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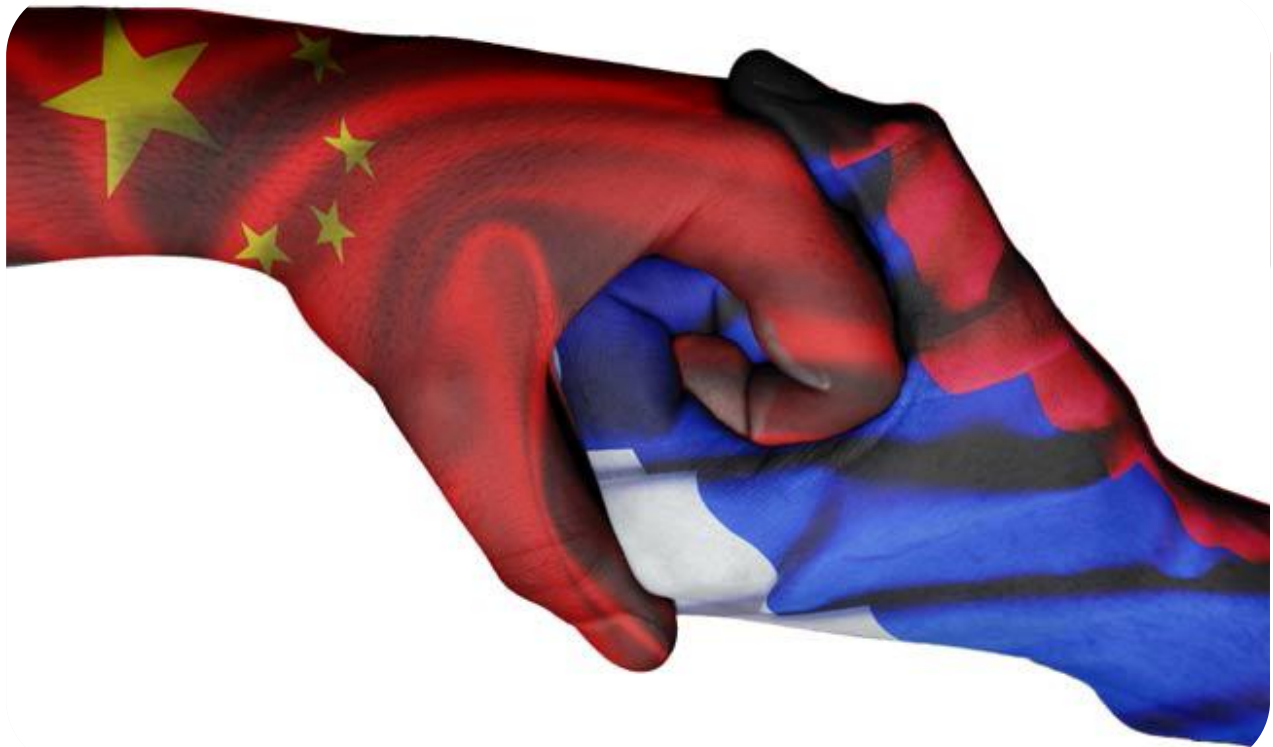
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# The “Great Game” of the 21st Century: the Contest for Central Asia between China and Russia



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## I. Acknowledgement

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## II. Abstract

*In recent times, the topic of China and Russia has been prevalent in many spheres of discussion. Both countries are harnessing attention from the world for a number of reasons, chief of which is their stance on certain aspects of international relations. The goal of this study is to disclose the motivations of China and Russia in the Central Asian region, focusing on the Republic of Kazakhstan. Both the Dragon and the Bear have their vested interest in the region. This paper will focus on analyzing their actions and state rhetoric, with the goal of determining the motivations and interests of both parties in regards to Kazakhstan.*

### III. Abbreviation List

<b>bn</b>	billion
<b>BRICS</b>	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
<b>CA</b>	Central Asia
<b>CIA</b>	Central Intelligence Agency
<b>CIS</b>	Commonwealth of Independent States
<b>EDU</b>	Eurasian Development Bank
<b>EEU</b>	Eurasian Economic Union
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>KMT</b>	Kuomintang
<b>mn</b>	million
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>OBOR</b>	One Belt One Road
<b>WWI</b>	World War One
<b>WWII</b>	World War Two
<b>PRC</b>	People's Republic of China
<b>RF</b>	Russian Federation
<b>RUB</b>	Russian Ruble
<b>R&amp;D</b>	Research and Development
<b>SAM</b>	Surface-to-air missile
<b>SCO</b>	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
<b>SREB</b>	Silk Road Economic Belt
<b>TPP</b>	Trans-Pacific Partnership
<b>UNSC</b>	United Nations Security Council
<b>USA</b>	United States of America
<b>USD</b>	United States Dollar
<b>USSR</b>	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
<b>VCIOM</b>	Russian Public Opinion Research Center

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## Introduction

Over the centuries, Asia has been a host to a plethora of civilizations, wars and events. The resource-rich nature of the region, coupled with geographic diversity and human potential has made it a hotbed of activity. Many powers originated in the Asian region, starting with the ancient Babylonians, the dreaded Mongols and Tatars, China of course and even to an extent Russia, who owes much of its strength to the Asian backbone (Stearns, Adas, & Schwartz, 2011). What we are seeing now, China and Russia vying for power in the region seems like the continuation of the “Great Game”—the contestation for power between the Russian and British empires in Central Asia which took place for the majority of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Karasov, et al., 2010).

China is rapidly becoming a major player on the world stage. In the past several decades, China has experienced unprecedented growth, becoming a world economic leader. The rapid industrialization and urbanization led China to become a power to be considered with. This newfound status of a major power came with sufficient ambitions as well. After the fall of the USSR, there was a power vacuum left in the Central Asian region. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kirgizstan are no more part of the Soviet Union and are crucial partners for establishment of regional power. Both China and Russia vie for power in the region. However, relations between them appear to be friendly, barring on strategic partnership. The question remains what China will do to satisfy its national interests.

The reason for choosing this topic is the intricate and unique situation that the region is situated in—China and Russia are on quite friendly, and one might argue close terms. Russia still considers the Central Asian states its sphere of influence, and in many cases that rings true. Its influence in the region leaves little to doubt, in major part due to the lengthy history that Russia shares with the region. However, China is aiming to become a regional leader, and its many initiatives, such as the One Belt One Road and the substantial financial aid, are targeted at winning over its neighbors. As mentioned above, the situation is quite unique, a puzzle for China to attempt solving. There are many actors involved in this scenario, with each side having its own agenda. For the purposes of this paper, Kazakhstan was elected as a case-study due to its arguably dominant position among the Central Asian states. Attempting to analyze the situation may be difficult, mostly due to the complex and nuanced nature of this particular scenario. However, it is nonetheless a fascinating topic that has many layers, many possible outcomes and delicate balance to discover. It could be

argued that the nature of this scenario will prevent it from achieving a definite resolution in the near future (5-7 years) and therefore the conclusions drawn in this paper might not have real world backing; however, it could be strongly argued that the very nature of this geopolitical puzzle lends itself to fruitful analysis.

The current research focuses on the two most powerful actors in the region, namely the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation. Both countries have a vested interest in the Central Asian region. For the purposes of this research paper, the Republic of Kazakhstan has been elected as the subject of a case-study research. The first stage of this thesis is to define the strategic, economic and social interests of both China and Russia in regards to Kazakhstan, with a primary focus on how these interests affect China. Afterwards, the Sino-Russian relationship will be explored and analyzed. Finally, possible future scenarios will be taken into consideration.

## 1.1 Problem formulation

As already stated, the subject of this paper are the Sino-Russian relations in regards to their contestation over influence in the most prominent Central Asian state, Kazakhstan. A problem statement has been formulated, along with three sub questions, each of which is aimed at a specific aspect of their multifaceted relationship:

- Why is Kazakhstan a contested sphere of influence between China and Russia?
  1. How is the relationship with Russia affecting China's national interests?
  2. What are Russia's interests in the region?
  3. What are the future prospects for the Sino-Russian relations?

## 1.2 Structure

The structure of the current paper includes an introduction part, where an outline of the reviewed topic is presented, along with the projected problem statement and several sub-questions.

Following the introductory part are the literature review and methodology sections. The literature review section will focus on the existing literature on the topic, along with the contributions and innovation factor that this thesis brings. In the methodology section are described the application methods for research, along with research design and an overview of the case-study design.

After the Methodology part comes the Theory section. In this section the employed theory of Realist Constructivism will be presented, along with the theoretical concept of Soft Power, each with a description and intended usage explanation.

In the Background section the history of the relations will be presented, along with a contextualization of the state ideologies of China and Russia. This will provide context for the current situation and capability to read further into the scenario.

The Description section will provide context for the main concepts employed in the analysis. The concepts of Foreign Policy and National Interest, which will be used as the structural basis for the analysis.

What follows the core concepts section is the Analysis. This is the main part of the paper and it will focus on analyzing all the different aspects using the provided theories in the manner described by the Methodology section. The analysis will be split into three chapters, each focusing on one set of bilateral relations. Each chapter will be further split into the four constituents of national interest, with a sub-conclusion to summarize the findings of each chapter.

Discussion follows the analysis. This section is reserved for the contemplation of possible future scenarios, based on the findings of the analysis.

Finally, the Conclusion of this paper will provide the results from the analysis, along with possible incentives for future research.

## Literature review

In the following chapter an overview of the most topical literature on the subject will be presented. This literature has been used as the foundation on which the current paper has been built. Following the brief summary of the literature used, their contribution will be juxtaposed with the potential contributions of the current paper, followed by an argument as to how this paper differs from the previous publications on the matter. The unique points of this study will be presented as a case for its legitimacy.

The majority of the literature regarding the Sino-Russian relationship focuses almost exclusively on one of two topics: their relationship in regards to the West, and energy security. The papers by Michal Makocki and Nicu Popescu, and Yana Leksyutina are broad and thorough in their scope, analyzing their relations from a multifaceted perspective. While both these papers approach the topic in a similar manner, their conclusions differ. The paper by Makocki and Popescu, *“China and Russia: an Eastern Partnership in the Making”* argues that the relationship between Beijing and Moscow will not reach a higher status and is more a friendship of convenience. The paper by Leksyutina, *“Russian-Chinese Relations: Rapprochement or Rivalry?”* on the other hand concludes that the Sino-Russian relations will continue to improve in all aspects, evolving into a strategic partnership. This difference in perception can be attributed to a variety of factors. An argument can be made that the most prominent of these factors is the timeframe. The two papers were written six years apart, and in that time the balance of power shifted dramatically.

As previously mentioned, the other significant sector with a number of published papers in regards to the Sino-Russian relations is the energy sector. For example, the literature by Linda Jakobson, et al. *“China’s Energy and Security Relations with Russia”*, and James Henderson and Tatiana Mitrova, *“Energy Relations between Russia and China: Playing Chess with the Dragon”*, focus exclusively on the energy relations between China and Russia, a topic that is justifiably trending. In both cases the focus is on the mutually beneficial relations between Moscow and Beijing, with a strong emphasis on their pragmatic nature. The consensus appears to be that both China and Russia are friends out of convenience. The conclusions of both papers are ones that predict a more or less continuation of the trend, with China gaining more leverage and Russia being wary of overextending in its reliance on the Asian Dragon.

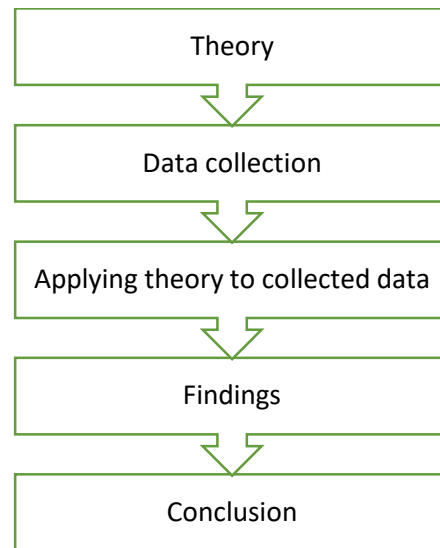
With the above papers being merely a sample of the vast resources used in this paper, it is evident that the Sino-Russian relations are a popular topic. Furthermore, these relations develop in one of the most dynamic regions on the planet, Asia; this is the main reason for the relevance of the current paper. The change in the dynamic within the last several years is evidence that this topic is very fluid and prone to bursts of transformation, mostly spurred by the volatility of Russia on the geopolitical stage. Furthermore, while there are many papers that explore the Sino-Russian relations, fewer of them focus on the Central Asian region, which could be argued is becoming an important stage for international influence. Both China and Russia have vested interest in the Central Asian states, with Kazakhstan arguably being the most sought after. Another aspect that this paper contributes to is the employment of the Realist Constructivist theory. This new theory is still seldom used in any academic papers, however it could be argued that the analytical tools it brings to the table are tailor-made for exploring topics such as the Sino-Russian relations. The infusion of ideas and consequently ideology as important factor in the foreign policy decision making provides new depth to the analysis of the actions of both Beijing and Moscow; something that is arguably missing from a large part of other publications concerning the same topic.

## Methodology

This section focuses on the research approach that will be implemented in this paper. An overview of the research process will be presented, outlining the methodological aspects that have been implemented. The goal of this section is to showcase the methods that were used to achieve and produce the conclusions. An explanation of the research approach will be presented, where the method of research will be presented. Implementation of the theories will be presented in the Theoretical Framework section, where the employed theory and theoretical approaches will be showcased, along with their intended use in the analysis. The case-study part will present an explanation of the employed case-study research method, along with its implementation in this thesis. Research context will provide brief overview of the contextual aspects of the research and explain the need for it in this paper. The research design section will showcase the general structure of the paper and how the flow of information will be presented throughout it. The information gathering section will be tasked with explaining the methods for obtaining the information, along with the major sources and types of data that will be used throughout this paper. The following two sections labeled Qualitative content analysis and Quantitative data will focus on the different aspects of data used in this paper. Each one of the aforementioned sections will explain the process behind the information gathering and its employment in the analysis of the topic. Lastly, the Limitations section will highlight the possible shortcomings and obstacles, both inherent to the topic and the employed methods, which may be encountered in the process of writing.

### 3.1 Research Approach

The two mainstream methods of research approach, which highlight the connection between theory and the research itself are the deductive and inductive approaches. For the purposes of this paper the deductive approach was chosen; the reasoning behind this is the choice of theory establishing the guidelines for the research process, not the other way around. Using deductive approach, a theoretical framework has been established, followed by the collection of data from varied sources, and the subsequent analysis applying the theories on the collected data. This will provide a streamlined and straightforward approach to the research and reliable results for the conclusion.

*Figure 1: Deductive Approach*

*Source: Author*  
(Bryman, 2008)

### 3.2 Case Study Research

The aim of this paper is to analyze the Sino-Russian relations and how the contestation over the Central Asian region affect their attitudes towards each other. However, the topic is very broad as it includes a total of 7 actors and a number of fields of interaction to analyze. Therefore, a case study research was elected so as to circumvent the overwhelming breadth of the subject matter. To achieve sufficiently plausible results, while adhering to the spatial constraints, a single state out of the five Central Asian states has been chosen—the Republic of Kazakhstan.

As per Flyvbjerg, the selection of subjects for a case study can be separated into two broad categories, the Random selection and Information-oriented selection (refer to Appendix A). The first category is the random selection, which is primarily utilized to avoid systematic biases. The Random selection method is further subdivided into two categories—random sample, which is used to attain a representative sample, thus allowing generalization of the entire population, and the stratified sample, which is used for generalizing specific sub-groups within the population. However, the random selection method is not applicable for the current case, as introducing chance to the choice of which country in the Central Asian region to subject to a case study is unscientific and misguided. Therefore, it is only logical that the second category, which is information-oriented



selection be the suitable choice. According to Flyvbjerg, information-oriented selection is used *“To maximize the utility of information from small sample and single cases. Cases are selected on the basis of expectations about their information content”* (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 35). Therefore, utilizing the information-oriented selection would be beneficial for this paper; however, within it, there are four subcategories of cases, and before proceeding, a case type must be elected. Of the four types of cases, the strongest argument can be made for the case study of Kazakhstan falling into the extreme/deviant case type. The extreme/deviant type is reserved for obtaining information on unusual cases, where there is a bright outlier, be it a problematic one or a good one (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Compared to the critical or maximum variation case types, the extreme/deviant type is the most applicable in the case of Kazakhstan; considering this topic deals with such intricate and complex constructs as states.

The Republic of Kazakhstan was elected as the case study research subject due to a number of reasons, chief among are its prominence in the region, its bilateral relations with both the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation, and its importance to both analyzed parties. As explained in the previous paragraph, an argument can be made that Kazakhstan is an extreme/deviant case type. To support this choice, it should be noted that, as previously mentioned, states are complex structures, and despite their closeness, the Central Asian states have differing agendas and motivations. While it is possible to generalize them under a common denominator from the start, it would be detrimental to the study since they are not on equal footing. Furthermore, as already stated, Kazakhstan is arguably the most prominent state in the region, its relations with both Beijing and Moscow would provide a rich narrative for the case study. Lastly, the question of generalizing can be addressed with the fact that both China and Russia prioritize Kazakhstan, and with it being the most influential out of the five CA states in its own right, an argument could be made that it is possible to follow the trends in the region based on this case. A case could be made for any of the other four Central Asian states, however I believe that focusing specifically on Kazakhstan will provide the most results, relative to the overall subject matter.

The type of research strategy that will be employed in this paper is reliant on the specific problem statement, and more specifically the type of question that it asks. In the case of this paper, this question is “How”. According to Yin, there are three types of research strategies, advantageous for different types of research (Yin, 2014). The choice of which research strategy to employ

depends on the question asked. The three types of strategies are as follows: explanatory, descriptive and exploratory. Each of the three methods of research strategy is applicable for different cases and using the correct one depends on three conditions. Said conditions consist of the type of research question posed, the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioral events, and the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events.

