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AN ANALYSIS OF THE SINO-RUSSIAN RELATIONSHIP

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Lieutenant Commander Russ Moore

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Thesis Co-Advisors:

Dr. Mary Hampton

COL Bob Smith

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE SINO-RUSSIAN STRATEGIC
RELATIONSHIP

Russ Moore

LCDR, United States Navy

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Author:

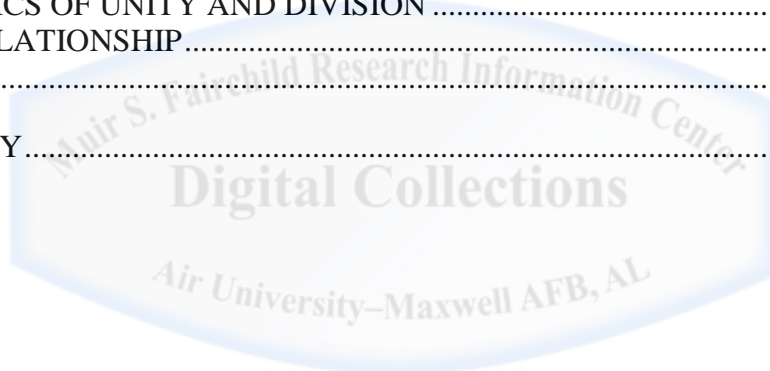
Russ Moore

Approved By:

Dr. Mary Hampton/Col Bob Smith

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ABSTRACT

This analysis is a reflection of specific aspects of the Sino-Russian partnership in the new millennium. Various perceptions debate the enduring nature of this relationship and include postulations of a relationship that is short-lived, as well as an enduring partnership based on the de-emphasis of U.S. hegemony in the Asia Pacific region and abroad. This analysis will demonstrate that the Sino-Russian relationship is inherently conflicted, and their respective national self-interests routinely emerge during various occasions of mutual cooperation for the purpose of opposing U.S. power abroad. Specifically, a history of Sino-Russian relations is analyzed. Multilateral partnerships are also analyzed that reveal both nations approach foreign policy problem-solving with a realist perspective. Methodology analyzes the Sino-Russian economic and historical relationships, followed by an analysis of the Sino-Russian energy relationships, Korean peninsula policy, and the multilateral institutions of the Shanghai Cooperation Network and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Analysis reveals that the Sino-Russian relationship bases itself on pure competition while it counters U.S. influence in the Asia Pacific region. Analysis also shows that because of a mutual skepticism and continued competition, the Sino-Russian relationship faces many challenges if it hopes to become a more enduring partnership.

Increasingly over the last decade, general public consensus focuses on the degree of strategic commitment of the Sino-Russian partnership. While there is no doubt a relationship exists, the degree of the relationship continues to be questioned. Michael Levin, author of “The Next Great Clash” takes the position of Russia as balancer between China and the West, while other authors assert a more pragmatic basis for the relationship. In this analysis, the Sino-Russian relationship is found to be an alliance of convenience and a zero-sum relationship oriented towards a unique purpose – the challenge of American hegemony in the Asia Pacific region as well as abroad. Absent U.S. influence in the Asia Pacific region and abroad, this relationship descends into pure competition for resources and influence.

This analysis chooses two common areas to gain perspective in the practical relationship that Russia and China share. These areas include mutual and independent dealings in regional and international economic policy, as well as foreign policy approaches. Foreign policy challenges include an analysis of the Sino-Russian Central Asia policy, Korean peninsula policy, and multilateral institutional frameworks used in the application of policy on both the Korean peninsula, along with Central Asia. A brief history illustrates an analysis of Sino-Russian interaction that forms a baseline of distrust that dates back to the 13th century, as well as numerous slights, both actual and perceived, that continue to shape Sino-Russian relations to this day. Distrust as a by-product of mutual historical transgressions in the Sino-Chinese relationship ultimately yields individual approaches to policy that are sufficient to ensure this partnership will never be more than an alliance of convenience to secure mutual regional and international interests. Much international speculation to the strategic risks this partnership represents bases itself more on perceptions and sensationalism as opposed to a pragmatic view and approach to regional and international challenges. And while the specific goal of this relationship is to

counter U.S. international influence and hegemony in the Asia Pacific region, this analysis presents examples of both consistently reverting to zero-sum contests in order to achieve national objectives regionally and abroad.

