

London School of Economics and Political Science

Russia and the Rise of China

An Analysis of Russian Foreign Policy towards China under Putin

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Declaration

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Abstract

Since 2000, Russia has continued to pursue closer relations with China. In the West, the relationship has been met with skepticism. In general, the narrative of a reluctant partnership fraught with mutual mistrust and hidden rivalry has been accepted as a basis for a reasonable understanding of Russia-China relations. Nevertheless, Moscow and Beijing have continued to develop their relations and to regularly declare that they are doing so in the spirit of trust, mutual respect, and friendship. This thesis contributes a rigorous and systematic analysis to the literature on Russia-China relations that employs an integrative analytical framework targeting dispositional factors of Russian decisionmakers as a source of explanation for Russia's foreign policy towards China from 2000 to 2020. The study finds that, primarily, perceptions of a lack of unmanageable conflicts of interests between Russia and China and an absence of harmful intentions from China to Russia among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers inhibit confrontation and enable cooperation. The thesis also contributes theoretical insight on how a great power manages decline by participating in the institutions and projects of a rising power for the sake of information access, which strengthens the ability of the declining power to protect its interests. The study includes a crowdsourced content analysis of over 42,000 paragraphs that were published by 19 prominent Russian institutions of knowledge production on international affairs, foreign policy, and security, and mention China at least once. With an additional analysis of the connections of the publishing institutions and the authors of the texts to the Russian government and military, the thesis identifies dominant views that have likely contributed to the dispositional factors that form the basis of Russia's foreign policy towards China.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The state of Russia-China relations has profound implications for global stability. This makes the relationship an appealing case for international relations (IR) scholars and analysts. In the 1990s, Western literature that emphasized the limits of Sino-Russian partnership gained prominence. As the literature continued into the 2000s, claims of a hidden rivalry between the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China (PRC) rife with the threat of confrontation and conflict due to mutual mistrust and conflicts of interests became widespread and acquired momentum that bears considerable weight to this day. Despite these claims, Russia's relationship with China is apparently as good as it has ever been.

The primary explanandum of the thesis is that there is a dominant perception of an absence of threat from China to Russia among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers. This perception is puzzling for three main reasons. First, for realists, shifts in the balance of power are one of the main causes of confrontation, balancing, and conflict among states. Given the rapidity of China's rise, its proximity to Russia, the anarchic international environment, and that Moscow can never be certain of Beijing's intentions, current or future, Russia would be expected by many realists to perceive China as a threat.

Second, it is arguable that the fact that Russia and China are both widely considered balancers against US hegemony is not sufficient to prevent a perception of threat. Neither Russia nor China wish to have a formal alliance with the other, mainly because Moscow does not want to be obligated to side with China in a conflict in the East or South China Seas or over Taiwan, and China does not want to be obligated to side with Russia over a conflict that may erupt over Moscow's interventions in the post-Soviet space or its neighborhood. Moreover, the

relationships of each with the US differ significantly. China is dependent on the US market for the continuation of its economic growth, which it considers critical for domestic stability and the defense of its interests abroad. The same cannot be said of Russia.

Third, hegemonic stability theory and power transition theory both suggest that shifts in the balance of power are dangerous, as they may lead to war. According to the former, a declining power has an incentive to initiate a preventive war against a rising power in order to maintain its dominant status. According to the latter, a rising power has more of an incentive to initiate war if the dominant power is unwilling to accommodate the rising power's mounting interests. Russia has long been overtaken by China in terms of economic power, however, despite China's relative conventional superiority in northeast Asia, Russia may still be considered the dominant military power between the two because of its massive nuclear arsenal and conventional superiority in Central Asia. As Beijing's military expenditures have consistently exceeded those of Moscow with a growing expenditures gap since 2000, Russia may be considered in relative decline in terms of overall military power.¹ The debate over whether the rising power or declining power has more incentive to initiate conflict is irrelevant to this study. What is important is that there is a considerable amount of literature that argues that shifts in the balance of power motivate

¹ SIPRI. 'Military Expenditure by Country, in Constant (2018) US\$ m., 1988-2019'. Available at <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>. Accessed 09/07/2020. For other estimates of Russia's military expenditures, please see Erik Andermo and Martin Kragh. 'Secrecy and Military Expenditures in the Russian Budget'. *Post-Soviet Affairs* 36, no. 4 (2020): 297-322; and Keith Crane et al. 'Trends in Russia's Armed Forces: An Overview of Budgets and Capabilities'. Rand Corporation. 2019. pp. 3-26. Available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2573.html. Accessed 10/04/2021. For other estimates of China's military expenditures, please see Office of the Secretary of Defense of the United States. 'Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020'. 01/09/2020. p. 140. Available at <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF?fbclid=IwAR0P56sTP7J83TN2ebe2QkqHU40D2LjxHv5wuAEdmNhBP3WKa-ZJgC63mko>. Accessed 10/04/2021; and International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). *The Military Balance*. 2020. p. 259.

conflict, and in accordance with such literature one would expect a perception among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers that China threatens Russia.

The focus on perceptions of an absence of threat from China to Russia among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers is foundational to the approach taken by this thesis to analyze Russia's foreign policy towards China. Since the foreign policy of a state towards another is often determined to a large extent by whether the other state is considered a threat, much of the policy can be explained by the rationale behind the view of the other as threatening or non-threatening. The study does not claim to explain every element of Russia's foreign policy towards China from 2000 to 2020.² However, it does offer an explanation of the policy during this period, specifically with regard to the way it has managed to avoid confrontation and conflict and continued to develop cooperation despite the shift in the bilateral balance of power.

In employing an analytical framework that integrates agency and structure in the interest of producing a multilevel multicausal explanation of Russia's foreign policy towards China, the thesis aims to identify the intentions and dispositional factors (perceptions and values) of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers and to elaborate the explanation the dispositional factors provide with a discussion of structural constraints. The study includes a crowdsourced content analysis of 42,445 paragraphs that were published by 19 prominent Russian institutions of knowledge production on international affairs, foreign policy, and security, and mention China at least once. With an additional analysis of the connections of the publishing institutions and the authors of the texts to the Russian government and military, the thesis identifies dominant views

² The thesis refers to the period of 2000 to 2020 as 'the period of interest'.

that have likely contributed to the dispositional factors that form the basis of Russia's foreign policy towards China from 2000 to 2020.