### 3.3 Theoretical Framework

In order to properly approach the research and more importantly, attain valuable and reliable data from it, a proper use of tools to “frame” the study are necessary. For this purpose, a primary theory and a theoretical concept have been elected to be used.

The primary theory employed in this paper will be Realist Constructivism, a relatively new and arguably progressive approach to International Relations. Using Realist Constructivism will provide the necessary tools for analyzing the situation between China and Russia in the context of this paper, thus shedding light on aspects of their relations that may otherwise be overlooked when using a more conventional tool. Realist Constructivism, being a hybrid of the two mainstream theories in IR, brings much needed extra tools in the form of ideas and identity as an influencer in the decision-making process. Realism, while a unquestionably potent theory for analyzing a plethora of subjects, is often times too broad and encompassing, in some cases insufficient for properly exposing the fine intricacies of the relations on the international arena. In the case of this paper, Realism in both its classical and neoclassical variations is insufficient in factoring in the very central factor of identity that plays a crucial role in both China and Russia’s foreign policy making. Constructivism on the other hand, while well-versed in the subject of identity, is unable to provide a sufficient explanation for the power struggle that is happening in the Central Asian region. Therefore, while undoubtedly stellar theories with a proven track record, an argument can be made that both Realism and Constructivism by themselves fall short of encompassing the full spectrum of the relations and more importantly, the decision-making process in the foreign policy between the two Asian giants. Therefore, an amalgam of the two aforementioned theories in the form of Realist Constructivism could provide the necessary tools for analyzing the situation, both taking into account the apparent power struggle and the differing identities that shape their decision-making. Finally, the concept of Soft Power will see use, albeit limited one. It was chosen

primarily because of the history that both China and Russia share with the Central Asian countries and the cultural influence that they exert on them. It could be argued that the centuries of mutual history between Russia and the Central Asian states plays a significant role in their modern day relations, and the Soft Power concept will help highlight these influences.

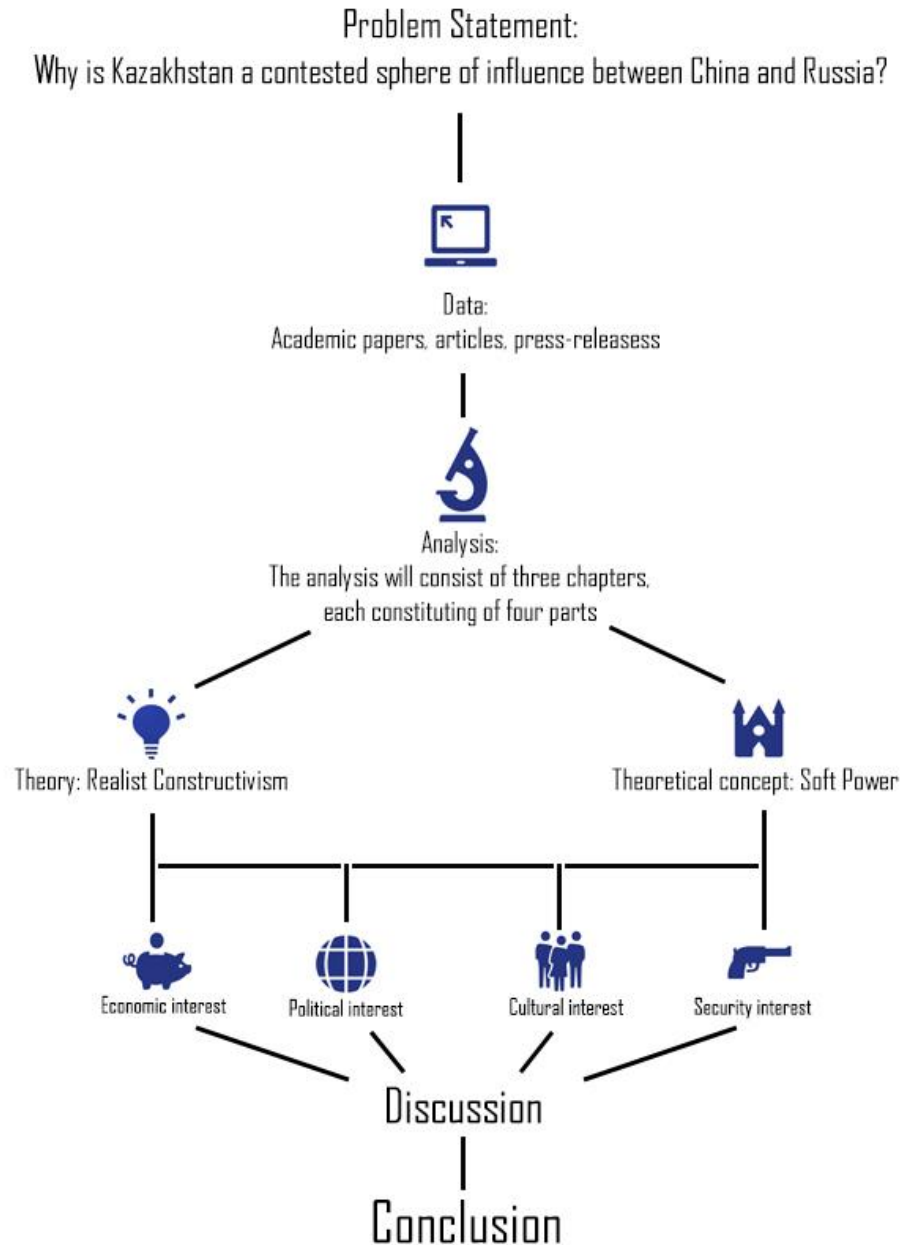
### 3.4 Research Context

Due to the long-winded history that the region shares, it is nigh-impossible to approach the provided problem statement without sufficiently fleshing out the background, providing context for the research. For these purposes a look over the more recent history of the region and the actors in it will be provided, along with a focus on the important dates, events and actors. Furthermore, a contextualization of what could be argued to be the state ideologies of both the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation will be presented in the background section. These ideologies, contextualized with the aid of Realist Constructivism will provide a valuable tool in analyzing and rationalizing the foreign policies of both Beijing and Moscow. Lastly, parts of the analysis will also serve dual role as background information as well, presenting the interests of each party. The goal is to provide a foundation for this research, as I strongly believe that the current relations between the parties involved have deep roots in history.

### 3.5 Research Design

The research design below illustrates the thought process and the general flow of the paper, emphasizing the most important aspects and main focuses of said paper

Figure 2: *Research Design*



Source: Author

### 3.6 Data Selection

By using qualitative content analysis and analysis of secondary data, qualitative and quantitative research methods will be employed in this paper. A wide range of literature and official data will be used throughout this paper.

The method for selecting data that will be employed is the selective sampling technique. Using this non-probability form of sampling permits the selection of documents based on personal judgment. The reasoning behind the use of the selective sampling technique is the large volume of data that pertains all the actors involved in this study. Including all possible relevant data on the topic, which includes in total three major countries and spans across a plethora of fields is a nigh-impossible task. Therefore, a more stringent approach to data collection is employed. The main focal points for data collection will be the two main actors—China and Russia. Data on the Central Asian state of Kazakhstan will be gathered mostly from state official statements and sources related to the influencers. Lastly, the availability of data will be more nuanced due to the inclusion of both information in two languages, English and Russian, allowing for a more wholesome approach to the subject.

### 3.7 Qualitative Content Analysis

The qualitative content analysis employed in this paper will follow the classical formula established by Alan Bryman. This type of analysis relies on the researcher to interpret the information provided in the source material in a scientific manner. Analyzing a number of articles, press releases and interviews with the use of the tools outlined previously in this chapter will provide a solid basis for conclusive results (Bryman, 2008).

Since the focus of this paper is on the relations between China and Russia, and more specifically their attitudes and actions towards the Central Asian state of Kazakhstan, establishing a baseline for qualitative data is in order. The categories of qualitative data that will undergo usage and analysis are articles from reputable sources, scholarly material, official press releases from the governments and second-hand interviews. The goal is to have a coherent set of qualitative data that will provide sufficient information on the topic of multilateral relations.

### 3.8 Quantitative data

The approach to quantitative data in this paper will be straightforward and streamlined, in order to give a better understanding on the topic. The main reasoning for this straightforward usage is the fact that all the actors involved are full-fledged states with functioning capabilities; therefore, it could be argued that there is an abundance of data available for analysis.

As this paper focuses on the multilateral relations between the stated actors, there will be an emphasis on raw data in fields such as production, trade and exports. One may reason that the relations between said countries could at the very least be affected by said fields of activity. An additional approach to quantitative data analysis will be the acknowledgement of the longitudinal aspects. Taking into account the longitudinal aspects may provide a picture of the changes over time, which will contribute to understanding the underlying motivations, at least to some extent. Furthermore, it could be argued that applying the theoretical approaches that will be used in this paper to the longitudinal aspects of the analyzed data will give another depth to the multilateral relations and contribute to the wholeness of the topic at hand, and more importantly, the conclusions that will be derived.

### 3.9 Limitations

The primary limitation is the topic at hand. The relations between China and Russia are intricate and convoluted, especially taking into consideration their contestation over Kazakhstan. An argument can be made that most topics that concern high-level international politics have inherent limitations. The constant development and fluidity of international relations means that few things remain static and more often than not are in a constant flux. This limitation is difficult to address, however, it is possible to argue that this limitation is woven into the topic itself and requires to be worked with, instead of remedied in some manner. Another limitation connected to the topic is the sensitivity it carries. The high-level political interactions always carry weight, and even in my attempts to secure interviews with state officials from all three countries, I've encountered road blocks connected to this exact limitation. Addressing this limitation is possible by having a balanced approach to the matter and approaching the used literature with an objective and analytical view.

The employed theory could also be considered an inherent limitation to all projects. It could be argued that using another theory would lead to different results and therefore conclusions. The employment of Realist Constructivism as a primary theory limits the viewpoint to that of Realism. However, an argument can be made for Realist Constructivism being the most viable theory for this subject. It can be argued that both the PRC and RF are leaning more towards Realism, therefore to gauge their actions with most accuracy and efficiency, with little lost in translation, Realism is a necessity. However, considering the prevalence of state rhetoric, the state ideology in regards to both China and Russia, it can be concluded that simply using Realism would not be sufficient for the purposes of this paper, as it provides a too broad perspective and reasoning. Therefore, the employment of Realist Constructivism is arguably the most fitting choice.

The employed methodology also carries a set of limitations. The purposive sampling technique employed in the writing of this thesis means that there is a possibility for omitting data. Bias is addressed by employing an objective, unbiased approach to selecting data, gathering data from several different sources on the matter. However, the importance and dynamism of the topic means that there is a large volume of material, thus in this case time constraints becomes a limitation. Similarly to bias, this limitation is somewhat remedied by employing a balanced, unbiased approach, with the aim of having a healthy representation of the most prevalent views on the topic. The last limitation is a logistical one, concerning language. As the focus of this paper is China, there is a large part of information on the topic that is inaccessible due to the language barrier. This limitation can be somewhat remedied by gathering material from translated sources such as books, official statements, articles and press-releases.

## Theory

In this section the theories used in the paper will be presented. The theoretical framework is of paramount importance and will be the *de facto* tool to analyze the topic. The theories used will determine the point of view, and more importantly, the approach to the data and how it will be processed.

The main theory used in this paper is the rather new Realist Constructivism. As a supplement to the theory of Realist Constructivism the concept of Soft Power will be employed as well. The theory of Realism Constructivism was chosen primarily because of its unique approach to the matter of combining the theories of Realism and Constructivism. Realism is a theory that is widely utilized in both the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation. An argument can be made that the realist point of view lies at the heart of the decision-making of both Beijing and Moscow, thus using said theory is appropriate to fully flesh out the actions of both powers. The marriage of Realism and Constructivism is beneficial for the purposes of this paper, as both China and Russia have discernable ideas and ideology driving their actions. The employment of the constructivist toolset in the Realist Constructivist theory will add a new level of understanding to the analysis, something not possible with employing only using Realism. Conversely, as already mentioned, Realism is an integral part of the relations in the region, and merely using Constructivism would not provide the appropriate depth of understanding. Therefore, the theory of Realist Constructivism was elected as the primary analytical tool for this paper.

The Soft Power concept is a theoretical approach, which was chosen because of the storied history that China and more importantly, Russia have with the Central Asian countries. The Soft Power concept will be used to shed light and decode their actions in regards to the Central Asian state, and how much the cultural influence from both sides may affect their decision making.

For the purposes of understanding the complex nature of Realist Constructivism, a brief overview of both Classical Realism and Constructivism will be introduced below, followed by a full-fledged introduction to the Realist Constructivist theory itself.



## 4.1 Realism

A primary driving force in the study of international relations, Realism has been a prominent theory for centuries. Dating back to Niccolo Machiavelli, Realism is one of the main branches when it comes to study in the field of international relations. Along with Classical Realism, there is Neorealism and Neoclassical Realism; however, as Realist Constructivism employs the Classical Realist worldview, the brief exposition below will focus only Classical Realism (Morgenthau, 1978).

The roots of Realism lie in the belief that politics, like society, is governed by objective laws which stem from human nature. Understanding these laws is necessary before attempting to use them to improve society. According to the theory of Realism, human nature has not changed since the period of classical philosophies of China, India and Greece discovered the objective laws of said nature. Thus, the laws of politics which stem from human nature are age-old, providing an argument that novelty is not a defining factor in political theory, and conversely old age is not a detriment (Morgenthau, 1978).

The defining characteristics of the theory of Realism are the struggle of power, survival agenda for the states and the anarchic state in the international political system. The four tenets of classical Realism are as follows:

1. That states are the central actors in international politics rather than individuals or international organizations,
2. That the international political system is anarchic as there is no supranational authority that can enforce rules over the states,
3. That the actors in the international political system are rational as their actions maximize their own self-interest, and
4. That all states desire power so that they can ensure their own self-preservation.

However, Realism has its limitations. Over the years, Realism faced many critiques and even the development of neorealism/structural Realism by Kenneth Waltz was in order to “mend”

the vulnerabilities of Realism. Furthermore, Constructivism is thought to be in opposition of Realism, with them both being mutually exclusive paradigms. The main critique is the reliance on human nature as the main foundation (Morgenthau, 1978).

## 4.2 Constructivism

As already mentioned above, Constructivism is a theory in international relations that positions itself as an alternative to the firmly established theories of Realism and Liberalism. Constructivism advocates the point that the main actors are governments with identity, and a social landscape which serves the basis for a state. The distinguishing characteristic of Constructivism is that it acknowledges the many variables of international relations through the prism of social constructs. Variables such as “anarchy”, “power” and “interest” are perceived as social constructs (Wendt, 1999).

According to the tenets of Constructivism, the defining aspect of interstate relations is identity. Constructivism approaches the study of international relations through the school of sociology, thus perceiving states from an anthropological point of view. According to Wendt, it is necessary to perceive states as “people”, anthropomorphizing them and giving the human qualities (Wendt, 1999). According to him, identity performs three crucial roles in society:

1. The identity provides the actor and the other actors information on who they are
2. Identity helps players communicate to each other who they are
3. The identity possesses a certain set of preferences and interests when it comes to choosing a course of political action.

According to Wendt, there are four levels of identity:

1. Corporate identity—states acting as an organizational actor, ruling the society through the structures of political power
2. Type identity—a political regime and economic system
3. Role identity—the ability of states when it interacts with other states

4. Collective identity—when two or more states can be brought under the same umbrella, a common identity denomination

There are several aspects, besides identity, that differentiate and define Constructivism as a separate field of study in the school of international relations. The first of them is the concept of “interest”. Identity and interest are tightly intertwined in Constructivism. Interests stem from the identity of the actor, however, the identity itself is a product of the social structure, the interplay between the actors. The concept of social structures refers to notions such as the principles of social differentiation, social institutes, and the principle of social role division in a given system. Therefore, the identity and interests of an actor, a state are largely constructed by social structures, and not birthed from human nature or the domestic political climate (Wendt, 1999).

The social structure itself is more of an intersubjective rather than a material concept, as seen by constructivists. Intersubjectivity applies to the concept of material events, in that it is up to the actors to determine a given event, based on their ideological predisposition. When an idea is modified, so does the meaning of the material events. A characteristic of Constructivism is an idealistic worldview. This is represented in the identity and interests of a state are determined by the social structures, which in turn are formed by the shared ideas, and not material powers. Therefore, the identity and interests of actors are neither preexistent, nor are they infused by nature, but rather birthed and subsequently shaped on the basis of ideas; this is what is referred to as wholeist approach of constructivists (Wendt, 1999).

### 4.3 Soft Power

*“When one country gets other countries to want what it wants—might be called co-optive or soft power in contrast with the hard or command power of ordering others to do what it wants”* – Joseph Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, 1990 (Nye J. , 1990)

Soft power has become a standout approach to conducting international relations in the past several decades. Joseph Nye, the person who coined the term “Soft Power” in the 1980’s has become a staple in the community of international relations.

Joseph Nye explains the rise to prominence of the Soft Power concept as a means to explain the recent developments in international relations. According to Nye, states used to prioritize their military defense in order to ensure survival, however, in the modern landscape, where it becomes increasingly cost-prohibitive and frowned upon to demonstrate and use military power, other tools come into prominence. Communication, manipulation and coercion are the new instruments used by prolific states to get what they want (Nye J. , 1990).

The origins of Soft Power can be traced back to its ideological predecessor—the cultural hegemony theory envisioned by Italian Marxist theoretician Antonio Gramsci. The cultural hegemony theory argues that states use cultural institutions to maintain power in capitalist societies (Nye J. S., 2004). In the case of China, the seed of Soft Power was arguably planted much earlier. The permanence of concepts and ideas akin to Soft Power can be observed in ancient Chinese philosophy. Lao Tzu writes: “*Water is the softest thing, yet it can penetrate mountains and earth*”. This shows clearly the principle of softness overcoming hardness (Tzu, BC). The general notions of Soft Power are hardly new, however, not until Joseph Nye have they been gathered under one umbrella term.