THE ROOTS OF DISTRUST

Consensus holds throughout the history of the past seven hundred years that China and Russia are part of a mildly dysfunctional relationship, which sees both on the receiving end of slights, both real and perceived, during numerous interactions. Wave tops of this sordid history examine major historical events that form the foundations of this mistrust from a Russian and Chinese perspective, followed by analysis of examples in present day.

In an examination of the Russian perspective, its existence with China and its Asian neighbors are less than harmonious over the centuries. Beginning in the 13th century, Mongol hordes burned through Russian city-states and imposed their rule through military might and the tributary process to Mongol rulers for the next three centuries, which leaves lingering apprehension of a threat from the East among Russians that persists to this day.¹

The resulting isolation cut Russia off from the intellectual enlightenment and innovations of its Western neighbors in Europe, and leaves Russia to develop its own culture, uniquely Russian in its concepts of autocracy, Eastern Orthodox religious, and nationalist beliefs.² Both positive and negative perceptions of China emerge as a result in both popular beliefs and in subcultural beliefs of various groups within Russia. These negative perceptions, more familiarly known as the “yellow peril”, derive from the subjective, yet generationally pervasive view of an authoritarian and barbaric East.³ Different lines of thinking also emerged on China that includes those of Russian Westernizers and Russian anti-Westernizers.⁴ Russian westernizers believed in the concept of inevitable conflict between East and West, and that

Eurocentric enlightenment was the only way for civilizational progression. Furthermore, this line of thinking also espoused that Russia spared the rest of Europe the scourge of Mongol destruction.⁵ Conversely, Russian anti-westernizers viewed Asia as a viable alternate culture to the West.⁶ However, to illustrate the degree and depth of this negative image of the East, former President Yeltsin's "shock therapy" economist and Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar makes past references to an undemocratic and hostile China.⁷ Additionally, the yellow peril phenomenon also denotes illicit and illegal Chinese activities and immigration in the Russian Far East (RFE), once a part of China.⁸ Even Russian President Putin in 2000 stated the unsettling prospect to the RFE population that they could one day be speaking Japanese, Chinese, and Korean.⁹ Further aggravating this situation is the belief among the Russian and Chinese population that the former Chinese territory in the RFE ceded to Russia in the nineteenth century remains unresolved.¹⁰ A presently rising China, which has not quelled Russian suspicions regarding the RFE, exacerbates this problem.¹¹

Historical record and opinions also highlight equally negative treatment of China by the West, Russia, and the Soviet Union, which also contributes to the Sino-Russian baseline of distrust. Further complicating this dynamic is the over two thousand year-old belief by the Chinese of its inherent destiny of hegemony, similar to Russian exceptionalism or American manifest destiny.¹² The word hegemon, whose etymology is purely Chinese, is defined as a single pole of axis, with hegemon power exercised over all nation states.¹³ To that end, China historically sees itself as this single pole of axis then and now. Characteristic of this belief are accounts from numerous historians that China does not see itself as emerging as a superpower, but returning to its former glory.¹⁴ A specific example of this include conservative Chinese scholar Yan Xeutong comment that the Chinese people wish to return to this former glory, and