Based on the analysis performed, the explanation of Russia's foreign policy towards China from 2000 to 2020 offered by the thesis is as follows. The dominant perception of an absence of threat from China to Russia among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers can be explained by the view that Russia's and China's interests have been at most mutual or complementary and at least not in severe or unmanageable conflict. The perception is also attributed to the view that China has not had harmful intentions towards Russia and that a good state of relations between the two countries is being maintained and continues to develop.

Regarding its relations with China, the main constraint that Russia's policy faces in the Russian Far East (RFE) and Central Asia (the two areas of focus in the thesis) is China's economic power. Throughout the period of interest, the trade structure of the RFE and China has been unbalanced in favor of the PRC: the RFE exports mostly raw materials and China exports mostly finished goods. Despite the unfavorability of the trade structure, China's economy provides vital import and export markets for the RFE. The economic dependence of the RFE on China constrains Russia's foreign policy in a way that makes actions that might severely disrupt the current economic relationship between the RFE and China at least unattractive and at most nonoptional. This constraint, however, has not given rise to a dominant perception among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers that China poses a threat to the RFE primarily because the unfavorable trade structure is generally not attributed to external actors, including the PRC, but rather to domestic factors.

China's economic power has also constrained Russia's foreign policy in Central Asia throughout the period of interest. Both Russia and China consider economic development linked to stability, and both are interested in a stable Central Asia. While Russia may prefer to be the primary driver of economic development in the region, it is simply not capable of doing so. Despite this limitation, China's economic activity in Central Asia is not considered particularly threatening by Russian foreign policy decisionmakers. There is a dominant perception that China's economic interests in Central Asia are 'natural', 'logical', or 'understandable', and that the competition that exists between Russia and China in the region is successfully managed through diplomacy, allowing the countries to avoid confrontation and conflict. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is generally considered beneficial to Russia, complementary to the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and a development that furthers the countries' shared interest in socio-economic stability in Central Asia.

In this view, China's economic expansion serves not so much as a loss as a gain for Russia in the form of more stability on its southern border. Russia's policy of hindering the development of multilateral economic cooperation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and its hesitation to lower or remove EAEU tariffs on imported Chinese goods may also be viewed as serving a stabilizing function by protecting domestic industry in Central Asia. Russia's policies have a balancing effect that serves the interests of both Russia and China in regional stability and are not as much a response to a direct threat from China as they are a response to a potential threat in the form of socio-economic upheaval in Central Asia prompted by the failure of domestic businesses due to an influx of inexpensive Chinese consumer goods and the growth of anti-Chinese sentiments. This perspective of Russia's economic balancing policies combined with two other main policies—the linking of the EAEU and BRI beginning in 2015 and the 2018

EAEU-China trade agreement—creates a picture of economic interaction between Russia and China in Central Asia characterized less by confrontation and rivalry moving towards conflict and more by manageable competition moving with caution towards a higher degree of cooperation and coordination in the mutual interest of regional stability.

In the context of Russia managing its relative decline *vis-à-vis* China, four factors are considered to have likely contributed to the dominant perception among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers that the rise of China does not pose a threat to Russia. First, despite China's conventional military superiority over Russia in northeast Asia and the countries' military expenditures gap, Russian officials do not perceive China as a challenger to its status as a great military power. This is mainly due to Russia's stable military power relative to that of China in Central Asia, China's recognition of Russia's 'privileged' interests and role as the primary security provider in the region, and Russia's maintenance of a massive nuclear arsenal.

Second, ideational convergence has contributed to the perception that the rise of China does not pose a threat to Russia. The countries have ideationally converged around the fight against the 'three evils' of terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism and the 'Shanghai Spirit', which includes mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for cultural diversity, and the pursuit of common development. Russia and China have also ideationally converged around the rejection of unipolarity in favor of multipolarity, the foreign policy principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, and the de-ideologization of their relations in favor of a more pragmatic basis.

Third, Russia, regarding its relations with China, may be seen as engaging in strategic retrenchment in the interest of solvency.³ Russian foreign policy decisionmakers likely realize that confronting a rising China is beyond Russia's means, and by retrenching it has an opportunity to strengthen in an environment in which it does not have to sacrifice tremendous resources for the sake of confrontation or conflict with China.

And fourth, Russia has managed its decline relative to China by participating in the institutions and projects of the PRC, including the SCO, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and the BRI for the sake of information access. In addition to the leverage Russia gains as a participant in the institutions and projects, its participation allows Moscow to better understand China's activities, particularly in Central Asia, and this information strengthens Russia's ability to protect its interests.

Literature Review

It has been common among Western scholars and analysts to argue that Russia's public relationship with China, consisting of rapprochement, cooperation, and continuing development, is fragile because of mutual mistrust and conflicts of interests. Occasionally, authors suggest that it is a facade hiding a rivalry carried out in private. Some claims that Russia perceives China as a threat are left unsubstantiated while others are accompanied by citations intending to offer supporting evidence. If time is taken to check the sources thoroughly, sometimes evidence is found to be wanting. *The Future of China-Russia Relations (2010)* was selected for this part of the review because it was published in the middle of the period of interest and includes the work

³ MacDonald, Paul K., and Joseph M. Parent. *Twilight of the Titans: Great Power Decline and Retrenchment*. Cornell University Press. 2018. p. 26.

of several prominent scholars in the field of Russia-China relations. The following focuses on a few citations made by Downs in one of the chapters of the volume.

Downs argues that between Russia and China there is ‘historically developed mutual mistrust and lack of understanding’ and that ‘mistrust between China and Russia has hindered energy cooperation between the countries’.⁴ The former claim was left unsubstantiated, but for the latter the scholar cites an entire article by Lo, which contains some contradictions and arguments wanting of evidence.⁵

Lo posits that, for various reasons, Russians are filled with mistrust, anxiety, and suspicion towards China, and makes the seemingly contradictory claim that between Russia and China, ‘the level of mutual trust is higher than ever’.⁶ The scholar does not cite any evidence in the 24-page article, but makes bold claims, including the following.

‘The re-emergence of a positive bilateral agenda has done little to allay Moscow's anxieties about the “China threat”. In its most elemental and primitive form, this fear is embodied in the bogey of a “yellow horde” rushing in to fill the “empty spaces” of the Russian Far East ... China is challenging - discreetly - Russia’s once pre-eminent position. The old strategic arrangements, whereby Beijing was happy to leave Moscow the responsibility of managing radical Islamic and separatist currents, are unraveling’.⁷

In contrast, the analysis performed for this thesis reveals that a positive bilateral agenda has likely done much to ‘allay Moscow’s anxieties’, and that the division of labor between the two in Central Asia, in which Russia focuses more on security and China more on economic well-being

⁴ Downs, Erica. ‘Sino-Russian Energy Relations: An Uncertain Courtship’. In James Bellacqua, ed. *The Future of China-Russia Relations*. University Press of Kentucky. 2010. pp. 146, 160.