Joseph Nye explains the concept of Soft Power as “*the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes you want*” (Nye J. , 1990, p. 65). Nye envisions three ways of affecting the behavior of other states:

1. Threats of coercion (“sticks”)
2. Inducements and payments (“carrots”)
3. Attraction

Soft power represents the third option; attraction. While the first option relies on intimidation, the second on bribery, attraction uses the allure of the state to coerce the target to do as requested. According to Joseph Nye, the Soft Power of a state comes from culture, values and policies—intangible power resources. Examples of Soft Power resources are human rights, individual opportunities, democracy, etc. Soft Power is not exclusive to states—NGO’s, corporations and firms are also able to wield soft power (Nye J. , 1990).

As already mentioned, the concept of Soft Power will be used as an additional tool for analyzing the specific relation in the China-Russia-Kazakhstan triangle, and more specifically the bilateral relations between Russia-Kazakhstan and China-Kazakhstan.

One could argue that Russia longs for the long-past glory days of the USSR, therefore the push towards the CA states may be seen as more than just power politics. The idea of a reunited Soviet Union in some form may as well be a driving force when it comes to CA countries. Furthermore, this notion is backed by the fact that Russia has, or at the very least had the same idea for Belarus, which it voiced clearly (RFERL, 2011). Therefore, one could argue that Russia has more than just power play and pure politics when it comes to the Central Asian countries. Thusly, the concept of Soft Power was elected to be used in this scenario.

#### 4.4 Realist Constructivism

Still a fledgling creation in its infancy, this idea, not a fleshed out theory yet, Realist Constructivism nonetheless brings a lot to the discussion and analysis in international relations. Infusing the tenets of Constructivism into the realist worldview, thus performing a successful merger of the two previously thought of exclusive paradigms of the school of international relations. I strongly believe that the relatively new approach of Realist Constructivism is necessary for this paper and will bring forth a unique perspective that neither Realism nor Constructivism are able to provide on their own.

*“The realist constructivism would look at the way in which power structures affect patterns of normative change in international relations and, conversely, the way in which a particular set of norms affect power structures.”* (Barkin, 2003, p. 337)

Both classical Realism and Constructivism have their critiques. Realism, for example is often criticized for its broad nature- *“The proposition that the nature of international politics is shaped by power relations invariably is listed as one of the defining characteristics of Realism. This cannot be a uniquely Realist claim, however, since then every student of international politics would be a Realist”* (Barkin, 2010, p. 334). Therefore, while Realism may be on point with international relations being a struggle for power and self-interest, it is, however, a too broad of a definition—the concept is too general to be able to identify the intricacies of said relations. On the

other hand, Constructivism is primarily criticized by Realists for its inability to comprehend that the same international organizations that it champions were created and are permitted to exist simply because it is in the interest of states (Barkin, 2010).

Taking the critiques and limitations of both Realism and Constructivism, a hybrid approach is proposed by some scholars, chief among which is J. Samuel Barkin. Realist Constructivism calls for a thorough study of how exactly ideas, as per Constructivism, affect the relations and power balance among actors on the international stage. As already mentioned, Realist Constructivism combines the principles of Constructivism with the worldview of Realism, providing ideas as a tool, emphasizing their importance and using them to understand the decision making process behind the actions that states take in the pursuit of interests. From a Realist Constructivist point of view, states assess the situation and make decisions that benefit them the most, often at the expense of other states. However, as per the theory, there is no one objective assessment, applied by all states; Realist Constructivism urges its users to turn towards ideas and ideology, and use them to gauge the perception of self-interest and the definition of power when it comes to states as actors (Barkin, 2010).

The primary tenets of Realist Constructivism are closely related to Realism, as the name suggests. As in Realism, there exists a constant struggle for power and power is the one of the primary goals of state, along with survival. However, unlike classical Realism, where the decision making process is deeply rooted in human nature, Realist Constructivism argues that this same decision making process is a product of the national identity. What this constitutes is the difference in understanding and methods of pursuing power, which is strongly correlated with the identity of the state. Therefore, the identity of the state and its social construction actively shape its understanding of power, and as a consequence determine how said power is achieved (Barkin, 2003). However, the states being the ultimate holders of power still possess the ability to interpret and thus manage the identity as it is best suited. Furthermore, even within the state, the determinant of identity interpretation are the actors holding power, therefore possessing control over it. As Samuel Barking puts it:

*Even if all actors in the international system at a given point in time accept the same basic set of normative structures, they will differ in their interpretations of those structures, whether for*

*rationality self-interested reasons or for psychological reasons. When interpretations differ, the power of the interpreter continues to matter.* (Barkin, 2010, p. 135)

Thus, the inherent struggle for power, a tenet of Realism and one of its support pillars, is approached uniquely by each state, an approach that is deeply rooted in the identity of said state. In the case of China and Russia, it could be argued that the actors with most control over the identity are Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin respectively. As will be explained in the Background section, both China and Russia have an overtly advertised identity, taking the shape of a nation-defining ideology. In both cases, said identity took shape relatively recently, within the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Description

The following chapter will introduce the core concepts used to structure the analysis. They represent an integral part of the build, providing a common ground for analytical comparison. The concepts introduced are Foreign Policy and National Interest.

### 5.1 Foreign Policy

There are many definitions of foreign policy, by just as many scholars, thus making said term rely heavily on context and definition. In order to properly discuss foreign policy, a shared understanding of the concept needs to be presented, so that there is a consensus on the matter of the term. For the purposes of this paper, the term foreign policy is formulated as *“A country’s foreign policy, also synonymously called international relations policy, is a set of goals outlining how the country will interact with other countries economically, politically, culturally and militarily, and to a lesser extent, how the country will interact with non-state-actors”* (Dahn, 2014). Thusly, the concept of foreign policy used in this paper will constitute of four parts—economic, political, cultural, and military. It could be argued that the military part can also be substituted with security, since security encompasses both offensive and defensive actions, as well as securing the nation’s basic needs. In the case of China, there is also the backbone of China’s foreign policy, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Initially a foundation for the relations between China and India, the principles are considered a general guideline for Beijing’s foreign policy. These principles consist of the mutual respect for each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression against anyone, mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence (Li, 2017). The principles are an extension of the national ideology and are a more tangible representation of the national interests. The national interests are themselves an inseparable part of the foreign policy and it could be argued that they are the backbone of the state’s interaction on the international level. The nature of foreign policy and its actual application stems from the state’s national interest. Therefore, to understand foreign policy, one has to understand the nature of national interest.



## 5.2 National Interest

*“The core interests of a nation, psychological or tangible, greatly impact its foreign policy objectives.”* (Dahn, 2014)

The concept of national interest used in this paper will be closely attached to the one of foreign policy, therefore making their utilization inseparable. The rationalization of the concept of national interest can be described as a government’s natural ambition to protect and secure their sovereignty, as well as secure the development of the state and its individuals. In accordance to Li, *“Since the national interests are paramount, foreign policies are designed by the government through high-level decision making process”* (Li, 2017, p. 23)

*Figure 3: National Prerogatives*



*Source: Author*

(Li, 2017)

The flowchart above indicates the progression of national interests, in accordance to their importance. The two competing views on national interest are the moral idealism, which argues that nations should cooperate and agree on moral standards of conduct, and political Realism, in

which each nation is acting primarily in its own interests. The realist use approach views the question of national security as the core of national interests. As the working theory in this paper is Realist Constructivism, which is firmly entrenched in the realist worldview, the question of national interest will be analyzed from the realist viewpoint, one that is deeply rooted in the selfish agenda of the state. As with foreign policy, the national interest can be divided into economic, political, cultural and security categories. These four divisions make up the full spectrum of the states' national interest. The economic interests is the most constant of national interests, and takes importance in the case when a nation's survival is reasonably secured. The economic interest can be further divided into several subcategories, which constitute the interest itself. The four subdivisions of the economic national interest are to provide the citizens with an adequate standard of living, ensure the economic growth and development of the state, establish favorable trade relations with other nations, and enhance the international status of the state. The political interests of the state involve the nation's push of its interests, with the core concepts of it being state sovereignty, political independence and international status. Identity, or cultural interests, are arguably the most vaguely definable, with them revolving mostly around the spiritual aspect of the national interest. The identity interests are tied to and aimed at promoting such concepts as the nation's beliefs, values, culture, religion, history, and system of government. For the purposes of this paper, the cultural national interests will be viewed through the prism of the Soft Power concept. Lastly, the security interest is arguably the most important, being the foundation of the national interest. As fig. 3 indicates, the security of the nation should be achieved to a reasonable degree before any of the other interests become prominent. The national security itself is achieved through military superiority, territorial security, energy stability, maritime interests and several other, lesser objectives (Li, 2017).

The interests themselves are divided into several categories, based on their importance, prevalence and continuity. Arguably the most important distinction between interests is the importance. According to Li, it is divided into Vital (Core), Important (General) and Less Important (Secondary). The Core interests are of utmost importance to a state, and under no circumstance can they be compromised without dire consequences. The Core interests are further subdivided into external and internal focuses, with the former representing foreign threats, and the latter being concerned with the provision of education, prevention of poverty and the safeguarding of the

environment. The important interests focus on the issues such as human rights, politics and the security of the national interest through a sustainable world order. The last and least important classification is the secondary interests—under this category fall the cultural proliferation, and other lesser matters of national interest (Li, 2017).

## Background

In the following section, an overview of the relations between China, Russia and Kazakhstan will be explored, as well as a contextualization of the current ideologies of both Beijing and Moscow. Considering the rich history that these countries share, it is important to put their current relations in perspective by delving into the past. Furthermore, the current interactions between the actors are difficult to analyze without taking into consideration their history in the past. Thusly, an overview of the relations and interactions over the years is in order.

The first part of this section will be split into three sub-chapters, each focusing on the relations between the specific actors. Firstly, the Sino-Russian relations will be looked upon, going over the highs and lows of their relations throughout the years. The second chapter will focus on the Russian relations with Kazakhstan over the years. This chapter is important due to the fact that Russia in both imperial and Soviet incarnations has had domain over said state for the majority of the last 150 years. Thusly, their history is an important aspect of the imminent analysis of their current relations. Lastly, the relations between China and Kazakhstan will be looked upon, as it is also an important aspect when it comes to analyzing their current relations.

It should be noted that the history of the relations will only be looked upon in the previous hundred or so years, as it can be argued that the last century largely shaped the Sino-Russian relations into what they are today.

The second part of this chapter will provide an overview of the contextualized ideologies of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation. The ideologies presented are derived from statements and governmental rhetoric and are there to provide a coherent narrative, which is further supported by the application of the theory of Realist Constructivism. The two ideologies are going to be applied in the analysis as a tool under to be used with the theory of Realist Constructivism.

### 6.1 Background on Sino-Russian relations

The first events that will be looked upon are from 1922, with the formation of the USSR. In 1922 there was a large influx of refugees from Soviet territories to China, thus increasing the Russian population of cities such as Harbin and Shanghai. In the following years the relations between

China and the USSR remained largely stable, up until the unsuccessful Guangzhou uprising in 1927, after which the relations between USSR and China deteriorated and any diplomatic exchanges were terminated. This was a somewhat surprising move because up until 1926, the USSR was supporting the KMT and Chiang Kai Shek. However, with him advancing to power, a conflict between his side and the communist party in China erupted, which was against the USSR agenda. Supporting the communist party in China became a priority for the USSR. Amidst the turmoil, a new state is created in the far east of China. This revived government, calling itself the Manchurian republic was established with the help of Japan and is hostile towards both China and the USSR. Starting from 1937, slowly building up confidence, the Manchurian republic, which by that point identified as the Great Manchurian Empire, was used as an invasion point for a Japanese forces, on both China and the USSR. From 1937 to 1942, the USSR helped China in fighting back the Japanese invaders by providing specialists, trainers and pilots to the Chinese. Furthermore, cooperation was set up between the two countries on a number of logistical aspects. In 1939 a trade treaty was signed between China and USSR (Lukin, 2013).

Between 1945 and 1949 China is in a state of civil war, with the Soviet Union supporting the Chinese Communist Party. On October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1949, the USSR is the first country to recognize the People's Republic of China, merely a day after the state was established. What followed was a period of friendly relations, marked by the China-USSR "*Treaty of friendship, alliance and mutual assistance*" (Lukin, 2013). Strides are made in the bilateral relations, with mutual assistance in rebuilding both countries. A controversial decision was made by the USSR to give up all the intelligence resources and assets they had previously infiltrated into China. However, with the death of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin and the ascent of Nikita Khrushchev, the relations between the two global pillars of Communism deteriorated. Mao Zedong was upset with the critiques towards Stalin by Khrushchev, labeling the strategies employed by the new Soviet head command as "revisionist" and the concept of "peaceful coexistence" as wrongful. This worsening of the relations led to the annulment of the previously established trade treaties. Furthering the deterioration of their relations is the quote by Mao Zedong stating that capitalism has won in the USSR. The Sino-Soviet Schism reached its apogee in 1969 when a series of border skirmishes between Chinese and Soviet troops commenced. These small scale armed conflicts marked the lowest point of the Sino-Soviet relations. Following the limited but intense border clashes, a meeting to ease the tensions was called in between then Secretary Zhou Enlai and the head of the

Soviet committee of ministers. An agreement was reached to ease the tensions between the two communist states to reestablish diplomatic and trade relations. In the following decade the relations slowly thawed, giving way to mutual cooperation. By the 1980's, the easing of the relations allowed for the reestablishment of general consulates, inter-party relations and even student exchange programs, among other cooperative behavior (Lukin, 2013).

A significant improvement in the diplomatic relations only started after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Following the dissolution of the USSR, the relations between China and the newly formed Russian Federation continued to improve. In 1992, the Russian President Boris Yeltsin made his first official visit to China, during which trade was resumed and border negotiations were commenced. Both parties identified their relationship as “*good-neighborly and mutually beneficial*”, with active military-technical cooperation between the two countries began (Henderson & Mitrova, 2016). In the period between 1991 and 1996, China and Russia maintained friendly relations, slowly becoming closer. In May 1994 Chinese and Russian officials signed the agreement of Sino-Russian Border Management System—this agreement was intended to aid border trade and counteract criminal activity. In the same year, during his visit to Moscow, Jiang Zemin called the Sino-Russian bilateral relations a “*constructive partnership*” (Lukin, 2013). By the end of 1996, the relations between the two countries evolved into a “*strategic partnership of coordination*”, and the following years saw even further improvements. Furthermore, 1996 also saw the formation of the Shanghai Five, an organization including China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan and Tajikistan (Henderson & Mitrova, 2016). This organization focused on improving mutual trust in the military aspect, along with reduction of border forces and economic cooperation. The end of 1998 saw China and Russia issuing a joint communique, promising to build an “*equal and reliable partnership*”, among the first strategic partnership agreements for China (Gracie, 2015).

However, despite the purported strategic partnership and the growing closeness between China and Russia, the relationship was not regarded as a priority by the new Russian ruling elites—their focus was westward, primarily aimed at the USA and trying to integrate Russia into the European space (Braterskiy, 2015). Asia was seen as a secondary vector, with the East being generally regarded as a potentially volatile region and close ties to any one country could lead to difficulties with the West, while any economic tradeoffs would be hardly worth it. Certain government

officials saw a threat in China, going as far as distancing itself from the East in favor of western allies, claiming Russia is an “outpost” of democracy in the East, fearing the relations with Beijing would hurt the political standing with the West (Voskresenskiy, 2013). Furthering the notion of carefulness was the still existing psychology of the “Chinese Threat”, a leftover from the decades of unfavorable relations, and the growing concerns regarding China’s involvement in Russia’s energy-rich, but sparsely-populated Far East (Henderson & Mitrova, 2016).

Vladimir Putin’s ascend to power changed the situation, with a new external policy, one that included an increasing of and support for the intensification of the Sino-Russian relations. Furthering the ties between China and Russia was the signing of the treaty of Good-Neighborly and Friendly Cooperation in July of 2001 by initiative from Jiang Zemin. Also in 2001 was the transformation of the Shanghai Five into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which also included Uzbekistan, in addition to the previous five members. Territorial disputes in the region, which were one of the reasons for the formation the aforementioned Eurasian alliance were to a certain extent remedied with a treaty in 2005, in which China received a number of contested territories (Leksyutina, 2012). In the following years, various cultural enterprises were organized in both China and the Russian Federation, such as year of Russia in China and year of China in Russia, in 2006 and 2007 respectively. Xi Jinping maintains that Russia is an important strategic partner and Russia was the first country to be visited by the newly appointed Chinese leader in 2013 (The Guardian, 2016).

As of this year, China and Russia have close economic, strategic and diplomatic ties. Both countries see eye to eye on a number of issues, such as the conflict in Syria and the involvement of the United States in the South China Sea. In the territorial disputes such as Tibet and Taiwan, China has the backing of Russia (Jakobson, Holtom, Knox, & Peng, 2011). Trade wise, as of 2012, Russian exports make up 2.3% of China’s market, while China makes up a much more noticeable 10.1% of the Russian imports (WTO, 2017). However, not everyone is on the opinion that Russia and China will make long-term strategic partners. Stephen J. Blank is on the opinion that Russia is in process of succumbing to China:

*“the political and economic failures of Russia in developing its Far East ties sabotaged its move towards a stable status of a great Asian state and even more so its ability to play this role...If this*

*trend continues in its current form, Russia will turn into a junior partner to China and a resource trove, instead of an independent Asian state” (Blank, 2011, p. 19).*

## 6.2 Russia and Kazakhstan

The republic of Kazakhstan is arguably the most influential and prominent of the Central Asian states, spanning 2,724,900 km<sup>2</sup>, with a population of more than 18 million with more than 6 million native Russians (AS RK, 2009). Kazakhstan has a long history of relations with Russia, particularly Tsarist Russia. However, for the purposes of this paper a more narrow focus on the history starting from the 20<sup>th</sup> century and onwards will be sufficient.