that the previous centuries of western domination are a mistake that should be corrected.¹⁵ Over the past two hundred years, China perceives the actions of Western nations during the 19th century as repeatedly taking advantages of declining Chinese power during the Qing Empire, to include the First and Second Opium wars that resulted in lopsided treaties, troop garrisons in port cities, gunboats navigating its rivers, and the reduction of China to Western colonies.¹⁶ Russian interests and expansionism also exploited the internal challenges of the Qing Dynasty during the period of a weakened China.¹⁷ It is during this time that Russia finally begins to settle Siberia.¹⁸ With this expansion come the one-sided treaties of Aigun, Peking, and Tarbagatia in the years 1858, 1860, and 1864, respectively, which result in Russia's receipt, through Chinese acquiescence, of approximately 1.5 million square kilometers of territory.¹⁹ Russia's opportunism further widened the friendship gap between the two. Interspersed throughout these periods in Sino-Russian relations is a mutual neglect of this territory other than for defensive considerations, along with negative interactions due to the armed clashes and various disputes in the Russian Far East (RFE).²⁰ China views Russia's opportunism as an insult, particularly that a neighbor is equally exploitative as Western powers during a period of Chinese weakness.²¹ Furthermore, China still sees the RFE as unresolved, in line with its views on Taiwan.²²

In more recent history, Soviet interaction with China was equally offensive and created an apprehension of domination by the Soviet Union. During this time, Soviet insistence that it be a part of the China Communist Party's decision-making process due to its financial support, its often-flawed subject matter expertise on governance, Stalin's efforts to control China through its dependence on Soviet aid, and the Soviet Union's consolidation of the Mongolia's People's Republic as a client-state did not alleviate this tension.²³ Additionally, Soviet proclamations of

the superiority of the Soviet communist model serve to further rekindle China's age-old contempt of their northern barbarian neighbors.²⁴

As a Eurasian neighbor, Russia had the opportunity to be a supporter of Chinese interests and cement a real strategic alliance early in their histories. Of note is what this relationship might be today if Russia took more of a mentorship role during times of Chinese weakness, especially during China's formative years as a developing communist nation. Had China been treated as an equal, it is arguable that the Sino-Russian partnership might be comparable to Western strategic alliances today, which could more easily threaten Western hegemony regionally and abroad. The cumulative effect of this conflicted history with the West and Russia bears itself out as an embarrassment to Chinese national identity that remains a fixture on their national conscience today. The current generation of China that lives during a time of relative prosperity is taught firsthand the historical injustices of China's humiliation by Western powers, which results in a generation of nationalists that stand in stark contrast to the generation of pro-democracy youth of late 80s.²⁵ Add to this Russia's inherent fear of its Asian neighbors that originates from the trauma of the Mongol invasion in the 13th century. And while the historical facts demonstrate that the threats to Russia in recent history originate from her Western borders that include Napoleon's France and Nazi Germany, comments in the recent past by Russian leadership, along with popular opinion, demonstrate a generic fear of the historic yellow peril continues, at the very least, to occupy the Russian national psyche. Likewise, recent historical record of Chinese mistreatment during the Soviet empire leads to the reasonable assumption that at least some skepticism and mistrust exists in the minds of both Chinese leaders and its public. Consequently, the recent record of the Sino-Russian partnership, discussed further, witnesses a record of realist approaches and interactions towards domestic and international policy

challenges that sees Russia and China hedge their strategic bets as they endeavor to deemphasize U.S. hegemony regionally and abroad, while they simultaneously seek to gain the advantage over each other.

THE ECONOMICS OF UNITY AND DIVISION

It is known that Chinese economic growth continues to surge, despite signs that it is beginning to slow. Its population size alone, coupled with cheap labor and business costs, signifies its continued explosive potential as a consumer market. It is also known that military might follows economic might. To that end, Chinese leadership continues to make qualitative economic growth a priority with special emphasis on a knowledge-based economy through its lobby with foreign trade partners to transfer critical technologies as a condition to finalize any agreements, as was the case in 2008.²⁶ This priority continues to be the case in 2012.²⁷ In contrast, the Russian economy is known for its problems in the realm of disregard for rule of law, which discourages foreign investment, coupled with its philosophy of business as a privilege granted by the state. Given these strengths and weaknesses, it is reasoned that the Sino-Russian economic relationship operate on a goal of offsetting their respective weaknesses, while also building their own fiefdoms in order to best secure regional power for themselves. To that end, both pursue economic policies that simultaneously strengthen both economies, albeit different aims. The two venues of trade between the two that offer the greatest mutual benefit, as well as the greatest challenges to the United States and the west, are in the arena of foreign military sales (FMS) and energy.