⁵ Lo, Bobo. ‘China and Russia: Common Interests, Contrasting Perceptions’. *Insight Turkey* 9, no. 2 (2007): 128-151.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 143-144.

and development, was not unraveling and, despite China's recent expansion of its security presence in Tajikistan (examined in Chapter 7), has not undergone substantial change.

Lo offers some scenarios for the future of Russia-China relations, one of which the scholar claims is 'favored by some Russian Sinologists' that are not cited.⁸ The scenario is that China will 'crack up under the weight of various pressures: political succession; democratization; an overheated economy; social inequality and dislocation; uncontrolled population growth' and as a result, Beijing might "compensate" for domestic setbacks with a more aggressive and nationalistic foreign policy', which may involve 'revisiting' some issues such as the demarcation of the common border, illegal immigration, and 'strategic accommodation in Central Asia'.⁹ Lo adds that 'any move by Beijing in this direction would have serious repercussions, to the point that armed conflict could not be ruled out'.¹⁰

This thesis shows that views such as these in Russia are marginal. Dominant views among Russian experts and officials are far more moderate and include cautious optimism and continuous reassessment of Russia's relationship with China, which, in general, has led to the conclusion that the countries' relations are good and that they continue to develop in a positive direction. The study uncovered no evidence to suggest that Russian officials are concerned that domestic pressures in China will result in the targeting of Russia with an aggressive policy as compensation.

Lo's article, which Downs describes as a 'discussion of the mistrust between China and Russia', is the only source the scholar cites to support the claim that 'mistrust between China and Russia

⁸ Ibid., p. 148.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

has hindered energy cooperation between the countries’.¹¹ Given the questionable foundations of Lo’s arguments, it would be reasonable not to take Downs’s claim at face value.

Downs also posits that ‘Moscow has been reluctant to make binding commitments to construct oil and natural gas pipelines to China largely because of concerns that by doing so Russia will be directly helping to fuel the rise of a country that poses a serious long-term threat to Russian national security’.¹² The scholar cites two pages of a chapter written by Yu. The most relevant claim Yu makes on these pages is that ‘Russia’s indecision on the pipeline issue reflects its mixed perception of China, which is rooted in a muted, but serious, concern about a rising China’.¹³ Yu cites two sources of evidence for this claim. The first is “‘FMA 8 Dec: Russian, Chinese, and Japanese Media Discuss Far Eastern Pipeline,” December 8, 2003, FBIS’.¹⁴ A basic search of this citation, in whole or in parts, brings no results that lead to the source to which Yu refers. The second source Downs cites is an article by a media correspondent with a bachelor’s degree in Latin American studies.¹⁵

Downs also claims that ‘many Russians are convinced that [the RFE] will increasingly become a Chinese sphere of influence if larger numbers of the hundreds of millions of inhabitants of China’s northeast move north in search of additional “living space”’.¹⁶ In addition to one of the pages of Yu’s article discussed above, the scholar cites three sources. One of the sources makes the opposite claim:

¹¹ Downs. ‘Sino-Russian Energy Relations: An Uncertain Courtship’. 2010. p. 172.

¹² Ibid., p. 160.

¹³ Yu Bin. ‘China and Russia: Normalizing Their Strategic Partnership’. In David Shambaugh et al. (eds.) *Power Shift: China and Asia’s New Dynamics*. University of California Press. 2005. p. 239.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 244.

¹⁵ The New York Times. ‘James Brooke’. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/by/james-brooke>. Accessed 27/06/2020.

¹⁶ Downs. ‘Sino-Russian Energy Relations: An Uncertain Courtship’. 2010. p. 160.

‘Erroneous is the argument that because Russia’s East is so thinly populated and China’s neighboring regions are densely populated, Russia risks being overrun by Chinese. All evidence from economics says that the natural tendency is for economic activity to concentrate, not disperse. People are not like a fluid or a gas: they do not flow to fill a vacuum. The Chinese immigrants in Russia — who in general are far fewer than some of the alarmist estimates — follow the laws of economics, not physics. They are not attracted to empty spaces in Siberia. They are attracted to cities where they find Russians with whom they can trade’.¹⁷

Another source the scholar cites, an article by Ostrovsky published by *Financial Times*, refers to Vasily Mikheev, a Doctor of Economic Sciences and Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences, who claims that ‘fear of Chinese migration has increased disproportionately to its size’.¹⁸ Ostrovsky does not cite a source, but Mikheev has stated similarly elsewhere.¹⁹ Another part of Ostrovsky’s writing Downs may be referring to is where the scholar states that ‘paranoia about migration is stoking up nationalism’ and quotes the Head of the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation Konstantin Romodanovsky, who stated in 2006 that ‘settlements like Chinatowns are unacceptable for Russia and I can assure you we will not have them in Russia’.²⁰ Elsewhere, the Deputy Head of the Federal Migration Service Vyacheslav Postavnin elaborates that the Russian population ‘feel[s] discomfort if the concentration of foreigners in the region exceeds 17-20%’, and notes that one of these areas is the RFE.²¹ Downs does not differentiate the concerns of Russian civilians in the RFE and the concerns of the Russian government. As the

¹⁷ Caddy, Clifford G. ‘As Russia Looks East: Can It Manage Resources, Space, and People?’ Gaiko Forum. January 2007. p. 4. Available at <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/200701.pdf>. Accessed 27/06/2020.

¹⁸ Ostrovsky, Arkady. ‘Fears Grow of Chinese Moving into Russian East’. *Financial Times*. London, UK. 01/12/2006; and Vasily Mikheev. Profile at the Website of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations. Available at <https://www.imemo.ru/about/persons/departement/full?id=9>. Accessed 27/06/2020.

¹⁹ See for example Vasily Mikheev. ‘Sibir’ Kitaitsev ne Prel’shchaet (Siberia Does not Appeal to the Chinese)’. *Rosbalt*. 06/05/2013. Available at <https://www.rosbalt.ru/moscow/2013/05/06/1124338.html>. Accessed 27/06/2020.