After the October revolution and the subsequent establishment of the USSR, what is present day Kazakhstan underwent several territorial and status changes, when finally in 1936 the Kazakhstan Soviet Socialist Republic was established. Kazakhstan SSR was an integral part of the USSR, with its vast amounts of energy resources and rich ore deposits. What is more importantly, the Kazakhstan SSR was home to the Baikonur spaceport, which to this day is used by Russia for its space programs. After the dissolution of the USSR, Kazakhstan was the last of the Soviet republics to proclaim independence on 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 1990. Starting from its independence and to this day, the president of the Republic of Kazakhstan is Nursultan Nazarbaev. Russia and Kazakhstan maintain close strategic relations, in part due to the large Russian population of Kazakhstan (Glushchenko, 2010).

Economically, both countries share a strong bond, with Russia accounting for 11% of Kazakhstan’s exports, second only to China, while Kazakhstan accounts for 3.3% of the exports of the Russian Federation (OEC, 2017). Both countries are founding members of the SCO and have cooperated on matters of security and border integrity on several occasions.

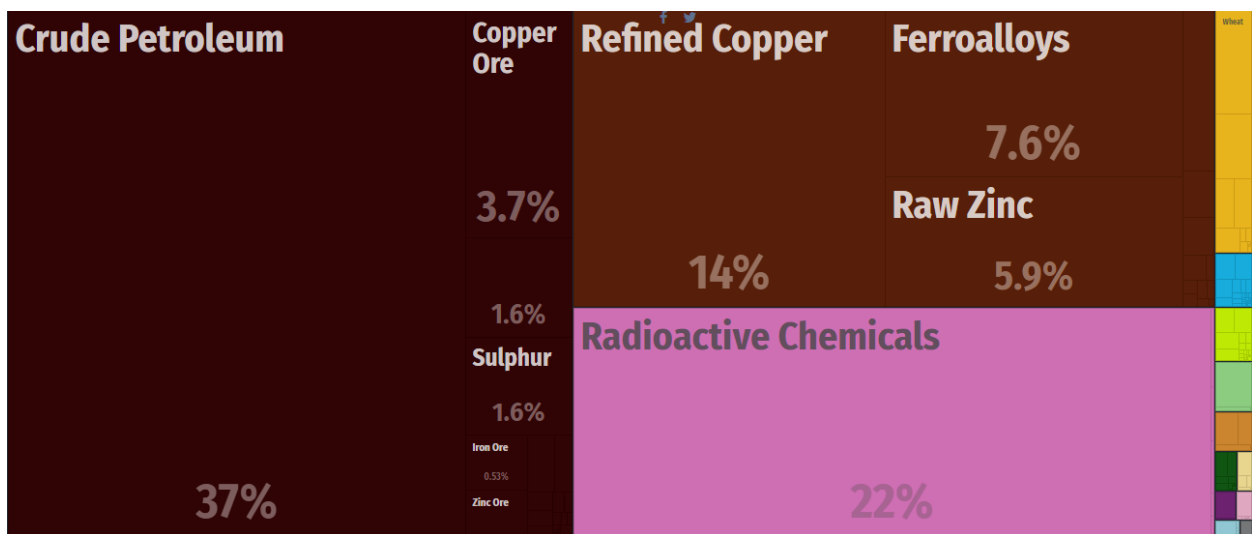
The unique aspect of the relations between Russia and Kazakhstan is the large ethnically Russian minority in Kazakhstan-more than quarter of the population are ethnically Russian. Furthermore, Russian language is an official language in Kazakhstan, along with being the most prevalent, followed by Kazakh language (AS RK, 2009).



### 6.3 China and Kazakhstan

The relations between China and Central Asia over the span of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have mostly been absent, largely due to the latter being part of the Russian Empire and the USSR afterwards. However, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the opportunity for beneficial relations presented itself. As already mentioned, the Central Asian states are rich in resources, more specifically energy and natural ores. Thus, the relations between China and Kazakhstan are founded on economic partnership. Kazakhstan is arguably the most prominent of the Central Asian states and is a target of China’s attempts at globalization. The “One Belt One Road” initiative goes through Kazakhstan and it is crucial to China’s strategy of growing influence. China invests in the infrastructure, agriculture and most prominently, the energy sector of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is a premier trading partner of China in the region—crude oil, mineral ores and radioactive chemicals constitute the lion’s share of the CA state to the PRC (OEC, 2017)

Figure 4: Kazakhstan exports to China



Source: (OEC, 2017)

Furthermore, an oil pipeline was established between China and Kazakhstan in 2005, which increased the trade flow of crude oil and natural gas (H-T, 2017).

On the political side, China and Kazakhstan are both founding members of SCO, and enjoy a healthy amount of cooperation. Through the SCO, they cooperate on border control, anti-terrorism and joint military training. Due to the proximity of the volatile Xinjian province to the Kazakh border, both China and Kazakhstan have tight cooperation in regards to anti-terrorist endeavors.

Both countries participated in large-scale anti-terrorist maneuvers in 2006, known as the “Tian-Shan-1-2006” (Sputnik, 2016).

## 6.4 The “Chinese Dream”

*“To realise the Chinese road, we must spread the Chinese spirit, which combines the spirit of the nation with patriotism as the core and the spirit of the time with reform and innovation as the core,”* Xi Jinping (BBC, 2013)

The ideological concept described below will be used as a driving factor, born of the national interests of the Chinese state, while at the same contributing to the evolution of said interests. For the purposes of this paper, the concept of the “Chinese Dream” will be used as an umbrella term for China’s foreign policy ideology. While the “Chinese Dream” incorporates many ideas and values in regards to the China’s domestic matters, such as expanding the middle class and a more egalitarian society, the focus will be almost exclusively on its employment in the foreign policy field. In accordance to Realist Constructivism, the state identity is the one that determines its foreign policy and the methods with which it achieves power. In the case of China, it could be argued that said identity is the “Chinese Dream” paradigm. The concept itself will be derived from a number of interpretations of Xi’s new ideology, therefore providing a more nuanced and multifaceted approach to this otherwise vague term.

Using a catchy slogan is an established approach for China’s leadership. In the past, such slogans as “Hide and Bide” and “Peaceful Development Strategy” were employed to compress foreign policy behavior models into poetic phrases. Deng Xiaoping was credited with coining the slogan *“Bide its time, hide in brightness, not seek leadership, but do some things”* (Berkofsky, 2016, p. 67). The “Hide and Bide” paradigm was employed by Deng Xiaoping as a relatively isolationist and non-interfering approach to international affairs, focusing on the economy and growth instead. However, China’s deeper involvement in the world economy, along with substantial investment into less developed countries have led to the “Hide and Bide” paradigm being nigh-impossible to follow. Therefore, the “Chinese Dream” replaced Deng’s “Hide and Bide” paradigm (Berkofsky, 2016).

The concept of the “Chinese Dream” was first introduced by Xi Jinping in 2012, and since has been a hot topic of discussion. The conceptual and linguistic origins of the “Chinese Dream” can be traced back to a 2010 book written by a senior colonel of the PLA Liu Mingfu: *The China Dream: Great Power Thinking and Strategic Posture in the Post-American Era*. The main theme throughout the book is that China should regain its position as the world’s most powerful state, a position it had for a millennia before its humiliation at the hands of Western powers (Mingfu, 2010).

The main theme of the “Chinese Dream”, one that is more solidly defined, is the theme of National Rejuvenation. In his November 2012 speech, Xi Jinping introduced the concept of the “Chinese Dream”, amidst an exhibition called the “Road to Renewal”. Said exhibition featured artifacts related to various stages in the history of China, among which were ones related to the defeats in the Opium Wars and the Qing Dynasty overthrow in 1911. Amidst these artifacts of failure Xi Jinping promoted his idea of a national ideology, one of combining traditions of the old, something that made China great in the past, with the rapid progress that the country is experiencing now. Xi Jinping predicts the “Chinese Dream” will be completed by 2049, the centennial anniversary of the PRC.

The Chinese Dream is vague and immaterial in its essence, which leads to various interpretations. The spectrum of interpretation ranges from the “Chinese Dream” being Xi’s own scheme to stay in power and promote a cult of personality, to a benevolent reinvention of the national identity and peaceful coexistence. Axel Berkofsky, professor at Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale (ISPI) argues that the “Chinese Dream” paradigm will turn into an ideology. He writes:

*“China’s currently very assertive policies related to territorial claims in the South China Sea are somehow hinting at what Xi means when he speaks of “renewal”: the unilateral “renewal” of China’s territorial borders. Indeed, over the last three years – at least so it seems – China’s (very) assertive and at times aggressive policies related to territorial claims in the East and South China Seas have been an instrument to help “resurrect” Chinese power as declared in the “China Dream”.”* (Berkofsky, 2016, p. 66)

Using the interpretation of Berkofsky, along with the overt and straightforward rhetoric for world leadership penned by Liu Mingfu, the concept of the “Chinese Dream” is a tool for gaining, or rather regaining influence and lost power, at least from the perspective of the PRC.

For the purposes of this paper, the interpretation of the “Chinese Dream” will be one in accordance with the theory of Realist Constructivism. Therefore, the “Chinese Dream” will be treated as the identity, in accordance with which China tries to secure its survival and more importantly, gain power on the international arena.

## 6.5 Great Russia Ideology

*“Before all else, it should be emphasized that the fall of the Soviet Union was the largest geopolitical catastrophe of the century. For the Russian people it became a true drama. Tens of millions of our fellow citizens and compatriots suddenly ended up beyond the Russian borders. Furthermore, the crumbling epidemic leapt on Russia itself”* Vladimir Putin (Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2005)

As with the previous part in this section, the ideology of the “Great Russia” will be used as an umbrella term for Russia’s foreign policy strategy. Unlike the “Chinese Dream” ideology, which has a concrete name, the “Great Russia” one is named for the purposes of this paper. While it is mentioned in the official rhetoric, the term is not formally adopted. Nonetheless, an argument for its definite existence will be presented below, based on the views of several respectable authors.

The paradigm that Putin so strongly pushes in the past 6-7 years is oddly similar to the “Chinese Dream” – national rejuvenation and regaining past glory. As with China, the history of Russia is filled with often interchangeable moments of greatness and times of strife. In the last couple of centuries, Russia has had a golden age under Peter the Great, and has suffered at the hands of Western powers and domestic turmoil (Karasov, et al., 2010). With the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia was plunged into a decade of chaos and disarray, dubbed the “Wild Nineties” by contemporaries (Menon, 2017). The rampant corruption, straining war in the Caucasus and frivolous oligarchs created an image of Russia that was stark and memorable. However,

following the sudden resignation of President Boris Yeltsin in 1999, the situation in the Russian Federation gradually changed. A change in course ensued, spearheaded by Vladimir Putin (Henderson & Mitrova, 2016).

Writer and journalist Oliver Bullough argues that Putin has had the goal of reestablishing Russia as a world power and reclaiming the old glory of the USSR since his ascension to the post of president in 1999. As Bullough writes: *“His domestic policy was to restore stability, to end what he called the “revolutions” that had brought Russia low. His foreign policy was to regain Russia’s place in world affairs.”* (Bullough, 2014) With the failure of obtaining a position both in NATO and the EU, Russia has turned towards its old compatriots with whom it shared a common ideological foundation—the former Soviet States and Communist China (Braterskiy, 2015).

Over the past two decades, Russia gradually distanced itself from the West, attempting to become an assertive power in its own right. Putin’s paradigm, the one that he has been slowly building up in the past two decades has been more and more pronounced since he returned to the president chair following reelection in 2012. According to Bullough, at least some of Putin’s rhetoric is a product of his upbringing:

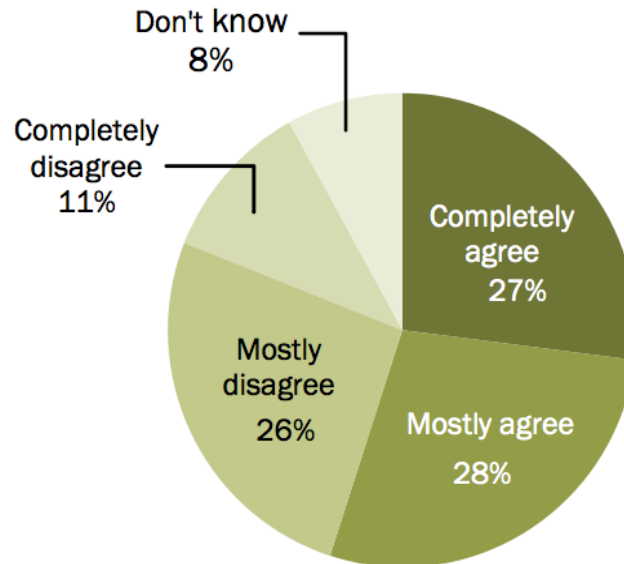
*“Born in Leningrad in 1952, Putin came of age in the Soviet Union’s golden years, the period after the USSR’s astonishing triumph in World War Two. Sputnik, the hydrogen bomb, Laika the dog and Yuri Gagarin all bore witness to Soviet ingenuity...Life was stable. People got paid. The world respected them. Everyone knew their place.”* (Bullough, 2014)

This old glory, the apogee of the Soviet Union is an ideology that is arguably very difficult to be suppressed, especially if said age was so recent, in relative terms. This notion is further backed by the large percentage of the Russian population who share Putin’s view on the dissolution of the USSR. According to a study performed by PEW Research center in 2014, the number of adults (18+) in Russia who consider it a misfortune that the USSR split is 55%. The diagram below shows the division on the votes:

Figure 5: Opinion on the dissolution of the USSR

## Misfortune USSR Does Not Exist

*% who ... it is a great misfortune that the Soviet Union no longer exists*



Source: Spring 2014 Global Attitudes survey. RUS1b.

**PEW RESEARCH CENTER**

*Source: (PRC, 2014)*

*“Pew has asked Russians this question twice before, and got roughly the same result: 58% in 2009 and 50% in 2011 ... Today, roughly 6 million fully post-Soviet Russians have reached adulthood” (PRC, 2014)*

This statistic clearly shows that even though a part of the interviewed adults have no conscious recollection of the USSR due to their youth, they nonetheless consider it a tragedy that it dissolved. This opinion is in line with what Vladimir Putin banks on. Furthermore, an argument could be made that Putin’s rhetoric is successful, propagating the notion of the greatness of the USSR. However, merely looking into the Soviet period and trying to recapture it is not the case. As Bullough writes:

*“Putin restored some Soviet symbols. He brought back the Soviet national anthem and Soviet emblems, and praised the Soviet triumph in World War Two. But he embraced pre-Soviet themes too. He befriended the Russian Orthodox Church, and name-checked anti-Soviet philosophers like Ivan Ilyin, whose remains he had repatriated to Russia and buried with honor”* (Bullough, 2014)

The ideology that Putin seems to follow is one of a Great Russia, taking the most successful bits from the vast and turbulent history of the country. In 2001, Putin reinstated the Soviet anthem as the official anthem of the Russian Federation, albeit with slightly changed lyrics. Furthermore, in 2009 a portrait of Joseph Stalin was displayed during the victory parade on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, a move that sparked controversy abroad (Sputnik , 2013). Russia’s current course does not follow a single one ideology from its past, but rather an amalgam of its subjective successes.

One thing that often escapes the translation is the distinction between “Русский” (Russkiy) and “Российский” (Rossiyskiy)—the former refers to an ethnical identity and belonging, while the latter is one of a territorial and cultural affiliation. This difference is important, since the misunderstanding of the term may lead to a completely different interpretation. As Dmitry Linnik, chief of the London bureau Voice of Russia states:

*““He is a nationalist - in the federal 'Russian', not ethnic 'Russian', sense of the word. That is his biggest driving force, I think - not hunger for power or personal ambition.”* (Bullough, 2014)

Thus, while the rhetoric appears to be of a nationalistic flavor, it is in reality deeply rooted in the centuries of multiculturalism that Russia has had. This notion is important as it will provides the foundation of Moscow’s interests in the Central Asian region.

Aligning this interpretation of a “Great Russia” ideology with Realist Constructivism for the purposes of this paper yields a useful and coherent tool for gauging the foreign policy of Russia.





## Analysis

In this section the analysis of the subject will commence. The analysis section will be divided into three chapters, each of which will focus on a different set of the multilateral relations. Furthermore, each chapter will be split into four segments, in accordance to the tenets of foreign policy and national interest established in the “Description” section. These four parts are the economic interests, political interests, identity interests, and security interests, as outlined by Li (Li, 2017). These four interests encapsulate the full spectrum of national interests, therefore providing a wholesome image of the regional situation when in regards to the foreign policy of the involved actors. The employed theory will be Realist Constructivism, along with the “Chinese Dream” and “Great Russia” ideologies as a tool of analyzing the foreign policy paradigms of China and Russia. The Soft Power concept will be used as a subsidiary tool of analysis, when it is deemed necessary.

In the first chapter, the relationship between Russia and Kazakhstan will be analyzed and extrapolated upon. The intricate relations between the two ex-Soviet States will be analyzed in light of the contestation for influence in the region. The second chapter will focus on China’s relations with Kazakhstan, analyzing the goal of Beijing in regards to each facet of its national interests. The third and final chapter will center on the Sino-Russian relations, with their multifaceted relationship analyzed according to the previously mentioned foreign policy and national interest aspects. Lastly, every chapter of the analysis will finalize with a sub-conclusion, outlining the primary focus and findings of the chapter.