Beginning in the 1990s, the transfer of Russian military hardware and technology began in earnest and coincided with increasingly friendly relations.²⁸ For Russia, these sales provided desperately-needed revenue for an infant Russian economy after the collapse of the Soviet

Union.²⁹ Also as a result of this cooperation, China not only received current military hardware, but takes one step closer to achieving its ultimate goal to increase self-reliance in the design and construction of its own military weapons and technology in the new millennium.³⁰ This arrangement remains the case in 2008,³¹ and endures into 2012.³² While it is clear a potential security threat to Russia exists via a China with modern weaponry as its neighbor, it is also clear Russia takes the calculated risk to provide China this step up. An analysis of this arrangement demonstrates how Russia and China each benefit. Russia's benefit is a relationship of convenience with China originally born out of desperation that began with the last gasps of the Soviet Union during its efforts to provide desperately needed revenue, coupled with the Yeltsin and Putin administration's unwillingness to close enterprises within the post-Soviet military industrial complex.³³ Another benefit of this relationship is an increasingly strong Chinese military capable of power projection beyond its shores, which is more of a challenge to U.S. interests in the Asia Pacific region. It is known that Russia is less than enthusiastic for further NATO expansion. It is reasonable to argue that a stronger China can offset this expansion, particularly when it comes to Central Asia. In addition, there is the added benefit of Russian economic diversification with an export other than energy. The obvious ways FMS ceases between the two is if Russia, particularly if it becomes concerned with its territories in the Far East, hesitates to further strengthen a neighbor via FMS. Russia also runs the risk that China develops its own organic capability for military technology development as a result of FMS,³⁴ which can prove particularly worrisome to the U.S. and Russia.

For China, self-reliance on its own military technology innovations is the goal. As China's economy continues to grow, it is likely its defense budget will at least parallel its growth despite some minor decreases. As discussed earlier, China's ability for power projection will also

include modernization and capability in the blue-water navy it so desperately needs to provide security for 85% of its oil supply, which travels through sea lines of communication from abroad.³⁵ This increased self-sufficiency and modernization both benefits and negatively impacts China. If China upgrades its blue water navy for power projection beyond its shores, its ability to more readily guarantee the security of its energy resources in transit from abroad will become available. However, as this modernization increases and begins to achieve parity with that of Russia and the west, a critical power shift in Asia is likely specifically because of its new ability for power projection.³⁶ To this end, media reports indicate China is conducting sea trials of its first aircraft carrier. It is too early to see what the immediate effects are, but it is likely that Russia could be discouraged from further arms sales and technology transfers if China significantly closes the technology gap.

In the realm of economic power, China seems to benefit at Russia's expense. However, it is known that the conditions set by the government for the Russian economy also put it at a disadvantage. Much of the mainstream thinking that contributed to the eventual collapse of the old Soviet system still exists today, specifically in the doctrine of state economic control over private industry, lack of direct foreign investment in the form of emerging technology and industrialization, and the false dichotomy of energy resources as the centerpiece of the present and future economy.³⁷ Because of the specter of state intervention and disregard for the rule of law, private enterprise potentially remains at the mercy of the Russian state, where even a perceived slight or action viewed as untoward to the state can result in nationalization or unfavorable legal outcomes for an enterprise; hence the hesitation of foreign corporations and the inability of Russia to attract foreign direct investment in businesses and factories.³⁸ To highlight this fear, foreign direct investment in Russia as of 2010 stands at negative \$9 billion.³⁹ This

foreign investment is vital for technological and industrial development critical to the modernization of the Russian economy.⁴⁰ Absent this improvement, it is likely Russia will continue to rely on oil and natural gas as the bailiwick of its economy.