²⁰ Ostrovsky. ‘Fears Grow of Chinese Moving into Russian East’. 2006

²¹ RCB Politics. ‘FMS: Poseleniĭ Napodobie "Kitaĭskikh Kvartalov" v RF ne Budet (FMS: There Will Be No Settlements Like “Chinatowns” in the Russian Federation)’. 16/12/2006. Available at <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/16/11/2006/5703bcfb9a7947afa08cb139>. Accessed 27/06/2020.

scholar's claim above seems to be framed as one including concerns of the Russian government, the relevance of this source is weakened.

The final source Downs cites for the claim that 'many Russians are convinced that [the RFE] will increasingly become a Chinese sphere of influence' if the Chinese seek 'living space' in the north is three pages in a book chapter written by Hill and Gaddy. On one of the pages, the authors claim that, in the context of 'the buildup of Chinese conventional military forces' and the Russian military's 'abject decay', 'Russian policymakers [are] understandably nervous'.²² Hill and Gaddy continue: 'in many respects, contemporary Russian leaders and analysts are still grappling with the security dilemmas that have plagued Russia since the tsarist era'.²³ The authors do not cite evidence for either of these claims.

On the other two pages cited by Downs, the most relevant are the assertions that Russia's anti-immigration lobby at the time was 'in the ascendant', and that most Russian policymakers had 'pushed for more restrictions on refugees and immigrants as well as more stringent citizenship requirements'.²⁴ Gaddy and Hill cite an article by Heleniak published by the *Migration Policy Institute*. The authors seem to misquote Heleniak. In the article, the author makes the more modest claim that 'the anti-immigration side seems to be ascendant' and adds that 'demographic projections paint a dire picture that could temper policies to limit new immigrants'.²⁵ Gaddy and Hill also cite an interview, the topic of which was immigration, with the leader of the political party *Yabloko*, a marginal, yet legally registered political party in Russia, Grigory Yavlinsky,

²² Gaddy, Clifford G. and Fiona Hill. 'Russia of the Mind'. In Clifford G. Gaddy and Fiona Hill (eds.) *The Siberian Curse: How Communist Planners Left Russia Out in the Cold*. Brookings Institution Press. 2003. p. 171.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 181.

²⁵ Heleniak, Timothy. 'Migration Dilemmas Haunt Post-Soviet Russia'. Migration Policy Institute. 01/10/2002. Available at <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/migration-dilemmas-haunt-post-soviet-russia>. Accessed 27/06/2020.

conducted by *Novaya Gazeta*.²⁶ China is not mentioned explicitly in the interview, but is alluded to. Yavlinsky stated that east of the Urals ‘live three people per square kilometer. Our neighbors have 178 people each. And is it not really clear to someone that, abandoning migrants, Russia, which is losing 700 thousand people a year, will simply not be able to maintain its sovereignty in Siberia and the Far East? So, it is not migrants, but the cessation of migration that seriously threatens the national security of our country’.²⁷ In the interview, Yavlinsky explicitly opposes anti-immigration measures taken by the government, and when he speaks of immigration, he is primarily referring to immigration from CIS states. In referring to the population imbalance between Siberia and the RFE and their neighbors, Yavlinsky expresses concern over the maintenance of effective sovereignty over the territories. This thesis shows that such concern is marginal among Russian experts and officials for various reasons, including a lack of economic incentive for the Chinese to immigrate to Siberia and the RFE. It is more expensive to live in Russia. The Chinese who enter Russia tend to stay only temporarily to earn money then return to China. Additionally, Chinese immigrants potentially face harassment from the police and violence from xenophobic sectors of the Russian population.

In sum, the evidence Downs provides for the claim that ‘many Russians are convinced that the [RFE] will increasingly become a Chinese sphere of influence’ if the Chinese seek ‘living space’ seems contradictory, ambiguous, and irrelevant, and consists of a marginal view of the threat of population imbalance in northeast Asia.

²⁶ Grafova, Lydia. ‘Grigoriĭ Īavlinskiĭ: Nashemu Gosudarstvu Ĺiudi ne Nuzhny (Grigory Yavlinsky: Our State Does Not Need People)’. *Novaya Gazeta*. 29/07/2002. Available at https://www.yabloko.ru/Publ/2002/2002_07/020730_novg_yavlinsky.html. Accessed 27/06/2020.

²⁷ Ibid.

The inadequate provision of evidence in the literature on Russia-China relations is of course not unique to Downs. The selection of the scholar's work was based on the year of publication and the contribution of other prominent scholars in the field to the volume. Laurelle, for example, in the context of discussing perceptions of Russia's security in Asia, writes that 'anti-Chinese discourse within the Russian elites, hitherto reserved for the private sphere, has recently grown in number'.²⁸ The scholar cites an online article about 540 words long, in which Larin asks 'how many Chinese migrants are in Russia?'.²⁹ Larin cites estimates of the Chinese immigrant population in Russia, including those of Gelbras and Prikhodko, who claim that there were at the time 150-400 thousand, with a maximum of 500 thousand, contrary to alarmists who claimed there were millions.³⁰ The scholar also cites Guilbard, who claimed that there were hidden communities of Chinese in Russia and estimated their population at 8 million.³¹ However, Larin explains that 'neither he nor anyone else has yet provided any evidence of the existence of such communities', and at the end of the piece the author estimates that 'the number of Chinese reached 331 thousand people'.³²

It is arguable that one source may not be sufficient evidence for the claim Laurelle makes that 'anti-Chinese discourse within the Russian elites ... has recently grown in number'. But more importantly, the source the scholar cites does not constitute anti-Chinese discourse.

²⁸ Laurelle, Marlene. 'Moscow's China Dilemma: Evolving Perceptions of Russian Security in Eurasia and Asia'. In Robert E. Bedetski and Nikolas Swanström (eds.) *Eurasia's Ascent in Energy and Geopolitics. Rivalry or partnership for China, Russia, and Central Asia?* London: Routledge. 2012. p. 78.