### 7.1 Chapter 1: Relations between Russia and Kazakhstan

*“Russia has been a great power for centuries, and remains so. It has always had and still has legitimate zones of interest abroad in both the former Soviet lands and elsewhere. We should not drop our guard in this respect, neither should we allow our opinion to be ignored.”* V.V. Putin (Bullough, 2014)

The main themes throughout this chapter will be Russia’s pivot to the East. The paradigm shift that started in 2011-2012, shortly followed by the reelection of Putin as president once again, turned out to be a major game-changer in international politics. However, the shift towards Asia

was arguably put in motion before the events in Ukraine, and quite possibly the same paradigm shift led to said events in the first place; even though, from an outside perspective it seemed like the opposite. Braterskiy argues that throughout the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, Russia actively tried to integrate with the West. Braterskiy writes:

*“The West was ready to integrate Russia (and in the economic aspect largely succeeded), but refused to integrate Russia as a whole, with the latter retaining its sovereignty, national interest, and the capabilities to advance said interests. On the contrary, as integration goals the West was content with singular political and economic players, who acted in a rational, selfish interests, unable to join forces to attain mutual benefits”* (Braterskiy, 2015, p. 15)

The Russian Federation was not keen on such a deal, therefore it put forward an “all-inclusive” proposition—integration into the Western institutions (NATO, EU), along with a unified economic potential in the form of a *“Unified Europe from the Atlantic to the Ural”* (Braterskiy, 2015, p. 17). However, according to Braterskiy, the negotiations were sabotaged by the United States, who were afraid of losing their influence over Europe (Braterskiy, 2015). This notion, while controversial, lines up with the Realist worldview provided by the Realist Constructivism.

Following the failure to integrate with the West on favorable for Russia terms, a gradual pivot towards other actors on the international stage was enacted. At the same time Putin’s rhetoric of regaining the old glory, the “Great Russia” ideology started to be more prevalent. Following the war in Georgia, and especially the Ukrainian crisis, which from the Russian perspective were necessary measures to maintain its security and prevent the encroachment of NATO, Moscow turned towards the East, focusing on China and attempting to maintain influence in the Central Asian region (Braterskiy, 2015). The establishment of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) is what could be argued an attempt to maintain and further solidify the control of the former Soviet Republics—something that was direly missing in the 90s.

### 7.1.1 Economic interests

The economic interest is one of the most persistent importance, virtue of every nations' desire for survival, stability and development.

Russia has been a major trade partner of the majority of the Central Asian states for a significant amount of time. All five of the Central Asian countries being former Soviet republics contributed immensely to the natural formation of said trade relations. The main categories of export for the Central Asian states to Russia are energy resources, agricultural products and mineral ores. As of 2015, Russia accounts for more than 30% of the imports of the republic of Kazakhstan, and 11% of the export (OEC, 2017).

It should be noted, that Russia was in "charge" of redistributing the lion's share of energy resources from the Central Asian states, buying them at below market prices and pushing them forward to its energy partners. However, with the oil crisis in 2014, followed by the Ukraine crisis and the sanctions imposed upon Russia, the energy market between Russia and the Central Asian states suffered a significant blow (Umbach & Raszewski, 2016).

Kazakhstan maintains favorable economic ties with Russia. Both Russia and Kazakhstan are founding members of SCO, and Kazakhstan is also part of the Commonwealth of Independent States, which significantly eases the trading between the two nations. However, in the past couple of years, trade relations between the CA states and Russia diminished (Umbach & Raszewski, 2016). Furthermore, with the imposition of sanctions upon Russia, thus limiting its import and export capabilities, Russia needs to turn towards other sources for its economic needs. Between 2012 and 2015, Russia's import and export numbers shrank from 324 to 185 billion USD and from 480 to 317 billion USD respectively. This is a plummeting decrease of 75% in imports and 51% in exports, respectively (OEC, 2017). Due to the crisis in Ukraine, Russia has fewer friends on the international stage, and even though it always maintained a favorable disposition towards the CA states, now it is more than ever that Russia needs them. It could be argued that close partnership with the CA states, and more specifically Kazakhstan is part of the ideology of Moscow, while also being a necessity. A "pivot to the East" as it was called is part of its current ideology. Furthermore, it is necessary for Russia's economy to survive.

## 7.1.2 Political Interests

This section focuses on the political interests that Russia has in regards to the Central Asian states, and more specifically Kazakhstan. The political interests that the Russian Federation has vested in Kazakhstan are of paramount importance, both according to the Kremlin and the Realist Constructivist view. Kazakhstan being an ex-Soviet republic with a large part of the population of ethnically Russian origin is a defining factor to the political ambitions of Moscow.

It could be argued that the Ukrainian crisis was a point of no return in deciding the political interests of the Russian Federation. With Russia now at odds with the West, it was inevitable that a more pronounced turn towards its eastern neighbors was going to happen. Kazakhstan being the most prominent of the Central Asian states places it high on the priority list of Russian foreign relations. It could be argued that Russia's political ambitions in regards to Kazakhstan are greatly aided by the persistent Soft Power that it exerts over Kazakhstan. Long reigning president Nursultan Nazarbaev has been quoted saying *"Russia was, is, and always will be our closest neighbor, friend, ally, and partner in the economic and political relations"* (Radio Azattik, 2016). The long history that both countries share plays a crucial role in their relations.

Figure 6: Attitude of ex-Soviet republics towards Russia



Source: (Stratfor, 2011)

The establishment of the EEU could be perceived as step towards retaining influence in the CA region, and possibly reintegration in the future. The current ideology of Russia supports it, and there is already a set precedent of the integration negotiations with Belarus (RFERL, 2011). Considering the Russian Federation consists of 21 or 22 republics, depending on the viewpoint, it is only fitting for the national ideology to be shaped in a way to further emphasize unity, while at the same time encouraging further closeness with former countrymen. Furthermore, Putin has been overtly hinting at reunification attitudes in relation to Kazakhstan:

*“It is my deep conviction that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was a national tragedy on a massive scale. Incidentally, at that period, too, opinions varied, including among the leaders of the Union republics. For example, Nursultan Nazarbayev was categorically opposed to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and he said so openly proposing various formulas for preserving the state within the common borders.” (Putin, 2004)*

Approaching the relations between Russia and Kazakhstan from a Realist Constructivist perspective reveals undertones to their relation and the ambitions of the former in regards to its political interest. Kremlin has openly voiced its desire for a closeness between the former Soviet States, and Kazakhstan is no exception. The ideology birthed and nurtured in the Soviet Union is still strong both in the government and the majority of the Russian population. Less than 30 years have passed since the dissolution of the USSR, and a return to a more union-like relations with the former states is still appealing (PRC, 2014). Russia considers the Central Asian states its backyard, countries still under its sphere of influence. The case of Kazakhstan is even more pronounced, considering that more than 6 million of its population are ethnically Russian, and the Russian language is more ubiquitous than its Kazakh counterpart. Therefore, it could be argued that the political interests that the Russian Federation has vested in Kazakhstan are born of the ideology for a Great Russia, regaining lost power.

A more extreme interpretation of Putin's plans for Central Asia, and Kazakhstan in particular can be distilled from Putin's remarks regarding Kazakhstan. Referring to the venerable president of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev, Putin has been quoted saying: *"He achieved a unique feat—creating a state on a territory where a state has never existed...In this regard he [Nazarbaev] he's a unique man in the post-Soviet statesmanship climate"* (Michel, 2014). This underhanded compliment was made shortly after the Crimean crisis, implying Putin's doubts in the legitimacy of the Kazakh state. However, this single quote is not sufficient evidence of any aggressive intentions of the Kremlin in regards to Kazakhstan's territorial integrity, and as stated above, is a rather extreme interpretation of any possible intentions.

### 7.1.3 Identity Interest

The identity interest, also known as cultural interest, as defined by Li, is one of primary importance. In the case of the Russian Federation, said identity interest in regards to Kazakhstan is deeply vested in its historical relationship with Central Asia and its aspirations of resurrecting the glory of the past. The case of Kazakhstan is the most prominent, since as previously mentioned, there are more than 6 million ethnic Russians residing there. Therefore, in its relations with Kazakhstan, Russia has a considerable boost in its Soft Power projection.

*“Information is power, and modern information technology is spreading information more widely than ever before in history.”* — Joseph S. Nye (Nye J. S., 2004)

In the case of Kazakhstan, Russia possesses a major advantage in terms of projecting its Soft Power through information. The widespread use of the Russian language and adherence to largely the same popular culture is evident. Looking at the rating of the most visited websites in Kazakhstan, it is obvious that the populace is within the cultural sphere of influence of Russia. Barring the global giants such as Google, Facebook and Wikipedia, the top 15 most visited websites are populated by Russian products (Alexa, 2017).

*Table 1: Most popular websites in Kazakhstan*

1	YouTube.com	6	Yandex.ru	11	Google.ru
2	Google.kz	7	Google.com	12	Gov.kz
3	Vk.com	8	Ok.ru	13	Kolesa.ru
4	Mail.ru	9	Wikipedia.org	14	Instagram.com
5	Nur.kz	10	Olx.ru	15	Aliexpress.com

*Source: (Alexa, 2017)*

As the table above indicates, the presence of media of Russian origin in the Kazakhstan webspace is overwhelming. Vk.com, the Russian counterpart to Facebook occupies 3<sup>rd</sup> place, with the latter ranking in 24<sup>th</sup> place. Thus, from a perspective of information influence, Russia has a strong holding in the Central Asian state.

An even more important factor, one that directly contributes to the prevalence of Russian media consumed in Kazakhstan is the widespread knowledge of Russian. According to a census from 2010, almost 95% of the population can understand Russian, with 85% being completely fluent in it, able to freely read and write. For comparison, the percentage of the population that understands Kazakh language is at 62%, with 60% being fluent speakers (Demoscop, 2010).

An important factor that arises from this cultural closeness is the apparent positive attitude towards the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). An annual report for integration attitudes in the post-Soviet republics shows that the Kazakhstan population is among the most positive towards economic integration with its CIS partners. According to a report conducted by the Center for Integration

Studies of the Eurasian Development Bank in 2016, the population of Kazakhstan is positive in regards to unifying the currency in the EEU—58% voted positive, with 27% negative and 15% undecided. These numbers are amongst the highest of the 5 countries that participated in the census. For reference, only Kyrgyzstan has a higher number of positive respondents at 69%, and lower number of negative responses at 25%. What is more, the same tendency can be observed in the other questions, such as creating unified telenetworking companies—the population of Kazakhstan voted 69% for, and 18% against, trailing only behind Kyrgyzstan in positive responses (72%), and having the lowest percentage of negative responses (EDB, 2016).

Looking at the social and identity interest of Russia in Kazakhstan from a Realist Constructivist perspective, it could be argued that the Central Asian state in question is of a high priority to the Russian Federation. The reasons for this are the already extrapolated upon ideology of a Great Russia, of which the USSR influence is sizeable, and the presence of a large number of an ethnically Russian population. It is in Russia's interests to maintain close relations to Kazakhstan, and the social aspect and the shared history are arguably the most powerful tools at its disposal.

#### 7.1.4 Security interest

The security interest of a nation is one of primary importance and persistence. In the case of Russia, its security interests are especially emphasized due to its arguably unfavorable position on the international stage. Russia's security interests in regards to Kazakhstan are rather clear cut, following the ideology of Putin: energy security, national security, and what could be described as identity security.

The energy security aspect of Russia's interests' deviates from the classical understanding that is attributed to the term "energy security"; it is arguably a hybrid understanding of the term. The reason for this is that Russia is rather secure in the energy department—it is the first largest exporter on natural gas and second only to Saudi Arabia when it comes to oil. (CIA, 2017) Up to the Ukrainian crisis, Russia was in a rather beneficial situation—it acted as the middleman for much of the energy resources in the Central Asian region, delivering them to the European market with a sizeable markup (Bryza, 2007). However, with Russia's fall from grace, EU's attempts to distance itself from the Russian oil and gas, and Kazakhstan's increasing economic cooperation with China, the status quo seems to be changing (OEC, 2017).



The issue of national security which is paramount to any country, in this case can be described as vital to Russia. “*Kazakhstan is vital to our national security. It is the Southern Shield of our friendship*” (Putin, 2015) stated Putin several years ago at a meeting of EEU. Indeed, Kazakhstan is a sizeable landmass that secures its southern parts and acts as a buffer to any potential threats to the region. The map below illustrates the necessity of Kazakhstan as a close friend and buffer zone.

Figure 7: Map of Central Asia



Source: (Voskresenskiy, 2013)

Any entry into Russia from the South either has to go through Kazakhstan, or has to endure the harsh and inhospitable tundra, where roads are scarce and the terrain unfriendly.

Another, slightly more specific issue of national security that Russia faces in regards to Kazakhstan is the Baikonur Cosmodrome. Currently the only one of its kind, it is used not only by Russia, but virtually any country that needs to send astronauts in space. Since the USA scrapped its Space Shuttle program in the early 2000, Russia is the only country in the world capable of sending astronauts onto the ISS, and Baikonur is a vital part of this arrangement. While the lease for the

Cosmodrome is up until 2050 with a more than fair annual rent plan (a mere 115,000,000 USD), it is nonetheless in the interests of the Russian Federation to maintain access and full control of the only Cosmodrome capable of sending astronauts to the ISS (TASS, 2016). Furthermore, this ties in into Putin's ideology of a great Russia—the achievements of the Soviet space program and the Space Race with the USA are revered in Russia, therefore ensuring the ideology that Putin is building has another leg to stand on.

### 7.1.5 Chapter conclusion

Based on the findings outlined above, the interests of the Russian Federation in the Central Asian region, and more specifically Kazakhstan are more concerns of ideology, rather than some material necessity. While it could be argued with success that Russia needs the Kazakhstan for its trade relations, resources and national security, the more important aspect of their relation are the ties from the past that both countries have. The Russia that Putin is arguably building, one that could stand on its own against the “ruinous” powers of the West is one of tradition and firmly entrenched in the past. As previously mentioned, there is an upsurge of Soviet-era symbolism and ambitions, which are banking on the idea of greatness of the USSR. Approaching this from a Realist Constructivist perspective, it can be argued that this idea of a Great Russia that Putin arguably had since the day he stepped into office is what drives the current ambitions of the Kremlin. Kazakhstan happens to be one of the few ex-Soviet states that is so far willing to play along with Russia and is not too bothered by its questionable treatment of neighbors.

## 7.2 Chapter 2: Sino-Kazakh Relations

*“Central Asia is the thickest piece of cake given to the modern Chinese by the heavens”* General Liu Yazhou of China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA)

Ever since China started experiencing the unprecedented economic growth, its ambitions for regional leadership have started to grow. With the fall of the USSR and the subsequent formation of the Central Asian states, a power vacuum was created. China was wise to capitalize on it. The Central Asian states are a wealth of opportunity, as the aforementioned quote by General Liu Yazhou so wisely notes.

The inroads that China makes in the Central Asian region are clearly evident—heavy investment in the infrastructure of several of the CA states, along with ever increasing trade, and emphasis on cooperation (Xing, 2016). China is coming strong in the region, arguably upsetting the balance of power in the area. China’s “One Belt One Road” initiative, started by Xi Jinping in 2013 is one that could possibly change the dynamic of the region. The new-age Silk Road aims to connect China to Europe, along with all the countries it passes through, thus promoting globalization and trade partnerships. This is arguably an extension of Xi Jinping’s idea of a “Chinese Dream”, which promotes cooperation and prosperity with foreign countries, while bolstering the power of China. Li Xing argues that the OBOR initiative was crucial to the completion of the “Chinese Dream”. China uses its vast economic resources as an effective tool of doing politics. *“If you can’t beat them, buy them”* is an old adage of the venture capitalists, and it is oddly applicable in the case of China. Even though the world is wary of the Asian Dragon, it nonetheless appreciates the vast amount of wealth and economic benefits that is provided by said mythical beast.

The focus of this chapter is to uncover the reasons behind China’s involvement in the Central Asian region, and more specifically Kazakhstan. Being the most prominent of the Central Asian states, Kazakhstan is pivotal for China’s attempts to ease itself into a position of the regional leader. The primary themes throughout this chapter will be China’s much needed goal of energy security, the economic and political aspirations that it has with its “One Belt One Road” project, the issue of national security in securing its borders, and its overall tendency to veer towards globalization. All of these issues will be looked upon and analyzed using the Realist Constructivist theory, along with Joseph Nye’s concept of Soft Power, when it is applicable.

### 7.2.1 Economic Interests

The economic interests of China in the Central Asian region are relatively clear cut. China's dependence on energy resource imports is steadily growing with each year. China became a net importer of oil in 1993, when its demand for oil surpassed its production of oil. By the middle of the 2000's China had overtaken Japan, becoming the world's second largest consumer of oil, only behind the USA (Suleimen, 2014). According to data from the International Energy Agency, China's reliance on net import of oil skyrocketed from 7.5% in 1993 to 53.3% in 2011, and the trend is still continuing with estimates that by 2030, China's reliance on imported oil might grow up to 80% (IEA, 2016). Considering the ample growth of China's energy appetites, expansion into the Central Asian region was a given. The push towards the resource-rich Kazakhstan is in full force. In 2013 a \$30bn investment package deal was signed with Kazakhstan, focusing on the energy industry and the development of infrastructure projects (Beshimov & Satke, 2014). However, arguably the most important of the projects that China has in mind in regards to Kazakhstan is the "One Belt One Road" initiative.

*"From developing its western border regions; so as to ensure its capabilities for trade, to building infrastructure like highways, pipelines, and railways throughout the region via the 2013 Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) initiative, China is determined to secure the region as its own zone of economic interest and appears to be achieving this goal."* (Kelly-Clark, 2016)

As Kelly-Clark notes, China is poised to adopt the Central Asian region under its economic umbrella, thus ensuring the continued growth of its influence.

Figure 8: One Belt One Road initiative



Source: (Denyer, 2015)

The new-age Silk Road promises to connect Asia to Europe, opening vast possibilities for trade with European partners and investment into the region (Xing, 2016). The image above shows where the Silk Road is supposed to go through, thus making Kazakhstan a vital part of China's economic interest in the region. OBOR can be seen as a counterpoint to Russia's EEU and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Li Xing argues that OBOR is a response to the accelerated growth of regional integration processes (Xing, 2016).