To this end, as the world's second largest oil consumer, China imports approximately 80% of its oil from the Persian Gulf and Africa.⁴¹ China strongly desires to decrease its reliance on Middle East oil, primarily because it has little blue water navy capability to guarantee the security of oil shipped from the Middle East via sea lines of communication, as well as to diversify its energy resources.⁴² Russia desires to exploit the vast market demand for energy within China, as well as diversify its energy market with its primary customers who reside in Europe.⁴³ A perception exists that China does in fact receive most of its energy resources from Russia. Nothing could be further from the truth. As of 2010, China receives a meager 10% of its oil imports from Russia, and receives no natural gas from Russia.⁴⁴ Because of the obvious cost benefit from decreased logistics and strategic value, it is very likely that a significant minority of China's energy requirement could increasingly originate from Russia. As of 2012, this has yet to be realized.⁴⁵ Although China potentially represents the security of a guaranteed demand for Russia's energy, ineptitude on the part of Russia, along with the lingering mutual distrust that has plagued the two nations, discourages a deeper energy relationship, specifically in the failure to complete transnational oil and natural gas pipelines due to corporate infighting, non-agreement on price, Russia's use of energy as a foreign policy tool, and the persistent mistrust between the two.⁴⁶ This reluctance on Russia's part is primarily out of its fear of the continuation of a rising China, which subsequently creates a possible security threat in its own backyard.⁴⁷ As discussed earlier, Russia's use of energy as leverage in foreign policy also has a significantly negative impact on China's enthusiasm for a partnership, which included Russia's

shutdown of gas to Ukraine in order to ultimately extract Russia's desired higher prices.⁴⁸ While this did not squelch China's desire to continue work towards cooperation with Russia on energy, it showcases to Chinese leadership the potential impacts that accompany reliance on Russian energy.⁴⁹

While Russia and China currently partner in energy, and even though there is great potential for a deeper partnership, opportunism and distrust belies the veneer of partnership. Russia sees China as guaranteed demand of energy, but at the same time takes the viewpoint that the continued, or deepening, supply relationship directly supports China's continued rise.⁵⁰ This rise stands to become a threat to Russia, specifically in the RFE.⁵¹ China's gain in deeper ties results in the guaranteed delivery security that transnational pipelines and an increase in oil and natural gas from their geographic neighbor provide vice reliance on maritime delivery.⁵² Because of the lack of progress on transnational pipeline completion and Russia's use of energy as leverage in foreign policy, China remains equally skeptical about a deeper partnership.⁵³ In an attempt to predict the future of this specific relationship, a deeper Sino-Russian energy commitment is likely to increase Russia's worry over creating its own security threat. And while China is still enthusiastic about the thought of transnational pipelines, agreement on price, which Russia controls, looms over the issue.⁵⁴

A SPOILER RELATIONSHIP

In the realm of foreign policy, the commonality of a decrease in U.S. hegemony in the Asia Pacific region and abroad resonates between Russia and China. Conversely, both nations also wish to eventually be the dominant regional power and act accordingly in an attempt to secure those outcomes, despite the fact that Russia resigns itself to a weaker position as it continues to rebuild from the Soviet collapse. To this end, both pursue spoiler policies that

simultaneously affect this power shift and again reinforce their own positions regionally and internationally. The pursuit of these policies ultimately puts them at odds, and demonstrates that a true strategic partnership is not possible as long as one nation vies for dominance.