²⁹ Larin, Alexander. 'Skol'ko v Rossii Kitaiskikh Migrantov? (How Many Chinese Migrants Are There in Russia?)' Demoscope 347-348. 29/09/2009-12/10/2008. Available at <http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/2008/0347/tema01.php> Accessed 26/06/2020.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

This thesis provides support for some arguments in the field that contradict much of the literature claiming the existence of a hidden rivalry. Kaczmarkski argues that ‘the “New Great Game” metaphor contributed significantly to a misreading of Russian-Chinese relations in [Central Asia]. The global economic crisis triggered the emergence of a new status quo ... The new configuration has been far from optimal for either Moscow or Beijing but has nevertheless been satisfactory enough to remove Central Asia from the list of pressing concerns’.³³

Charap et al. argue that, while there are limits to their partnership, ‘Russia and China have avoided any turbulence that might have resulted from this asymmetry through mutual accommodation and compromise’.³⁴ The scholars explain that this is due to ‘relationship management efforts’, which consist of the devotion of ‘significant effort and political capital’, ‘a pragmatic, behind-the-scenes approach to resolving disputes and publicly stress[ing] the positive elements in the relationship’.³⁵ Charap et al. claim that, in addition to relationship management efforts, the ‘positive dynamic in their relationship is also a natural outgrowth of their shared views on the international order’.³⁶ According to the scholars, ‘China has of course seized upon the opportunities that Russia’s current situation presents. At the same time, it has been accommodating and mindful of Russia’s interests and has refrained from abusing its advantageous position’.³⁷ Charap et al. make an example of China’s acceptance of Russia’s proposal to declare the intended linking of the EAEU and BRI, noting that ‘China could have

³³ Kaczmarkski, Marcin. ‘The Asymmetric Partnership? Russia’s Turn to China’. *International Politics* 53, no. 3 (2016): 423.

³⁴ Charap, Samuel, et al. ‘Russia and China: A New Model of Great-Power Relations’. *Survival* 59, no. 1 (2017): 25-26.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

tried to implement the BRI in EEU member states on a purely bilateral basis. Instead, Beijing agreed to a significant political gesture'.³⁸

On the question of threat perception regarding China in an analysis of Russian foreign policy towards China in the Putin period, Kuhrt explains that 'Russian armed forces, in common with militaries in most countries, are trained to be aware of all hypothetical threats, and still cite China as a potential aggressor; what has changed is that this is now more likely to be couched in terms of competition for resources and Chinese expansionism into the Russian Far East, than in purely military terms'.³⁹ The scholar elaborates, citing general-lieutenant of the Russian military Vladimir Ivanovich Ostankov, an analyst working with the General Staff, who wrote that 'large-scale conflict cannot be ruled out'.⁴⁰ Kuhrt also explains that 'there is a sense that while China needs "a reliable rear area" (i.e. Russia) and does not pose a serious threat to Russia, by its "sheer weight" in the international system "it is quite capable of suppressing the will of other states"', citing another general-lieutenant, Anatoly Filippovich Klimenko.⁴¹

This thesis follows in the footsteps of Kuhrt by targeting expert analysis in Russia and focusing on the knowledge production of those with ties to the Russian government or military. It finds that the views conveyed by Ostankov and Klimenko are among those dominant regarding Russia's perception of China. The Russian military does indeed consider any state with considerable military power a potential threat. What this study finds in addition is that the

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 33-34.

³⁹ Kuhrt, Natasha. *Russian Policy Towards China and Japan: The El'tsin and Putin Periods*. Routledge. 2007. p. 112.

⁴⁰ Ibid.; and Vladimir Ostankov. 'Geopoliticheskie Problemy i Vozmozhnosti Ikh Resheniia v Kontekste Obespecheniia Bezopasnosti Rossii (Geopolitical Problems and Opportunities for Their Solutions in the Context of Ensuring Russia's Security)'. *Military Thought* 14, no. 1 (2005): 28.

⁴¹ Ibid.; and Anatoly Klimenko. 'Èvoliutsiia Voennoi Politiki i Voennoi Doktriny Kitaia (The Evolution of China's Military Policy and Military Doctrine)'. *Military Thought* 14, no. 2 (2005): 59.

dominant view emphasizes that a threat from China is purely hypothetical and that over the period of interest China has not given a strong enough reason to cause a perception among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers that China has harmful intentions towards Russia.

Another dominant theme among Russian experts found by the analysis is that China's interest in having Russia as a 'reliable rear' that it can count on in the event of a conflict with the US contributes to Moscow's confidence that China does not pose a threat to Russia.

Kuhrt also quotes Vasily Mikheev, a Doctor of Economic Sciences that has held positions in the Russian government who argues that 'there are no solid anti-Chinese forces [in Russia]. Any existing such feeling is limited in scope and marginal, lodged in ultra-nationalism and has no serious influence on Russian policy towards China'.⁴² This thesis supports this claim. It finds that, not only is the view in Russia that China directly threatens Russia apparently absent among foreign policy decisionmakers, but it is also marginal in the expert community. There also exists the view among experts that much of the anti-Chinese sentiment that does exist in Russia consists of certain media outlets that exaggerate issues relevant to China in the interest of sensationalism and that the sentiment is instrumentalized by politicians in the RFE to pander to xenophobic sections of the population and to attempt to justify requests for more funds from the federal budget.

Wishnick points out that 'discussion of the Sino-Russian partnership in the West is oddly out of step with analysis by Russian and Chinese policy experts' and addresses the question of whether Russia is hedging against China in Asia, which is often the focus in Western analysis.⁴³ The

⁴² Ibid., p. 113; and Vasily Mikheev. 'China: Threats, Risks, and Challenges of Development'. Carnegie Moscow Center. 2005. p. 40. Available at https://carnegieendowment.org/files/9275book_Kitai1.pdf. Accessed 28/06/2020.

⁴³ Wishnick, Elizabeth. 'In Search of the "Other" in Asia: Russia-China Relations Revisited'. *The Pacific Review* 30, no. 1 (2017): 115, 121-124.

question is relevant to this study, as evidence of hedging may suggest a perception among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers that China threatens Russia, or, at the very least, a perception of a potential threat from China that has prompted preparation in the form of hedging for the contingency that the threat becomes direct.

After a discussion of definitions of hedging, Wishnick argues that, according to Goh's definition, Russia is not hedging against China in Asia. The scholar explains that, for Goh, hedging is 'a form of "indirect balancing", designed either to preclude potential constraints on one's freedom of action or to create relationships that could be used as leverage in the event of a worsening of the security environment'.⁴⁴ Specifically, Goh defines hedging as 'a set of strategies aimed at avoiding (or planning for contingencies in) a situation in which states cannot decide upon more straightforward alternatives such as balancing, bandwagoning, or neutrality. Instead, they cultivate a middle position that forestalls or avoids having to choose one side [or one straightforward policy stance] at the obvious expense of another'.⁴⁵ Wishnick explains that Russia's behavior does not constitute hedging because

'Russia's partnerships with India and Vietnam originated in the period of decolonization – a time when these countries also enjoyed good relations with China. Subsequently, in context of the cold war and the Sino-Soviet conflict the Soviet Union sought to boost ties with Vietnam and India to counter both the US and Chinese threats. The continuation of these long-standing relationships since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the development of the Sino-Russian partnership reflects enduring bilateral interests such as military and energy cooperation'.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 122; and Evelyn Goh. 'Understanding "Hedging" in Asia-Pacific Security'. Pacific Forum CSIS Honolulu 43 (2006). Available at https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/pac0643.pdf. Accessed 28/06/2020.