Approaching China's economic interests in the region from a Realist Constructivist perspective, the goal of China in the region is to maintain its economic growth; and gaining influence and investing in less economically-developed countries is the next step in this plan. It could be argued that a large part of the identity of modern China has to do with the tremendous growth that the economy underwent in a matter of decades. However, the economy being a defining trait of the

country is a double-edged sword, since in the unlikely scenario that it starts severely underperforming, the consequences are unpredictable. However, for this exact reason, Xi Jinping enacted the “New Normal” initiative:

*“Under the new normal conditions, China’s economic growth has become more stable and driven by more diverse forces,”* Xi Jinping (AP, 2014)

The gradual shift of China towards a more balanced approach as the economy cools down is a sign that China is starting to adopt its mantle of a world-leading economy, and potentially down the line, a superpower. Using its economy to gain influence in the region is step for China towards a more globalist approach. Ensuring the survival and thriving of its economy by increasing its interaction with neighbors, thus bolstering its power. The national ideology of the “Chinese Dream” is an apt tool for gaining said power.

## 7.2.2 Political Interests

China’s political interests in the Central Asian region could be ascribed to several points: establishing a sphere of influence over the region, thus becoming the *de facto* regional leader; establishing good relations with the neighbors for general security purposes; improving the relations with the region to further the agenda of the “Chinese Dream”, thus gaining access to the wealthy Europe through the “One Belt One Road” initiative.

Establishing a leadership in the region has been a goal on Beijing’s agenda for some time now. The power vacuum that formed from the fall of the USSR and the rapid development of the Chinese economy created a perfect storm for a shift in the region. Thus, the vast investments in the region, extrapolated upon in the previous chapter are aimed at increasing China’s political reach with the Central Asian countries in general. In regards to the political interests, the participation of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in the SCO brings a plethora of benefits to China.

*“The Declaration points out that the SCO member countries have the ability and responsibility to safeguard the security of the Central Asian region, and calls on Western countries to leave Central Asia. That is the most noticeable signal given by the Summit to the world”* (PDO, 2005)

This quote above from the People's Daily is a clear message that the main participants of the SCO (China and Russia) are unwilling to allow Western countries to interfere with the Central Asian region. On the surface this could be read as a message to leave Afghanistan—the date coincides with a large deployment of NATO troops in the region (Belasco, 2009). However, this could, and arguably should be interpreted as a warning towards the West not to get involved in Central Asia, as it is the stomping ground of China and Russia.

Furthering the notion of a political influence in the region, China also strives to establish stable relations with Europe as well. In that regard, Kazakhstan can be seen as a stepping stone for Beijing's ambitions, since the proposed Silk Road goes directly through the heart of the ex-Soviet state—Astana (see fig. 8).

China is successfully leveraging its economic might to gain international influence—it is the largest trading partner in the world, with ties to almost every country. Furthermore, the Soft Power push proposed by the Chinese policy makers at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and further specified with the 2007 proclamation by Hu Jintao that culture is part of the national doctrine. China has spared no expense to spread its culture, language, art and history to the world, through various channels: Confucius Institutes, educational media aimed at English-speaking audiences, culture exchanges, university exchanges, scholarships, and many more initiatives. (Nathan & Scobell, 2016). However, said power is proving to be ineffective in the region, with budding anti-Chinese tendencies revealing themselves. In Kyrgyzstan, in 2012 more than 200 protestors blocked the access to a gold mine operated by a Chinese company. Furthermore, in 2015 the Prime Minister was forced to resign due to a scandal for awarding a Chinese company mining contracts. Kazakhstan had its fair share of sinophobic incidents—2016 saw a series of protests regarding a proposal to privatize unusable arable land, which was speculated to be sold off to China (Kelly-Clark, 2016).

The political standpoint of China in this case is rather straightforward, and its ideology apparent—with its growing power, its ambitions also grow, and considering the ideas behind the “Chinese Dream”, it could be argued that China's political ambitions in the region are twofold: establishing itself as the leader, and using the Central Asian states, and more specifically Kazakhstan as a stepping stone for its expansion westward.

### 7.2.3 Identity interests

*“To be the captive of the Chinese is a tight noose — with the Russians, it is a wide, open road.”*  
Old Kazakh saying

The social and identity interests of China in the region can be generally split into two goals: the propagation of China’s Soft Power and fighting terrorism in the west of China. Both of these goals play a major role in Beijing’s power play in the region. However, China is facing serious issues with achieving both its objectives in regards to cultural and identity interests.

In regards to the Soft Power that China projects in Kazakhstan, its strong investment into the country and the emphasis on economic cooperation while beneficial to both parties, seems to have a negative impact on the image that China wants to project.

*“Chinese soft power as applied to partners like Kazakhstan boils down in simple terms to forming a positive image as a reliable economic partner that has no political expectations. In many quarters, that presents a compelling alternative to Russia and the West, respectively.”*  
(Toleukhanova, 2016)

Indeed, as the Toleukhanova notes, China’s Soft Power in the region seems to be rather subdued and nonintrusive. However, this subdued image, possibly a remnant of Deng’s “Hide and Bide” paradigm, along with the rapid economic expansion into the region leads to fears and unsubstantiated rumors. As mentioned in the previous section, Kazakhstan has had societal backlash and Sinophobic rhetoric in the form of protests against a legislation that aimed the increase the lease on farming land from 10 to 25 years. The population reacted in an aggressive manner, protesting the passing of the legislation, thus preventing its addition (Toleukhanova, 2016). Furthermore, according to a study conducted by Aziz Burkhanov and Yu-Wen Chen of domestic newspaper coverage of Kazakhstan’s relations with China between 2013 and 2015, there are strong underlying negative currents towards Chinese expansionism. *“The display of negative and stereotypical images of China and its people is pervasive, demonstrating strong fear and antagonism,”* write the authors regarding Kazakh-language newspapers. Conversely, while still present, the Sinophobic rhetoric is much more subdued in the Russian-language newspapers. (Burkhanov & Chen, 2015)



The other goal of China in regards to Kazakhstan, while less prominent is still important—the war on terrorism. China shares its border with Kazakhstan exclusively in the Xinjiang province, thus making it a necessity to cooperate with Kazakhstan in policing the region. China and Kazakhstan have long-standing agreement on terrorist extradition and cooperation. Uyghur separatists create a serious issue for the government and the stability of the region, endangering the population of China (Xinhua, 2009). Following the rhetoric of Xi Jinping, the national ideology of stability and prosperity is seriously hindered by the presence of terrorism. Applying the Realist Constructivist theory, the terrorist threat is magnified further due to the presence of a different, hostile ideology in the country. According to the tenets of Realist Constructivism, it is the states that govern the utilization and interpretation of ideas, therefore the presence of extremist ideologies arguably undermines the state's authority.

#### 7.2.4 Security Interests

The security interests that China pursues in regards to the Central Asian region, and more specifically Kazakhstan tie into the primary interests of the country—ensuring national security and maintaining energy security. In regards to the national security, China appears to be emulating the USA in the regard that it wants establish a nigh-impregnable shield around it, composed of contested territories and allies. The energy security aspect of the security interests of China is a moot point, considering that as stated in the economic interests section, China is very reliant on the import of energy resources.

It could be argued that China's national security interest in the Central Asian region has to do as much with terrorists as it does with ensuring its border security against rival states. As mentioned above, China wants to emulate the USA geo-strategic location—the American mainland is completely and thoroughly isolated from external threats. It should be noted that most, if not all of China's territorial disputes, both terrestrial and aquatic, have strategic reasons behind them—in all the cases China is at a tactical disadvantage. The Arunachal Pradesh state has the benefit of higher elevation, similar to the Shaksgam Valley; the East China Sea, disputed with Japan and South Korea is liability because both these countries are hosts to a large number of US troops. In regards to the hotly disputed topic of the South China Sea, the reasons are even more evident—both Japan and the Philippines provide American military presence, and along with US carrier strike groups, present a serious strategic vulnerability for China (Zorthian & Jones, 2015). Establishing beneficial

relations with Kazakhstan provides China with a much needed buffer in the West, securing its border the same way these relations provide security for Russia. Furthermore, as already established in the previous section, the terrorist threat is a serious concern for the Chinese ideology, thus ensuring cooperation in handling the separatists in the Xinjiang province is an undeniably important objective for Beijing. Given China's ambitions on the global stage, it is only logical to assume that it wants to secure its borders.

The second, and arguably more important issue is China's reliance on Kazakhstan in regards to energy security. As mentioned in the economic section of this chapter, China relies on roughly 55% of its oil consumption on import. To facilitate the ever growing need for energy resources, China and Kazakhstan have signed a deal totaling \$30bln dollars, which includes the twofold increase in size of the already existing oil pipeline between Kazakhstan and China, the building of a modern refinery and investing in the Caspian Sea oil fields (Wood, 2015). In 2014, the percentage of Kazakh energy exports to China was a staggering 96.1% of the total exports (Haiyan, 2014). All this points to an aggressive strategy for ensuring energy security. Upwards of 80% of China's energy imports come through the Malacca strait, which in turn are supplied Middle Eastern and African partners. China is trying to reduce its dependence on marine imports due to the "Malacca Dilemma" which leads it to seeking trade relations with more stable partners inland (Suleimen, 2014).

## 7.2.5 Chapter Conclusion

The goals of China in the Central Asian region, and as an extension in the relationship with Kazakhstan, appears to be in line with their general goals. First and foremost, China aims to establish a leadership position in region, something that is considered an achievement under the "Chinese Dream" ideology. This in turn is achieved through the heavy financing of the energy sector and infrastructure of the region. The financial initiative also ties into its other goal of energy security and minimizing its reliance of marine imports of energy resources. The South China Sea is a crucial issue for China and reducing its reliance on it will provide Beijing more leverage in achieving its goals in that part. The third goal is national security in general, which can be subdivided into anti-terrorist measures and establishing a buffer zone between China and potential threats from the West. Both these objectives are crucial to Beijing when analyzed under the Realist Constructivist theory. Lastly, establishing tight relations and exerting influence over the Central

Asian region, with a priority on Kazakhstan can arguably provide a door towards Europe, something that China is keenly interested in. The “One Belt One Road” initiative aims to do just that. However, there are some lingering issues that China faces in the region, among which are the still prevalent terrorist threat in the North-West, the skepticism and mistrust exhibited from the population of Kazakhstan, and arguably the most pressing of all, the contestation with Russia over the Central Asian states. In the next and final chapter, this issue will be looked upon closer and analyzed.

## 7.3 Chapter 3: Sino-Russian Relations

The relationship between China and Russia has always had its ups and downs. As described in the “Background” section, despite sharing a common Communist ideology, the People’s Republic of China and the USSR were at odds during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some scholars view it as a result of the contention for the leader of the Communist world (Lukin, 2013). After the fall of the USSR, relations between the newly formed Russian Federation and China started thawing, with rapid improvement and cooperation. There is a plethora of ways to interpret this drastic improvement in relations—the two countries share a rich history together, and furthermore, both of them mirror each other in their experience with the West. The infamous “100 years of humiliation” closely resembles the relations Russia has had with the Western countries in the same time period—the Napoleonic War, The war in Crimea, the war with Turkey, where the enemies of the Russian Empire were supported by one or more of the Western powers (Karasov, et al., 2010). These eerily similar experiences in the history of both countries could be seen as bonding factor and a catalyst for their improved relations, an underlying foundation for their mutual mistrust of the West, along with the more obvious factors such as economic partnership and mutual dependence in regards to security. On the other hand, when approached from a Realist perspective, the relationship was one of necessity, a counterbalance to the hegemony of the USA.

Over the past several decades, China and Russia have formed a close relationship, with initiatives such as the SCO, BRICS, of which they are founding members, and tight trade in the energy sector and the military-industrial complex. However, it seems that the contention between the two states is coming back, with ideology still being a defining factor. While the PRC and the USSR were contending for the position of global Communist leadership, presently Beijing and Moscow have conflicting interests in regards to the Central Asian region.

In this third, and final chapter the relations between China and Russia will be analyzed, with the analysis from the previous two chapters acting as a backbone. Both Beijing and Moscow have their own plans for the region, and they do not match. Both countries have their ideologies that they heavily emphasize in their rhetoric—China with the “Chinese Dream”, an arguably ambiguous message, however one that analysts see as a “phantom menace” (Berkofsky, 2016), and Putin’s idea of a Great Russia, which is a much more concrete and straightforward approach, with the aim of regaining the glory of the past, even if it comes at great cost. As with the previous chapters, this

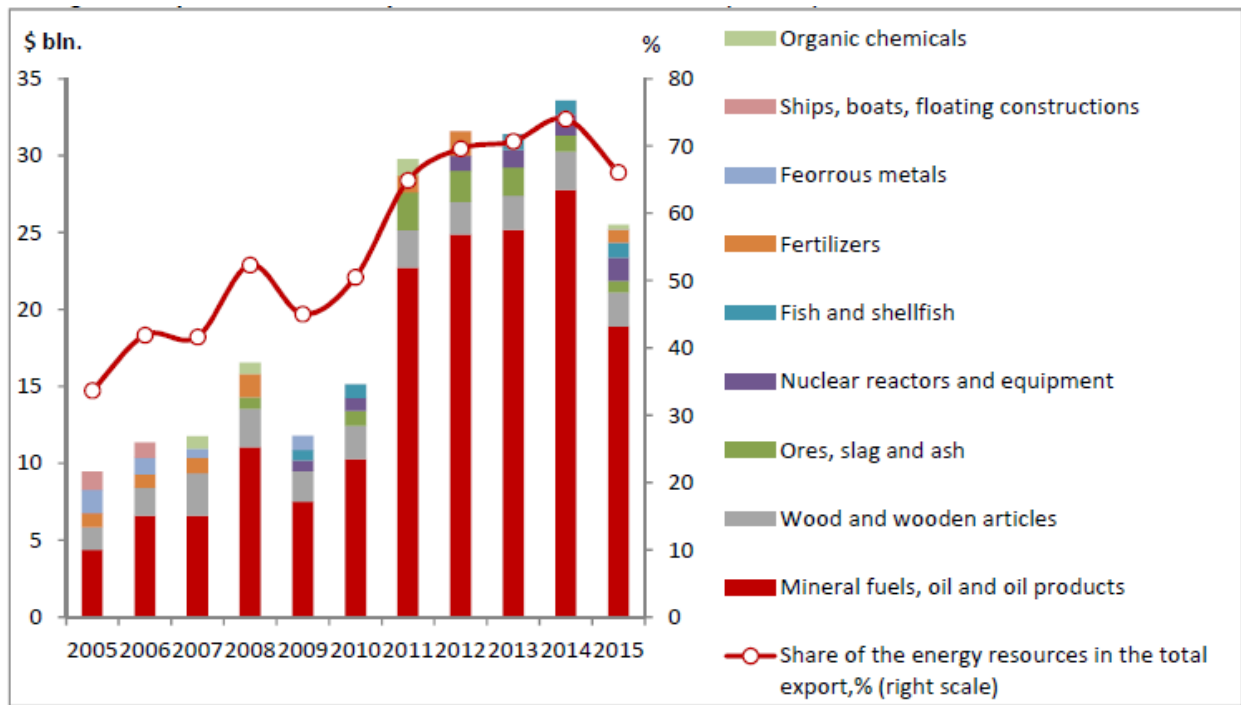
one will also be split into four parts, with a brief chapter conclusion at the end. The goal of this specific chapter is to answer the research question as thoroughly as possible, using the analytical framework and tools provided by the employed theory of Realist Constructivism, with assistance from the concept of Soft Power.

### 7.3.1 Economic Interests

From an outside perspective, it could be argued that the Sino-Russian relationships in their current state were ushered by the dire economic needs of China. As mentioned in the previous section, China became a net importer of oil in 1993, and since then its appetites for energy resources did not wane (Suleimen, 2014). The proximity of Russia, along with its abundance of natural resources would be an unpassable strategic opportunity for China, which was further magnified in the late 90's with Putin's rise to power and the emphasis on the exportation of energy resources. (Goldman, 2008). However, this was not the case because the Russian Federation was focused on exporting to Europe, while China was reliant on the Malacca Strait imports. While there could be underlying political factors that contributed to this lack of trade, arguably the most important hindrance was a logistical one—most of Russia's oil and natural production occurred in the West, while a majority of China's population lives in the East of the country, thus making the potential transportation a massively expensive and complicated ordeal (Stratfor, 2011).