Under the Sino-Russian cooperation policy as spoiler to U.S. hegemony, both extract benefits through pursuit of several mutually beneficial sub-policies, namely mutual cooperation on Taiwan, Central Asia, and Korean peninsula policy. Both demonstrate that the extent to which each cooperates depends on the individual and mutual advantage cooperation affords. Foreign policy approaches on Taiwan take several twists. The “One China” policy explicitly states that Taiwan is a part of China.⁵⁵ Since the Taiwan Relations Act already permits the selling of arms to Taiwan,⁵⁶ and when the prospect of a U.S.-Japan-Taiwan Theater Missile Defense (TMD) system appeared on the horizon in 1999, China moved on an effort already underway to cement a strategic partnership with Russia in 2000.⁵⁷ This effort ultimately results in the twenty-five article Sino-Russian Treaty of Good-Neighborly Friendship and Cooperation of 2001 that prescribes a strategic cooperation to achieve a multipolar world, along with Russian adherence to the One China policy.⁵⁸ Furthermore, while this treaty does not explicitly cement a military alliance, it does state that neither country will engage in activities with an alliance that damages or threatens the sovereignty of the other, nor allow any entity to use its territory to damage or threaten the sovereignty of either nation.⁵⁹ The goal of this policy is clear. U.S. presence in the form of TMD, according to China, is specifically to prevent Chinese regional preeminence and maintain U.S. hegemony in the Asia Pacific region.⁶⁰ China also took the opportunity to liken the National Missile Defense System (NMD) with TMD despite Chinese awareness that both systems were distinctly different.⁶¹ Russia’s views were very much in line with China concerning possibility of NMD deployment as well.⁶² And although a TMD

agreement between Russia and the U.S. already existed, Russia remained unconvinced the U.S. would not try to deploy a NMD system in its near abroad, even though Russia knows such a system is not capable of defeating Russian warhead first-strike capability.⁶³ Rather, the political perception was that of yet another attempt by the U.S. to gain a strategic edge over Russia.⁶⁴ It is obvious that Treaty of Good-Neighborly Friendship and Cooperation of 2001 was clearly an attempt to thwart U.S. dominance in the region that delivered no enduring obligations on the part of either. Wilson states that consensus at the time also corroborates this thinking.⁶⁵ Additionally, aside from political support of the one China policy and weapons support to China to defeat Taiwan and deny U.S. access, Russia is not obligated per the treaty and is unlikely to provide active military assistance in the event of armed confrontation over Taiwan.⁶⁶ The philosophy of convenience between the two is once again illustrated. The primary driver of cooperation seems to be U.S. intrusion into the affairs of the Asia Pacific region. And in this arena, the consensus of Russia and China seems to be that they, each as regional powers, should influence any regional policies. Conversely, neither seeks direct or indirect confrontation with the U.S. while neither concedes any relative strategic advantage to the other.

On the subject of Central Asia, both extract strategic and economic advantages in their involvement, while both ensure no asymmetric advantage in the region is gained by the other. For Russia, its state-controlled oil and natural gas companies are able to invest in critical energy infrastructure projects within Central Asian countries.⁶⁷ As an exporter of energy, Russia also benefits from the ability to potentially reestablish vital energy transit routes lost after the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁶⁸ In economic terms, Russia also sees the former satellite states as an opportunity to reinvigorate its economy via arm sales that can broaden its domestic jobs base and provide revenue for Russian industry.⁶⁹ The focus of China and U.S. concerns lay with the

region's energy reserves, which are estimated at approximately thirty-nine barrels of oil and 3 trillion cubic meters of natural gas.⁷⁰ U.S. interests are primarily concerned with diversification of world energy markets.⁷¹

China interests manifest themselves in several forms. In its attempts to diversify its energy markets with that of the Middle East and Africa, it seeks to limit its vulnerability in reliance on maritime shipping routes for the energy that it desperately needs to continue its economic growth.⁷² The possibility of pipelines to ferry these energy resources to China not only serve to diversify its energy markets, but to enhance its political and economic interests along the borders it shares with its Central Asian network.⁷³ To date, China already imports both oil and natural gas from the region. A separate element that exists along with its energy needs is the security problems that arise for Russia and China within Central Asian states, namely the threat they pose to their geographic neighbors in the form of government corruption, Islamic extremism, narco-terrorism, and criminal gangs.⁷⁴ It is likely that any unrest that results from these threats can spill over within each of their borders and encourage restive religious extremist and separatist elements within both nations.⁷⁵ In addition, the governments of Central Asian authoritarian regimes share similar views with Russia and China towards Western democracy, and a United States or NATO presence in this region stands to potentially democratize the governments of these countries, which no party believes is in their best interests.⁷⁶ Central Asian regimes also use this opportunity to achieve their own ends, namely to play Russia, China, and the U.S. against each other.⁷⁷ In absence of these circumstances, specifically a U.S. presence, it is very likely that conditions would revert to pure competition between China and Russia in the realist sense. Conditions in 2012 seem to demonstrate this pattern of self-interest between the two. While both unite to protest Washington's perceived interference in Central Asia, there is

