khorgos that realizes a very big amount of turnover and has significant role in internal development. Trade turnover in dry port Khorgos in 2019 was USD 1.75 billion⁶⁶ and Kazakhstan is willing to increase goods turnover. Through dry port goods are delivered to other important destinations that expand the strategic role of Kazakhstan to other countries.

Kazakhstan has strategic location and has huge amount of natural resources which attract Russia, China, Europe and the US. Relationship based on natural resources trade may give energy independence to many countries. As long as Kazakhstan can provide and supply energy, it will take benefit and develop. It also may not lose its strategic position. Both Russia and China can influence to future development. However, what happens when natural resources deposits finish?

Countries cannot be depended on natural resources forever. Necessity of alternative energy has already appeared. Each country should consider about their future energy need and the ways how to meet them because none of countries of the world will save their strategic positions by their natural resources.

⁶⁵ КНАВАР24 <https://24.kz/kz/zha-aly-tar/ekonomika/item/269842-aza-stan-men-resejdi-sauda-ajnalymy-tken-zhylmen-salystyr-anda-10-pajyz-a-artty>

⁶⁶ СИНЬХУА НОВОСТИ http://russian.news.cn/2019-02/26/c_137851782.htm

Conclusion

This research tried to define the role of Russia and China in Central Asia. Great powers as the US, European countries, China and Russia always try maintain their hegemonic position and some countries have to maintain friendly relationship due to their geographical locations as Russia does it with European countries and China with some Asian countries. Despite the US is the biggest economy in the world and it has influence almost in every corner of the world, currently there are many countries that are rising and may become its opponents. The US and China try to have cooperative relationship, however China's rise on the world arena worries the US. China has prestige role in Asia due to its location and China invests in Asian countries more than other countries do. Many countries depend on China's production.

Scholars tend to say that Russia and China will create alliance because of several reasons as problematic relationship with the Western countries, their common interests, etc. Both Russia and China work in the territory of Central Asian countries and they have effective position. Central Asian countries react differently to Russian and Chinese involvement in their territory. China and Russia work and invest mostly the countries with huge amount of natural resources. China invested in oil pipeline construction in Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan to connect oil transportation system with their countries and do different good transportation through Central Asian countries. Central Asia is a gate to Europe while China is a gate to ocean to Central Asia. Russia due to history has also an important position. Russian companies work in Central Asian countries and Russia accepts millions of people on work migration. Some states of Central Asia think Russian and Chinese rise is a threat while others receive it as beneficial factor.

Both Russia and China are important partners for Central Asia. Central Asian countries, Russia and China are members of common organization and they have good cooperation, trade relationship, they care about mutual security. Russia and China will be great partner also in the future for Central Asian countries and they have many fields that should be developed. These countries are closely connected due to their geographical location and history and in future they can be key points that will open further important relationship with other countries. As long as small countries have natural resources and strategic location,

they will not lose, they will develop and get benefit from major powers which seek for the area where they can rise their power, position and influence.

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