However, despite difficulties in the energy trade, the relations between China and Russia grew over last two decades, especially under president Vladimir Putin. The shift towards the East, which was mentioned in the first chapter is evident in the Sino-Russian trade relations. The graph below shows the progression of the Sino-Russian trade relations, along with its constituents:

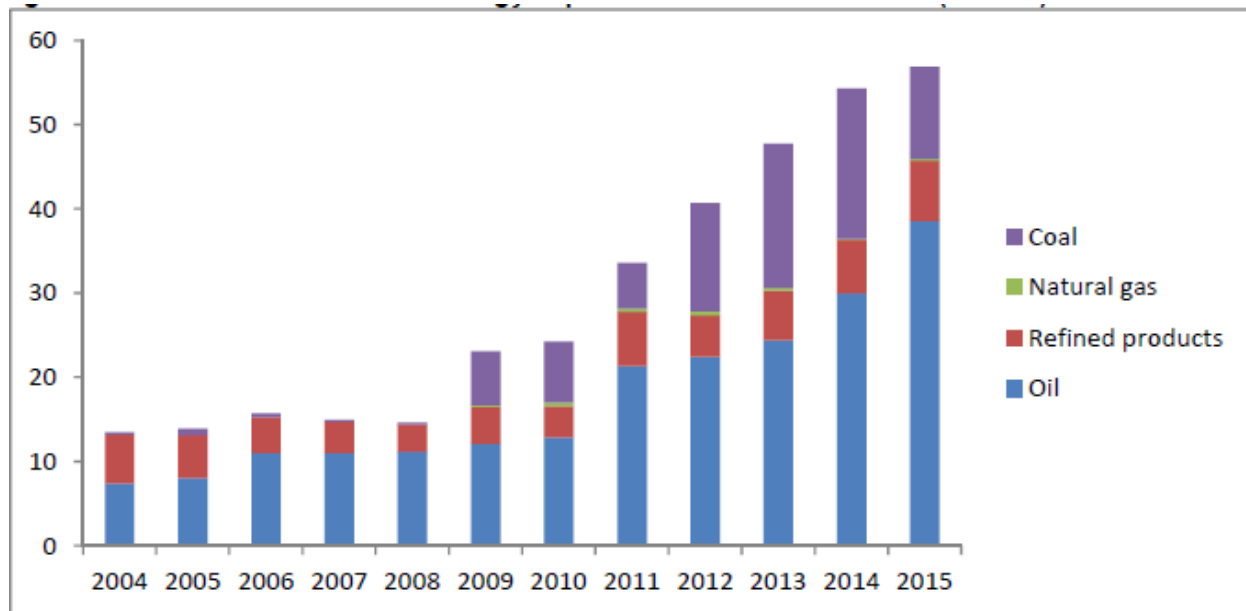
Figure 9: Split of Russian exports to China in 2005-2015 (US\$bn)



Source: (Henderson & Mitrova, 2016)

As evidenced by the figure, the overwhelming majority of the Russian exports to China are mineral fuels, oil and oil products. Furthermore, the sharp increase in exports between 2010 and 2011 indicate a shift in the doctrine and priorities of the Russian Federation, which lines up with Braterskiy’s argument that Moscow started pivoting to the East in this time period (Braterskiy, 2015). It should be noted that the sharp decrease in 2015 is attributed to the drastic decrease in the price of oil due to the oil crisis of 2014, and not a decrease in trade. The chart on the next page addresses that:

Figure 10: Breakdown of Russian energy exports to China in 2004-2015 (mmtoe)



Source: (Henderson & Mitrova, 2016)

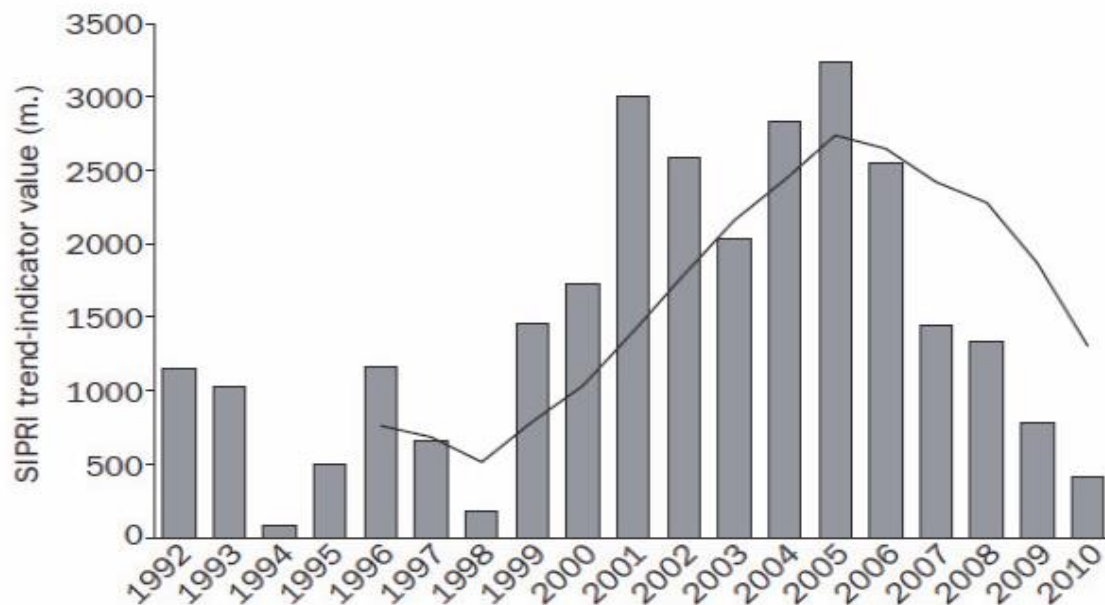
The export of energy resources has steadily risen over the past several years, with a massive natural gas deal being signed in 2014. A 30 year contract with a staggering price of \$400 billion is supposed to provide China with 60 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year through the Power of Siberia pipeline (Stratfor, 2014).

However, the current situation appears to be not as balanced as it was merely several years ago. Russia is ostracized from the West due to its actions in Ukraine and is desperate for trading partners. This gives China leverage over Russia, enabling it to negotiate deals more beneficial to Beijing. One of those deals is the aforementioned \$400 billion contract, which appears to be experiencing difficulties—Russia is likely to scale down the shipments, mostly due to the dropping price of the energy resources on the world market (Astakhova & Aizhu, 2016). Furthermore, the Chinese expansion into the Central Asian market and the energy deals that it strikes with the states in that region are putting even more pressure on Russia. Russia has strongly opposed China's push towards the development of an infrastructure development bank under the auspices of the SCO, fearing that it would become a tool of Chinese economic and influence expansion. However, in 2015 Beijing sidestepped Moscow in this regard and established the Asian Infrastructure

Investment Bank with a \$100 Billion capital base (Denyer, 2015). While the AIIB is not aimed specifically at wresting away influence from Russia in the CA region, it is nonetheless a powerful tool for winning over the Central Asian states with the opportunities it provides.

The other significant area of the Sino-Russian cooperation is the military-industrial complex. Since the 90's, Russia has supplied arms and military technology to China. *“During the 1990s, Russia's defense industry survived using two aqualungs — China and India,”* claims Ruslan Pukhov, director of Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies in Moscow (Clover, 2016). Indeed, during the 1990's and early 2000's, Russia exported large amounts of arms to China. This included fighter aircraft, SAM complexes, jet engines and avionics, among many other advanced technologies (Zhuravel, 2012). However, as the figure below shows, starting in 2005 and onwards the arms trade between China and Russia deteriorated.

Figure 11: Arms sales to China



Source: (Zhuravel, 2012)

Some analysts suggest that it was due to the Chinese side blatantly reverse engineering and copying the technology, actions which were voiding the agreement between the two sides. The most famous case is the SU-27/30 fighter, which was reverse engineered and produced by the Chinese as the



Shenyang J-11, fighter jet currently in service with the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) (Clover, 2016).

*"We were sick of their reverse engineering and their local designers managed to convince the political leadership that they could do this all themselves."* Ruslan Pukhov (Clover, 2016)

However, as per Zhuravel, the primary reason for the declining sales of arms was due to a variety of factors, chief among which was Moscow's concern that China is growing too strong, along with the changing geopolitical climate and the emergence of more powers on the international scene.

*"In the middle of 2000's the relative power of China kept increasing, as well as certain restoration of Russia's power took place. Moreover, the world witnessed the emergence of the aspiring poles of influence such as India and Brazil... the American power is not as unquestionable and unchallenged as it was in the 1990's."* (Zhuravel, 2012)

This situation changed drastically following the Crimean crisis. While it was reluctant to sell advanced military technology to China in the past, on the account of China's alleged reverse engineering of their technology and the growing power of the country, the situation seemed to have changed completely. Starting from 2014, roughly 10 years after the arms trade dried out between the two Asian giants, Russia signed weapons contracts with a total value of \$8bn. This includes deals for state of the art S-400 air-defense systems and 24 modern SU-35 fighter aircraft (Clover, 2016). It should be emphasized that the S-400 SAM and the SU-35 are the best Russia has to offer, thus making a complete turn on its previous reluctance to share advanced technology with China.

The new arms deals can be interpreted as a desperate act to salvage the economy, after it took a strong blow from the oil crisis and the Western-imposed sanctions. Furthermore, Russia appears to be trying to sell their best products while it can, since China's R&D is advancing at a rapid pace, and the technological gap is continuously shrinking. Mere years separate China from finally putting into production its J-20 fighter jet, a fully-fledged 5<sup>th</sup> generation stealth-capable aircraft (Bodner, 2016).

Approaching the economic interests of China from a Realist Constructivist perspective, it seems evident that Beijing has the upper hand and the “Chinese Dream” is on track. Given Russia’s woes in the past several years, with its shrinking economy and ever-decreasing number of friends and partners, China has all the cards when it comes to leveraging its agenda onto Russia. Putin’s ideology of a Great Russia seems to be aimed at regaining its strength, however the methods of achieving said mythical power appear to be short-term oriented. Moscow’s quest for gaining power hinges on very few partners, and in a realist world said partners have the capability, and right to exploit its weakness. China is in an extremely favorable position, with Russia practically begging it to do business, handing over its most valued possessions in an attempt to stave off an imminent crisis. It is in Beijing’s interests to leverage this situation to its maximum, and by the looks of things it is doing just that.

### 7.3.2 Political Interests

*“Faced with unbalanced power, some states try to increase their own strength or they ally with others to bring the international distribution of power into balance”* Kenneth Waltz

The present political relationship between the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation started in the early 90’s, continuously improving over the decades. However, it could be argued that necessity played a large part in the formation of said relationship. A significant role in the Sino-Russian rapprochement played the NATO military intervention from 1999 in Yugoslavia without a mandate from the United Nations for the use of military force, as well as the policy of the USA aimed at spreading its influence in the Central Asian region, at the expense of the Chinese and Russian interests in the region. The NATO operations in Kosovo sent out the message that the protection of human rights takes precedence over the respect for national sovereignty, which made China and Russia worry that the Kosovo model could be applied to the cases of Tibet and Chechnya. That concern made China and Russia to unite their efforts in creating a counterbalance to America as the center of power. From that moment the USA factor started to play a strengthening role in the Sino-Russian relations (Leksyutina, 2012).

One of China’s main political interests in regards to Russia is the latter’s permanent seat at the UN Security Council. While China itself has a permanent place at the UNSC, it is nonetheless interested in maintaining a close ally to be able to exploit the veto power. So far Beijing has been

supportive of Moscow continuously vetoing resolutions and sanctions on the Syrian government (McKirby, 2017). Both countries seem to be supportive, or at the very least nonintrusive regarding each other's areas of tension. China has not commented on the Crimean crisis, silently supporting it, while Russia has not expressed any defined opinion on the South China Sea dispute (Lihua, 2015). China seems to yet again in a favorable position, having a more or less reliable ally by its side when it comes to international issues.

The topic of arms trade between China and Russia, which was touched upon in the previous section also has political implications. The quote by the director of Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, Ruslan Puhkov illustrates the political goals of Russia's risky arms deal:

*"We need China's political support, so this is why we take this inevitable risk... Obviously, anyone who can commit hundreds of millions of dollars to defense contracts is important, but because of the political dialogue China is doubly important."* (Puhkov, 2016)

In the political department, Russia needs China just as much as China needs Russia. This temporary alliance by Realist standards is arguably one of convenience, in which both partners are at a more or less equal footing. For Xi Jinping's ideology of the "Chinese Dream" to be successful, he needs the international allies and the influence they bring to the table. Russia seems to a willing candidate and the benefits that China obtains from these relations seem to outweigh any possible detriments by a large margin.

### 7.3.3 Identity Interests

The identity interests of China in Russia appear to be secondary concern. However, it is nonetheless an important factor if China wants to continue moving forward with its initiatives, especially "One Belt One Road". Arguably the main concern of China in regards to Russia is the centuries old "Mongol complex", a term coined by Bobo Lo, historian working at the Carnegie Center Moscow. This age old notion stems from the invasion of the Tatar-Mongols in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, ravaging the state of Kievan Rus and establishing a yoke that lasted more than two centuries. During the imperial period Russia was in constant conflict with Asiatics such as the Ottoman Turks, Japanese and Central Asian Muslims (Karasov, et al., 2010). According to Norbert Eitelhuber, the centuries of subjugation and conflict with Asian states cultivated a deeply

entrenched fear and wariness of all things Asian, creating the narrative that Russia is a “*besieged tower*”, entrenched on all sides by aggressive and alien cultures (Eitelhuber, 2009).

However, it seems that these fears are subsiding in recent times. A study conducted in 2017 by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM) indicates that the attitude towards China has increased favorably (see Appendix C). According to the study, more than 50% of the Russian population considers China an economic and strategic partner of the Russian Federation. This is a stark increase from 34% in 2005. Furthermore, the fraction of the population who consider Beijing an economic or political enemy is favorably low—10% and 5% respectively. 37% consider that China will be an ally to Russia in the coming decades, with 14% considering the notion that China may become a dangerous neighbor, and only 2% think it will become an enemy. When it comes to taking sides between China and the US, the majority of respondents are in favor of neutrality, with 53%. However, when if pressed to take sides, the population is slightly in favor of China—29% voted for “*carefully support China, but maintain noninterference and develop relations with both countries*” (VCIOM, 2017).

While this questionnaire is hardly irrefutable evidence of the general attitude towards China, it nonetheless provides valuable information regarding possible future developments. It seems that China is benefitting from Russia’s current situation, and it appears that Beijing is one of the few beneficiaries of the Crimean crisis. Not only did the Russian pivot towards China intensified following the deterioration of its Western ties, but it seems that the population is following suit. This could be attributed to the high approval and trust rating that Putin commandeers in his country. Furthermore, the nationalistic rhetoric that Putin has taken up in recent years and successfully implementing, seems to be playing into the hands of China. A case could be made that China is successfully achieving Soft Power targets in an unorthodox manner—thanks to Putin’s rhetoric.

### 7.3.4 Security Interests

The security interests of China in the case of Russia can be divided into three broad categories: energy security, which was touched upon in the Economic interests section, national security, which includes the war on terror and the arms trade, and strategic partnership, which includes partnership in the SCO and the mutual support on the United Nations Security Council.

The question of energy security, which was already extrapolated upon in the Economics section of the current Chapter, is a priority for China. As previously indicated (see fig.10), Beijing is very active in securing its energy resources, with Russia being more than willing to cooperate. The \$400bn natural gas contract is still in motion, however with some hindrances. Furthermore, Beijing is heavily investing in the Russian energy industry. The result of a meeting between Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin in 2016 was a series of rafts on energy deals (Wang, 2016). The deals revolve around the purchase of stakes in a number of Russian projects by Chinese firms, oil supply contracts and cooperation in several petrochemical projects on Russian land. Deals between the Russian Rosneft and the Chinese ChemChina were struck on a number of ventures, including the delivery of 2.4 million tons of crude oil. According to recent stats, Russia was the largest supplier of crude oil to China in 2016 (Reuters, 2016). As already established, China's energy security needs are met.

In regards to the question of national security, China is using its close political ties to Russia to ensure the sovereignty of its borders. As already pointed out in the previous chapter, it can be argued that China strives to emulate USA in its strategically isolated position. Ensuring that Beijing's largest, and arguably most capable in military terms neighbor stays friendly is of paramount importance. The economic reliance and mutual support in international matters appears to be China's strategy to ensure the majority of its North border is secure. Furthermore, the defense contracts that Beijing and Moscow signed in the past couple of years are of great value to China—both the SU-35 and more importantly, the S-400 SAM are major strategic boons.

*“According to experts, the S-400's range of up to 400 km will allow Beijing to comfortably control its own airspace from attack, and to secure control over the airspace of neighboring countries and territories, including Taiwan and the Senkaku Islands, a group of islands in the East China Sea controlled by Japan but claimed by Beijing, as well.”* (Sputnik, 2017)

Projected to be deployed in 2018, the S-400 SAM increase China's power projection on its borders, giving it an additional trump card to employ its strong-arming tactics (Sputnik, 2017).

The last of China's security interests is the strategic partnership with Russia—the benefits of which are the SCO, which is primarily a strategic cooperation, and as previously mentioned, the mutual

support on the international stage. Under the SCO, China and Russia performed large-scale military exercises and war games. Starting in 2005, a number of joint ventures of the military kind were undertaken (Weitz, 2015). Furthermore, the cooperation extends to war on terrorism and even cyberwarfare.

### 7.3.5 Chapter Conclusion

The conclusion of this chapter will consist of the four interests that China exhibits towards Russia, with the results of the analysis briefly described.

1. In regards to the economic interests, China appears to be mostly interested in the already mentioned energy sector. To that end, China is utilizing the Realist approach and leveraging Russia's weakness to bargain better deals.
2. The political interests of China are covered by the joint participation in the UNSC and their mutual dependency on each other. It is in China's best interest to maintain an influential, if berated, ally on the scene of international politics.
3. In regards to the identity interests, as already noted China appears to be on the upswing with the popular opinion drastically improving over the span of a decade. Furthermore, it appears that Chinese Soft Power is reaching the Russian population, however in a manner that is unconventional—thanks to the efforts of the Kremlin and its ideology of a Great Russia, and the emphasis on the East pivot.
4. Finally, in regards to security, China appears to be a step ahead, securing lucrative deals for advanced technology, ensuring the security of its borders through economic dependency, making use of Russia's unfavorable position, and emphasizing its energy security through long-term deals with the Kremlin and the various energy holdings.