rarely convergence in any other area.⁷⁸ A June 2012 summit failed to produce a deal on delivery and pricing for natural gas,⁷⁹ while Russia continues to develop Central Asia's multilateral security equivalent to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Collective Treaty Security Organization (CTSO), which does not include China.⁸⁰ In addition, China recently refused to recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states after Russia's 2008 war in Georgia.⁸¹ The only enduring circumstance that requires cooperation are the security issues related to separatist and extremist elements within these states, and as discussed earlier, this cooperation is most likely be limited to ensure no spillover of these threats into their respective territories. Thus, it is apparent once again that absent U.S. adventures in Central Asia, China and Russia revert to the norm of economic and foreign policy competition in the region.

Korean policy presents its own challenges as both seek to counter U.S. hegemony in the region. Sino-Russian policy sees convergence and also experiences the usual conflicting state interests. While both seem united on maintaining a non-nuclear Korean peninsula and the mitigation of North Korea nuclear testing, more of a potential exists that place the relationship again in competition with each other.⁸²

Russia is apprehensive at the thought of Chinese domination of the peninsula at their exclusion.⁸³ As of 2010, in order to achieve a multipolar balance within the region, the common goal both seek is to avoid North Korean regime collapse, which could possibly necessitate further U.S. involvement on the Korean peninsula and a deeper U.S. presence in the Asia Pacific region.⁸⁴ However, it becomes clear that both always revert to state interests over the existing partnership. Russia stands to achieve economic gains if it integrates North Korean energy infrastructure.⁸⁵ Russia is also far more amenable to Korean unification and an eventual North

Korean regime collapse, which results in a united Korea looking to Russia in order to prevent dominance by China.

China, on the other hand, seems to be the dominant force on the Korean peninsula, showcased when it takes the lead as the chief intermediary in negotiation between North Korea and the West in the most recent Six Party Talks.⁸⁶ China is also North and South Korea's main and largest trading partner, respectively.⁸⁷ This fact, in addition to the prospect that regime collapse would further draw the U.S. into the Korean peninsula, suggests China prefers the current status quo.⁸⁸ Only after North Korea declared the viability of its nuclear weapons program during the nuclear crisis in 2002 does China seek out Russia to assist in de-escalation of the situation out of fear of further U.S. involvement that included possible military action.⁸⁹ Up to that point, North Korea, the U.S., and China hold talks that exclude Russia, for reasons to include Russia as a tertiary consideration on the issue of North Korea's desire for strictly bilateral talks with the U.S.⁹⁰ Russian involvement on the Korean peninsula seems to be at their behest and not because of any enduring need required by China or other third parties short of the nuclear crisis. Furthermore, China as a neighbor and chief trading partner is in a stronger position than that of Russia.⁹¹ The facts strongly suggest that Russia's trump card for involvement extends to energy support and the railway project that links the inter-Korean rail with the Tran Siberian railway in the Russian Far East.⁹² Russia also plays its usual energy foreign policy hand on the Korean peninsula when it pledges to supply energy via gas in the construction of a new pipeline for North Korea, which was hamstrung due to the North's inability to pay and offer the associated infrastructure development.⁹³ These actions demonstrate that the only uniting factor once again seems to be the desire to keep U.S. influence out of the region.

The world community is keenly interested in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the future role it will play in the execution of Sino-Russian foreign policy. While this partnership creates apprehension, particularly in the west, the perception of a threat is once again not in line with the underlying realities that create and inherent Sino-Russian split.