⁴⁵ Goh. 'Understanding "Hedging" in Asia-Pacific Security'. 2006.

⁴⁶ Wishnick. 'In Search of the "Other" in Asia: Russia-China Relations Revisited'. 2017. p. 122.

Wishnick adds that, ‘although Russia has not overtly sided with China in its conflicts over East China Sea islands or South China Sea issues, as Goh notes, neutrality is not the same as hedging. In fact, some recent Russian weapons sales to China have the effect of strengthening Chinese positions in these conflict zones’.⁴⁷

This assessment is in line with the findings of this study. While Russia is interested in diversifying its ties in Asia, this is mostly due to economic interests involving the value of diversifying export markets for raw materials for a stronger position in price negotiations with China, and the desire for weapons contracts, which keep the defense industry in Russia alive and allow it to develop more technology for the Russian military. The analysis offered by this thesis suggests that among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers there is a lack of perceived necessity to hedge against China in Asia to prepare for the contingency of confrontation or conflict because of the dominant view among Russian experts and likely among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers throughout the period of interest that conflicts of interest between Russia and China are not so severe as to be unmanageable and that China does not intend to harm Russia.

Wishnick explains that similarities in the worldviews of Russian and Chinese officials are ‘an important basis for their partnership and, in fact, the growing spheres of policy coordination reflect these shared political values’.⁴⁸ The scholar also points out that, ‘like their Chinese counterparts, Russian leaders and officials emphasize the responsibility of states to protect their own citizens and reject the liberal vision of a universal responsibility to protect individuals in

⁴⁷ Ibid., citing Harry J. Kazianis. ‘Russia Could Make South China Sea a Chinese Lake’. The National Interest. 25/02/2015. Available at <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/russia-could-make-china-king-the-south-china-sea-12318>. Accessed 28/06/2020.

⁴⁸ Wishnick. ‘In Search of the “Other” in Asia: Russia–China Relations Revisited’. 2017. p. 118.

harm's way, particularly if perpetrated by their own government', referring to R2P.⁴⁹ Wishnick explains further in a discussion of common identity between Russia and China that

'in speeches and joint statements, Xi Jinping and Putin uphold the political value of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, and advocate respect for the development path they choose, as well as mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference, non-use of force, mutually beneficial cooperation, equality, and peaceful coexistence. The values that Russia and China share also resonate with the foreign policy principles that each of the two states espouses'.⁵⁰

This thesis reconfirms such sharing of values and suggests that such common values contribute to the absence of unmanageable conflicts of interests between Russia and China, which is found to be one of the most plausible contributors to the absence of perceptions of threat from China among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

A review of literature on Russia-China relations would be remiss to exclude Lo's *Axis of Convenience* (2008). Throughout the book, the scholar acknowledges that there have been positive developments in relations between Russia and China. Lo observes that 'the degree of political, normative, and foreign policy convergence is unprecedented'; that 'Beijing's approach toward sensitive issues in the Russian Far East and Central Asia has been careful and even self-effacing'; and that Russia-China relations are 'one of the more convincing examples of positive-sum international relations today'.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 118-119, citing Xymena Kurowska. 'Multipolarity as Resistance to Liberal Norms: Russia's Position on Responsibility to Protect'. *Conflict, Security and Development* 14, no. 4 (2014): 489-508.

⁵⁰ Wishnick. 'In Search of the "Other" in Asia: Russia-China Relations Revisited'. 2017. pp. 116-117.

⁵¹ Lo, Bobo. *Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics*. Brookings Institution Press, Chatham House. 2008. pp. 10, 77, and 174.

These claims are supported by this thesis. Evidence suggests that the dominant view among Russian experts and officials is that, since 2000, and indeed since the late 1980s, Russia-China relations have developed in a positive direction and have reached the best state in their history. Also, China's restraint in the RFE and Central Asia and the role sharing in the latter region have contributed to a perception of an absence of threat from China.

However, the aim of Lo's book was not to advance these claims, but rather to argue that despite the apparent good state of Russia-China relations there were several reasons to doubt their sustainability. For example, the scholar argues that 'practical cooperation is hamstrung by historical suspicions, cultural prejudices, geopolitical rivalry, and competing priorities'; that 'the Mongol invasion [in the 13th century] implanted the idea of the East as threat in the Russian mind'; that 'the "Shanghai spirit" of positive-sum cooperation is an elaborate ruse'; and that 'demographic decline [in the RFE] was less an economic than a political and security issue', explaining that skepticism among 'elements of the Russian elite' towards China's denial of having territorial ambitions is 'founded in the conviction that "nature abhors a vacuum"'.⁵²

There is insufficient evidence to back the argument that there is a hidden rivalry between Russia and China brought on by mutual mistrust, historical suspicions, prejudice, or conflict of interest. The idea that the Mongol invasion of Kievan Rus in the 13th century significantly affects Russian foreign policy decision making regarding China in the 21st century is especially unreliable. As mentioned above, this thesis argues that one of the main reasons why Russian foreign policy decisionmakers throughout the period of interest have not perceived China as a threat is because occasional conflicts of interest between the two countries have not been so severe as to be

⁵² Ibid., pp. 2, 35, 58, and 180.

unmanageable through ‘relationship management’ techniques including frequent mutual consultation at the highest levels of government. Moreover, as explained above, Russia-China relations since 2000 have included a process of trust-building including the institutionalization of their relations and restraint.

Lo’s pointing out the demographic imbalance between the RFE and northern Chinese provinces and comment that ‘nature abhors a vacuum’ are reminiscent of the sensationalist stories in the Russian media in the 1990s. The dominant view among Russian experts and foreign policy decisionmakers is that for several reasons, including a lack of economic incentives, there is no reason to believe that there is a threat of mass immigration from a stable China.