## Discussion

The following chapter will be devoted to discussing the possible future prospects of the topic at hand. Considering the vastness of the subject and the unpredictable nature of international relations, especially in modern times, the possible scenarios are numerous. The first possible future prospect will be in regards to the relationship between China and Kazakhstan, one of the more stable and arguably more predictable in nature. Their continued partnership, paired with strong economic ties and the prosperity of the “One Belt One Road” initiative provides strong arguments for speculating possible future scenarios. This part will also include the possible repercussions for Russia in this regard. The part that follows it will focus on the main topic of this paper, the Sino-Russian relations. As stated above, the near-unpredictability of international politics with such influential actors, along with the sheer amount of possible permutations leads to a plethora of prospects. The limit will be set at four scenarios, each of which has an argument, albeit of varying strength, to be a possible future. The first scenario that will be looked upon is arguably the most likely one, and is one that is most in line with the results of the analysis. The continued shrinkage of the Russian economy, coupled with its pariah-like status in the West will lead it into an Eastward focus, thus increasing its ties to China. As a result, this union will be one of necessity for Russia, and of use for China. The second scenario that will be discussed is similar to the first, with the difference that is this theoretical case, once the majority of China’s goal in regards to Russia are achieved, Beijing will make Moscow a distant secondary focus, favoring the arguably more beneficial Western countries. The third scenario, which up until recently has been viewed as an actual and quite real possibility, is one where Russia rekindles its relationship with the USA, and to some extent Europe. A union like this has the possibility to affect China quite negatively, both in its economic and security interests. The last scenario, and quite unfortunately the least likely, is one of a triumvirate of friendly relations: China, USA and Russia establishing all-around good relations, and working together towards a more beneficial goal for the future. While the least likely scenario, there are still arguments that are in support of it.

## 8.1. Future possibilities for the Sino-Kazakh relations

As already written in the first and second chapter of the analysis, Kazakhstan is an integral part of both Beijing's and Moscow's plans in the regional, as well as global perspective. The strong trade relations between China and Kazakhstan, coupled with the new Silk Road initiative make the Central Asian state an integral part of China's ambitions. The ties between Russia and Kazakhstan are unorthodox, in the sense that both countries share a long history together, coupled with their strong cultural bond and the raw Russian influence in the country. How this apparent struggle for influence will play out in the future is an enigma. However, there are certain factors and variables that make predicting the possible future prospects a less speculative task.

China's economy-backed bid for influence in the Central Asian region, and more specifically Kazakhstan is one that is more quantifiable and apparent. Between their joint membership in the SCO, strong trade partnership and most importantly, the "One Belt One Road" initiative, the future of the Sino-Kazakh relations seems to be the clearer picture. China is banking heavily on its Silk Road plan as a way to widen its sphere of influence westwards, to Europe. Kazakhstan plays a crucial role in this plan, and it could be argued that its dependence on China will increase. The OBOR initiative is beneficial to Kazakhstan, as it will open up a swath of investments from both the West and the East. The vast economic resources that China is investing in the OBOR are bound to pay off. However, the only hindrance in the way of China's increasing influence in Kazakhstan appears to be Russia. For Russia, the OBOR project presents a threat to its national interests. Russia has grown accustomed to its role as a "middle-man" between Asia and Europe, and the number of trade corridors that will circumvent it under the OBOR initiative worry Moscow. A possible outcome to this scenario, and the future of the Sino-Kazakh relations is a *quid pro quo* relationship with Russia, where Moscow is kept happy in regards to its EEU initiative and the expansion of said customs union. The cultural aspect of the relations appears to be the most unpredictable, as the reigning president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev might soon be replaced, due to his advancing age. Furthermore, the long-talked about initiative in Kazakhstan to convert the Kazakh alphabet from Cyrillic to Latin could also create tension between Moscow and Almaty, especially taking into consideration the rather nationalistic trends that Putin has put in motion with his rhetoric. Considering the Ukrainian crisis as a show of force and Putin's questioning remarks regarding Kazakhstan's status as a country, the future prospects are rather limited. All things



considered, especially Moscow's apparent vast capabilities as a force of destabilization, China would be wise to not push into the region too aggressively, and when it does push, it will do on the foundation of further partnership with Russia, whilst ensuring the latter's position as the dominant security force in the region.

## 8.2. Possible scenarios for the Sino-Russian relations

The cloud of mystery surrounding the current relations between Beijing and Moscow, coupled with the arguably unpredictable nature of the USA, are providing a fertile ground for speculations regarding the possible future prospects of the Sino-Russian bilateral relationship. As outlined above, there will be four scenarios considered, with varying strength of argumentation behind each one; nonetheless, I believe that a case could be made for each one of them, given the right circumstances.

The current, and conceivably most tenable future prospect is one in which the relationship between China and Russia continues its current trend, where Russia's ties to the West are considerably weakened, resulting in a continued shrinkage of the economy. This situation of arguably mild desperation leads Russia to trade with China on favorable for the latter terms. As already stated in the analysis, this scenario is already unfolding, with Moscow striking what many analysts considering unfavorable deals with Beijing. The leverage that the Crimean crisis and subsequent isolation of Russia provides for China will be further utilized to increase the influence of the Beijing. The long-term energy deals can be viewed as an act of desperation on Russia's part, a move that aims to solidify its position with China. Furthermore, the sales of advanced military technology, which were resumed in 2014 can be viewed as another act of short-term gain, since one of the reasons for ceasing them in the first place were patent infringement on China's behalf, as well as security interests. Both the SU-35 fighter aircraft and the S-400 SAM provide China with extremely valuable technology that it sorely lacks. Since the situation between Russia and the West appears to be somewhat stagnating, and the Ukrainian crisis still unresolved, it could be argued that the current relationship between Moscow and Beijing will continue, with Russia turning more towards dependence on China, and China using its leverage over Russia to gain advantage. However, as the current situation dictates, this relationship will continue with both

partners showing respect to each other taking into consideration their interests, both globally and in the region.

The second, less likely scenario can be viewed as a close alternative of the first one. The two scenarios are closely tied together as the arguments used in the first one can be applied to this one as well. However, in this scenario, Russia's outlook is bleaker. As previously stated, Moscow appears to be in a state of mild desperation, indicated by eagerness to trade with Beijing, often times on unfavorable terms. Taking into account the continued shrinkage of the Russian economy and influence, it is a possibility that China gains enough leverage to "drain" Russia of all its usefulness. The aforementioned military technology could be merely a start, since Russia still possess certain branches of R&D that China sorely lacks. The continued and increasing reliance on China might lead Russia into a submissive position, where it will succumb to Beijing's demands more and more. Another important factor to consider in this situation is the presence of Vladimir Putin, whose influence could arguably make or break this scenario. As with the long-reigning president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev, Vladimir Putin has been for a long time in the Kremlin, and should there be an event where he is no longer in a leading capacity, it could be argued that the balance in the Sino-Russian relations might tip heavily in favor of Beijing. Furthermore, if the most recent developments in the relations between China and USA are any indicator, there is a possible scenario where China deemphasizes its relationship with Russia in favor of the USA. This point is further solidified by Beijing's spoken desire for closer relations with Europe and the USA, aptly named "pivot to the West". While unlikely, especially with the highly unpredictable nature and mood of the Oval Office, this scenario paints a picture where China uses Russia, draining it of most of its usefulness, leaving a submissive state behind, while in the process turning to the more lucrative Western countries.

The third scenario, part of which was speculated heavily upon until recently is one that involves Russia's return to good graces. Prior to the, and immediately after the election of Donald Trump, there was a heavy rhetoric of strong cooperation and reconciliation between the two former Cold War enemies. While these speculations have died down recently, mostly due to the Oval Office occupant's change of agenda, it could still be within the realm of possibility, considering the erratic behavior of the aforementioned leader of the free world. Factors taken into consideration here are China's meteoric rise, coupled with the Putin's rhetoric of a strong independent state with its own

sphere of influence, and the general weariness that Washington has in regards to Beijing. Taking this scenario into consideration, as unlikely it might be, requires a strongly aligned towards Realism point of view. However, it could be argued that both Russia and the USA have a vested interest in curbing China's ambitions—Moscow wants to retain its position of influence in the Central Asian region, which is being quickly eroded by Beijing, while Washington wants to retain its position as a world leader, thus subduing a possible challenger to the throne. Should Russia return to good graces with the West, its options drastically improve and China's leverage will be severely hampered. There is still the question of Putin's ideology of a Great Russia, and this rhetoric is arguably not compatible with a Westward integration; nonetheless, should this rhetoric for one reason or another become less prominent, there is little stopping Moscow from resuming its old trade habits with the West. However, a possible rekindling of Russia's relations with the West, and more specifically the USA will require the solution of several issues, such as the Crimean crisis and the Syrian war. In the case that these two former enemies establish a friendly relationship, it will most likely be at the expense of China. It could be argued that China's momentum will be drastically slowed, on the account of Russia's influence in the Central Asian region and the US's involvement in the South China Sea. Thusly, this unlikely, yet plausible scenario could seriously hamper China's plans, both regionally and on a larger scale, preventing it from attaining its set goals of rejuvenation and power growth.

The last, and arguably least likely scenario revolves around all three major players, along with their spheres of influence coming together. In this future prospect, the Sino-Russian relations maintain their course, with further improvements and a potentially strategic relationship. However, the most important factor that contributes to these relations is the rapprochement between Russia and the West, which involves resolving the Crimean crisis, Syrian war and lifting of the sanctions. This scenario is possible if Trump's initial attitude towards Russia makes a return, combined with his current, arguably momentary mood towards China. Under these circumstances, China may lose its leverage over Russia, however, the already established infrastructure and cooperation on both the EEU and the OBOR will provide a solid foundation for the continuation of their relationship. The impact of the removal of the sanctions will possibly revitalize the Russian economy, slowly returning it to its previous state, with the added advantage of a fledgling infrastructure in the East. Furthermore, this directly feeds into Putin's doctrine of a Great Russia, thus at least to some extent

providing a positive argumentation for this highly unlikely scenario. This arguably idealistic scenario is also backed by China's ideology of harmonious coexistence and mutually beneficial relations. It should be stressed that the future prospect in question relies on a more or less equal footing attained by all three countries, with neither maintaining an overtly leading position, thus for this scenario to be even remotely possible, any notion of a realist thinking should be discarded.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine the motivations and power play between the two Asian giants, the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation. Throughout the research process, information from a plethora of sources has been processed and analyzed, providing an unbiased as possible view on the subject matter. The employed theory of Realist Constructivism was put to great effect, as its hybrid nature and toolset helped bringing to light aspects that would otherwise remain obscured. The national ideologies, as defined in the Background section were developed with the aid of Realist Constructivism, providing a narrative for the actions of both states. The major findings of the analysis are outlined below.

In the process of analyzing the situation in the region, several trends and interests were discovered, which were used to answer the question formulated at the start of the study. Both China and Russia have a deeply rooted interest in the Central Asian region, however, their motivations are of different origin. As the analysis showed, the interests of China in regards to Kazakhstan hinge on several factors. The first factor is energy security. China needs the vast energy reserves that Kazakhstan has in order to continue fueling its demand for oil and natural gas. As the study showed, China is attempting to minimize its reliance on energy imports from the Malacca strait, prioritizing its neighbors Russia and Kazakhstan. This ties into China's security interest, where the South China Sea is seen as a security risk and the reliance on marine imports of oil a vulnerability. Furthermore, Kazakhstan is a crucial element of the One Belt One Road initiative. In this regard Kazakhstan is arguably of strategic importance for China. Through the OBOR project China opens up a corridor to Europe, and Kazakhstan is vital for this plan. Lastly, the "Chinese Dream" that calls for National Rejuvenation plays part in the Sino-Kazakh relations in the regard that China is ready to step up and gain its "rightful" place in the region, and subsequently the world. However, as the study showed, China still faces issues in its relations with Kazakhstan. The sinophobic tendencies in the region are an issue that China still seems to be struggling with. The second and arguably more important issue is the strong influence that Russia commands.

When it comes to Russia, the interests it has vested in Kazakhstan are more of the social, identity and political variety. Russia still seems to consider the Central Asian region its sphere of influence. Coupled with the rhetoric of an independent center of power that Putin has been emphasizing for

the past decade, Kazakhstan is a vital piece for Russian assertiveness on the global stage. The study found that Russia commands a strong presence of Soft Power in Kazakhstan.

Concluding on the question posed, Kazakhstan is an important element in both Beijing's and Moscow's agendas for different reasons. China needs the strategic benefits that Kazakhstan possesses, while Russia's interest is more tied to the social, political and identity aspects.

Moving onto the question of the Sino-Russian relations, the analysis showed interesting results and arguably worrying trends. The Sino-Russian relationship appears to be built on mutual benefit, however, in the case of China it is one of short-term gain. China has much vested in its relationship with Russia, and as the analysis showed, these interests come to fruition. Following the Ukrainian crisis, Russia has become more dependent on China, and the latter leverages this status in its favor. The long-term energy deals and sales of advanced military equipment are obviously beneficial for China, while Russia seems to be struggling. Ideologically, both states appear to have similar goals, however it could be argued that the "Chinese Dream" is more successful than its Russian counterpart. While there is contestation for the Central Asian region and Russia still has a strong foothold in Kazakhstan, the current trend indicates that China will gain more momentum in the future. However, this trend is subject to change, due to the inherent dynamism of the subject matter.

The possible future scenarios were thoroughly discussed in the Discussion section. The reason for their inclusion in the discussion and not analysis is the already mentioned dynamism of the subject and its shifting nature. Depending on several factors, like both China's and Russia's relationship with the West, price of oil and even personal health of the heads of state, the dynamic in the region might drastically change.

A possible future study on the topic should incorporate more longitudinal aspects into the study, analyzing the trends in the region over a longer period of time. Furthermore, as the Sino-Russian relations and the contestation for Central Asia is a dynamic situation, a future study may uncover new data purely on account of the timeframe. An obvious suggestion for further improvements would be to incorporate more data from the Chinese perspective, thus providing minimizing bias further. Furthermore, a more inclusive study wherein more actors are analyzed would provide the

topic with even more depth and definition. Nevertheless, the nature of the subject itself lends to continuous studies that develop as the situation in the region progresses.

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# Appendix

## Appendix A

Below is an excerpt from the paper “*Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research*” by Bent Flyvbjerg, explaining the major types of cases in case-study research.

Type of Selection	Purpose
A. Random selection	To avoid systematic biases in the sample. The sample's size is decisive for generalization.
1. Random sample	To achieve a representative sample which allows for generalization for the entire population.
2. Stratified sample	To generalize for specially selected sub-groups within the population.
B. Information-oriented selection	To maximize the utility of information from small samples and single cases. Cases are selected on the basis of expectations about their information content.
1. Extreme/deviant cases	To obtain information on unusual cases, which can be especially problematic or especially good in a more closely defined sense.
2. Maximum variation cases	To obtain information about the significance of various circumstances for case process and outcome; e.g., three to four cases which are very different on one dimension: size, form of organization, location, budget, etc.
3. Critical cases	To achieve information which permits logical deductions of the type, ‘if this is (not) valid for this case, then it applies to all (no) cases.’
4. Paradigmatic cases	To develop a metaphor or establish a school for the domain which the case concerns.

## Appendix B

The countrywide query was performed by the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM) was performed between in the period 28-29 of January 2017. Method of inquiry – phone call interview based on a stratified double-layered random selection method, including both stationary and mobile phones. The total number of respondents was 1200. The selection pool included the list of all the phone numbers registered on the territory of the Russian Federation. The data was weighed based on the possibility to be selected and socio-demographic parameters. For the current sample the error possibility with a probability of 95% is not higher than 3.5%. Besides the error probability, a deviation in the data may be introduced from the question formulation, and circumstances in the course of the field work.

In the periods 2005-2014, the query was performed via apartment visitation.

How do you think, currently what is China to Russia (closed question, one answer, %)					
Query year	2005	2007	2009	2014	2017
Strategic and economic partner	34	36	41	49	50
Friendly country, ally	22	27	19	36	27
Economic and political adversary, competitor	24	21	24	8	10
Hostile country, possible enemy	4	4	4	1	5
I'm having difficulty answering the question	16	12	12	6	8



How do you think, in the XXI century China will a friend or foe to Russia (closed question, one answer)					
Query Year	2005	2007	2009	2014	2017
Ally, friendly country	22	28	20	43	37
Close partner	26	24	27	36	38
Dangerous neighbor, competitor	25	20	24	9	14
Adversary, enemy	6	4	5	1	2
I'm having difficulty answering the question	21	24	24	11	9

The media recently reported, that China placed several new ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads on the border with Russia. Chinese media claim that the missiles are there in case of an armed conflict between China and the USA. In your opinion, should the Russian government react to this deployment of Chinese missiles? ( open question, one answer, %)							
Cities	Moscow and St. Petersburg	Cities with more than 1 million	Cities with more than 500,000	Between 100-500,000	Less than 100,000	Villages	Everyone queried (average)
No need for a reaction	28	25	20	27	24	21	24
Place missiles or anti-missile batteries	16	19	16	17	19	17	18
Russia should be wary	14	14	18	12	19	19	16
Solve the issue diplomatically (no specific proposals provided)	9	4	5	6	5	3	5
Figure out the real reason for placing the missiles	5	6	5	5	2	4	4
Come to an agreement for removing/not placing the missiles	0	3	1	3	3	0	2
Forbid China from placing missiles on the Russian border	1	1	2	1	3	4	2

Actions should be weighed carefully, avoiding conflicts	3	2	2	0	1	0	1
Redeploy the army near the border	1	0	0	1	1	1	1
Other	1	3	2	3	0	2	2
I'm having difficulty answering the question	21	21	29	25	23	28	25

The president of the USA is making aggressive statements in regards to China. The relationship between these two countries is tensing. Many are anticipating a large-scale conflict between the two. What should Russia do in this situation (closed question, one answer, %)						
Political parties	“Spravedlivaja Rossia” supporters	LDPR supporters	KPRF supporters	“Edinaya Rossia” supporters	Supporters of non-parliamentary parties	Everyone queried
Maintain neutrality and avoid the conflict	49	48	62	50	57	53
Carefully support China, but do not take part in the conflict and develop relations with both sides	32	33	28	32	20	29
Carefully support USA, but do not take part in the conflict and develop relations with both sides	8	6	4	6	15	6
Openly support China	1	8	2	4	1	4
Openly support USA	0	0	0	0	0	0

I'm having difficulty answering the question	10	5	4	8	7	8
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