Founded under the precepts to resolve border disputes in 1996 between China and Central Asian states, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) expanded to deal across the entire spectrum of Asia Pacific problems, as well as international challenges.⁹⁴ While the SCO can trace its origins to challenges to the overall security of Central Asia, the SCO was also founded in response to the expansion of NATO during this time, as well as U.S. involvement in Central Asia.⁹⁵ More specifically, the Sino-Russian partnership was apprehensive over the potential for the democratization in the region, which would serve to further weaken their regional influence.⁹⁶ To provide an administrative apparatus to deal with security issues within the SCO, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) establishes its headquarters in Tashkent, while the Chinese administrative equivalent is headquartered in Beijing.⁹⁷ As of 2007, the SCO held joint military exercises in the past with Russian armed forces, to include a large-scale exercise in the Russian Ural Mountains that involved some six thousand Chinese troops.⁹⁸ The most striking phenomena within the organization are the realpolitik approaches of its members. As mentioned earlier, Central Asian nations use the organization to counterbalance Russian and Chinese interests, while China and Russia seek to counterbalance U.S. involvement in the region.⁹⁹ The SCO also constrains a more assertive Russia in the region, in which it refuses to endorse Russian action in Georgia during the summer of 2008 and also denies diplomatic recognition to the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.¹⁰⁰

Prior to the founding of the SCO, the Collective Security Treaty, formally signed in 1992 and upgraded to a regional security effort, was renamed the Collective Security Treaty Organization in 2002 to counterbalance NATO expansion along with granting Russia the ability to control its agendas vice that of the SCO.¹⁰¹ Several actions initiated by the CSTO are noteworthy. First, the CSTO legitimized Russia's invasion of Georgia, casted blame on Tbilisi and ensures security of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, minus CSTO diplomatic recognition.¹⁰² It is also a forum to protest further NATO expansion and the deployment of any missile defense systems in Russia's near abroad, specifically Poland and Czechoslovakia.¹⁰³ The CSTO also enables Russia to reassert its power in the region.¹⁰⁴ It also does not confine Russia in a box that prevents them from working with NATO, as they endeavor to achieve solutions to the common problem of narco-trafficking within Central Asia, as well as for the coordination of operations in Afghanistan.¹⁰⁵

Even as the Sino-Russian partnership works together through these organizations, it is noteworthy that Russia feels compelled to form an entirely separate structure in its effort to deal with foreign policy challenges. In the spirit of an enduring partnership, it is reasonable to assume that both powers would work together to achieve some sort of consensus, even if that consensus was nothing more than a diplomatic position to lend support to one another. Instead, not only does the SCO snub Russia, the CSTO will not go the distance to diplomatically recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia despite being uniquely set up by Russia. A strong realist approach in dealing with challenges within this region routinely emerges from China, Russia, and the member states of the SCO and the CSTO. Any piggybacking of issues between Russia and China seems to be normally reactive in nature. If this were an enduring relationship with deeper ties, it is very likely that each would concede points and positions on issues within the

region that would build on the mutual strength of a supposed alliance. Thus far, individual claims are staked, with neither going too far out on a limb in order to avoid any diplomatic friction.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this analysis, the Sino-Russian relationship demonstrates it is governed by self-interest and distrust. This self-interest is based on past historical grievances as well actions on the international stage. Even on issues where partner cooperation or consensus exists, examples reveal China and Russia ultimately approach foreign policy problems with a realist perspective in order to achieve pragmatic solutions on a range of individual international and domestic issues while simultaneously filling the role as spoiler towards U.S. influence. While it is shown that this relationship will continue to exist for the near future, numerous challenges and historical grievances must be effectively addressed in order for a possibility of an enduring partnership to emerge.

¹ Bobo Lo, *Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the new Geopolitics*. (London, UK: Chatham House, 2008), pg. 18.

² Ibid., pg. 19.

³ Alexander Lukin, *The Bear Watches the Dragon*, (London, UK: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), pgs. 312-318.

⁴ Ibid., pgs. 70-73.

⁵ Ibid., pgs. 70-74.

⁶ Ibid., pgs. 72-74.

⁷ Ibid., pgs. 317.

⁸ Christina Yeung and Nebojsa Bjelakovic, "The Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership: Views from Beijing and Moscow." *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 23, (2010): pg. 265.

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