This thesis does not find sufficient evidence to suggest that the ‘Shanghai Spirit’ is an ‘elaborate ruse’. It would not be accurate to view Russia-China relations as absolutely and continuously adhering to its principles. The ‘Shanghai Spirit’ for Russia and China is an ideal aspired to in their interactions. There is more evidence to suggest a gradual convergence than divergence towards the principles of the concept.

In a seemingly contradictory turn, Lo argues that ‘China’s rise does not threaten Russia’s territorial integrity, political stability, economic prosperity, or civilization’.⁵³ According to the scholar, the threat China poses to Russia is marginalization in international affairs due to its continuing rise, and that the power disparity between the two will ultimately lead to liberties being taken in Beijing to infringe on Russia’s interests.⁵⁴

⁵³ Ibid., p. 89.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

This thesis finds that Russia's marginalization in international affairs due to the rise of China has not necessarily led it to perceive a threat from China. The dominant view among Russian experts and foreign policy decisionmakers is that such marginalization is due more to internal failings to stimulate innovative sectors of the economy to lead it away from heavy reliance on the export of raw materials.

One of the more recent works dedicated entirely to Russia-China relations is *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century* (2019), edited by Bekkevold and Lo. In the introduction of the volume, Lo presents arguments similar to those in *Axis of Convenience* (2008). The scholar acknowledges in several ways the good state of Russia-China relations and their continued development in a positive direction, then claims that 'much of the progress in the relationship is brittle', and that the division of labor in Central Asia mentioned above is an 'artificial distinction'.⁵⁵ Regarding the delineation of roles in Central Asia, Lo additionally posits that 'the long-time "division of labor" between Chinese economic primacy and Russian political leadership in Eurasia is being eroded'.⁵⁶ For this claim, the scholar cites two sources of evidence, the first of which is two pages of one of his books. The main argument Lo makes on these pages relevant to the division of labor in Central Asia is that Russia's 'pressuring' Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to join the EAEU 'is intended to shore up Russian influence' against China in the region.⁵⁷ No evidence is provided.

The second source is 'remarks by Timofei Bordachev and Yang Cheng at a conference on "Shaping Eurasia: What Convergence between China's Silk Road and the Eurasian Union?,"

⁵⁵ Bekkevold, Jo and Bobo Lo (eds.) *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2019. pp. 2, 4-5, 8.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

⁵⁷ Lo, Bobo. *Russia and the New World Disorder*. Brookings Institution Press, Chatham House. 2015. p. 149-150.

French Institute of International Affairs, Paris, 15 September 2016’.⁵⁸ A basic search of this source does not result in access to Bordachev and Cheng’s ‘remarks’. On the website of the French Institute of International Relations, unfortunately, there is no information on the conference to which Lo refers.⁵⁹ The content analyzed by this study includes a considerable amount of Bordachev’s work. None of it suggests the scholar believes that the division of labor between Russia and China in Central Asia has been ‘eroded’.

Bekkevold acknowledges that ‘the Sino-Russian partnership has expanded considerably, and is stronger than it has ever been. Russia has moved closer to China, a turn in Russian policy that China has embraced’.⁶⁰ The scholar also explains that Russia’s new arms trade deals with China supplying some of its most advanced technologies ‘highlight a major shift in Russian thinking ... based on the premise that China is much more likely to engage in a maritime conflict with the United States than it is to embark on a land campaign against Russia’.⁶¹ Bekkevold sums up Russia-China relations over the last few decades with the following.

‘Moscow’s diminished threat perception *vis-à-vis* China owes much to Beijing’s policy of reassurance since the 1990s. China has been careful to respect Russia as a great power and give Putin face on the international stage. China’s ability to keep Russia onboard despite the growing power gap is one of the greatest success stories of Chinese diplomacy. While its growing power represents a challenge to Moscow, the Russian leadership believes that engaging with China is safer and more profitable than attempting to counterbalance or contain it’.⁶²

Another area of the literature on Russia-China relations relevant to this study is the debate over whether or to what extent the relationship between the two countries may be considered an

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

⁵⁹ French Institute of International Relations. Debates. Available at <https://www.ifri.org/en/debates#>. Accessed 03/07/2020.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 299.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 302.

⁶² Ibid., p. 303.

alliance. A lack of consensus on the subject persists among scholars as divergent positions have been taken in recent years.

For Baev, Russia and China are pseudo-allies and there are several reasons to doubt that their relationship will be elevated to an alliance in the foreseeable future.⁶³ According to the scholar, in addition to weak economic ties, the difference in the countries' geopolitical priorities weaken the possibility for an alliance. Baev explains that Russia and China are geopolitically oriented in opposite directions standing 'back to back': Russia faces West to deal with confrontation while China focuses on peaceful conflict developments in East Asia and on managing its 'hugely important' relationship with the US.⁶⁴ General resistance to US hegemony is not enough and methods matter. According to Baev, Russia's violation of US sovereignty in its interference in the 2016 election had a negative effect on Russia-China relations, as Beijing had 'every reason to disagree' with Russia's actions.⁶⁵ Elsewhere, Russia's propensity to use military means for political ends constitutes 'dangerous revisionism from the position of weakness, which works cross-purpose with China's carefully calculated revisionism from the position of strength'.⁶⁶ Baev argues that Russia's incompetence in managing the Korean crisis and the differences in Moscow's and Beijing's purposes in managing the crisis have also damaged Russia-China relations and negatively affect the prospects of an alliance.⁶⁷ In sum, Baev views the relationship as a fluid rather than stable one that 'has turned into a mutually irritating duress, in which Beijing

⁶³ Baev, Pavel K. 'Three Turns in the Evolution of China-Russia Presidential Pseudo-Alliance'. *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 6, no. 1 (2019): 4-18.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

seeks to prevent Moscow from spoiling its difficult deal making with Washington, and Moscow resents the short leash—and needs to escape from the path of a designated loser’.⁶⁸

Blank presents a different view of contemporary Russia-China relations, arguing that the countries are de facto allies despite not formally being declared as such.⁶⁹ In the scholar’s view, Russia and China’s alliance ‘derives from long-held and evolving geopolitically and ideologically congruent anti-American perspectives’.⁷⁰ Blank dismisses arguments in the literature that Russia’s relationship with China does not constitute an alliance because neither want to be restricted by an alliance, they have very different views on major international issues, and Russia wants to avoid Chinese encroachment on its great power status, explaining that ‘both sides have carefully avoided that predicament while advancing together’.⁷¹ In the scholar’s view, neither the absence of a formal document nor theories of alliance should suffice to convince others that a Sino-Russian alliance does not exist. Blank points out that ‘history abounds with informal alliances and strategic understandings’ and argues that the countries’ military exercises and cooperation ‘conform to alliance dynamics’.⁷² The scholar goes a step further, claiming that ‘the bilateral relationship’s intensiveness, level of trust, depth, and effectiveness make Sino-Russian ties superior to an alliance’.⁷³ Blank elaborates that the informality of the alliance allows for ‘flexibility of maneuver while maximizing opportunities for co-ordinated action and manifestations of that flexibility do not negate the reality of an alliance’.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 13.

⁶⁹ Blank, Stephen. ‘The Un-Holy Russo-Chinese Alliance’. *Defense & Security Analysis* 36, no. 3 (2020): 249-274.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 251.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., p. 252.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 252.

For Blank, the Sino-Russian alliance reveals itself most in the countries' military relations. After a brief summary of the development of military relations between Russia and China beginning in 1993, the scholar points out that 'by 2018 high-level security consultations were occurring 20-30 times a year' in addition to regional consultations, side-line consultations at meetings of international organizations like the SCO, and the creation of new security fora, such as the China-Russia Northeast Asia Security Dialogue.⁷⁵ Blank also points out that 3,600 Chinese students have participated in a military student exchange program in Russia over the last two decades, emphasizing that China does not have this kind of exchange with any other country and arguing that this 'clearly shows a long-term programme of military interaction and co-ordination that will continue into the future'.⁷⁶

Further in support of the argument that relations between Russia and China constitute an alliance, Blank describes the ways in which the militaries of the two countries have technologically and operationally become increasingly intimate. The scholar claims that, according to Russian sources, Russia and China plan to merge their global positioning systems (GPS), GLONASS and BEIDOU, a move that will have significant military implications.⁷⁷ Moreover, the 'peace mission' joint military exercises held by Russia and China since 2005 have led to greater interoperability and increased intimacy due to the sharing of their respective C4ISR.⁷⁸ According to Blank, the joint missile defense exercises held in 2016 and 2017 marked

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 256-257.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ C4ISR is an acronym used by the US Department of Defense to refer to command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance.

a ‘new level of trust’ characterized by the sharing of information ‘in sensitive areas like missile launch, warning systems, and ballistic missile defense’.⁷⁹

Korolev takes a position more towards the center in the debate over whether Russia and China are allies. The scholar argues that the relationship has some of the main characteristics of an alliance but falls just short of it with only a few minor steps that may be taken in order to reach allied relations.⁸⁰ Korolev first formulates a framework of characteristics of an alliance based on the work of various IR scholars and the criteria outlined by the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions and the Correlates of War datasets.⁸¹ The framework is used in an analysis that aims to determine the extent of institutionalization of military relations between Russia and China. There are five criteria corresponding to ‘moderate institutionalization’ and three criteria corresponding to ‘deep institutionalization’. ‘Moderate institutionalization’ of military relations consists of an alliance treaty or agreement, a mechanism of regular consultations, military-technical cooperation and military personnel exchange, regular military drills, and confidence building measures.⁸² ‘Deep institutionalization’ of military relations consists of an integrated military command, joint troops placement and/or military bases exchange, and a common defense policy.⁸³ Korolev concludes that the ‘China-Russia military partnership is solid and comprehensive ... highly institutionalized and shows an upward incremental trend’, and as such, it is ‘on the verge of an alliance’.⁸⁴ The scholar argues that the lack of a formal announcement of an alliance ‘does not mean that an “alliance” is not possible or not ready’ and that such an

⁷⁹ Blank. ‘The Un-Holy Russo-Chinese Alliance’. 2020. p. 258.

⁸⁰ Korolev, Alexander. ‘On the Verge of an Alliance: Contemporary China-Russia Military Cooperation’. *Asian Security* 15, no. 3 (2019): 233-252.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 236.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 236-237.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

arrangement ‘may be beneficial for both China and Russia at the current time’.⁸⁵ Korolev also carefully emphasizes that, while the development of the countries’ military relations are trending towards a military alliance, this does not mean that the trend is not reversible or that the establishment of a military alliance is inevitable.⁸⁶

The alliance literature currently appearing in the field of Russia-China relations offers valuable insight into the quality of the relationship but falls short of providing an answer to the question of why Russia is not threatened by the rise of China. Even allied relations do not provide a guarantee that China may at some point take advantage of its superior position at the expense of Russia’s interests, at least from a realist perspective, which is discussed in the following chapter. Therefore, this thesis lies outside of this debate. This is not to say that the conclusions of the study have no implications for this area of the literature. The absence of perceptions of threat may facilitate Sino-Russian alliance formation or maintenance. But the presence of a dominant perception of an absence of threat from China among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers should not be considered a sufficient condition for the formation or maintenance of an alliance: the fact that a state does not perceive another as a threat does not necessarily mean they will become or remain allies.

Most literature on Russia-China relations does not focus solely on Russia’s apparent (through rhetoric and policy) lack of anxiety about the rise of China, but much of it includes relevant arguments. One such argument is that Russian decisionmakers’ fear of the rise of China is a significant variable affecting the pace (often considered slow) at which economic relations between the RFE and China are being developed and Chinese investments and projects are being

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 248.

accepted and implemented in the RFE.⁸⁷ As chapter 4 shows in its report of relevant results of the content analysis, concerns about economic relations between the RFE and China are not entirely absent, however they are marginal relative to the view that such relations are essential, mutually beneficial, and should be continued in their current state while solutions to problems are pursued. The dominant views identified consist of concerns about problems on Russia's side that are hindering cooperation, including the replacement of market mechanisms with top-down management; different standards in manufacturing and technology; complicated licensing procedures in Russia; high tariffs on Russia's side; a weak business and investment climate that fails to attract investment to sectors of the economy outside of raw materials; the inability to create standard living conditions in the RFE; the poor state of cross-border infrastructure; a lack of accessible information for Russian exporters and importers; an inadequate number of checkpoints and the inefficiency of those that exist; inadequate promotion of tourism; and a stifling legislative framework for bilateral cooperation which has consisted of administrative and legal barriers impeding foreign entrepreneurial and investment activity in Russia. Therefore, rather than apprehension on the Russian side due to wariness towards China's intentions, the economic unattractiveness of the RFE stemming from domestic factors including those listed above is argued to be the chief variable affecting the pace of the development of economic relations.

⁸⁷ See for example Bobo Lo. *Russia and the New World Disorder*. Brookings Institution Press, Chatham House. 2015. p. 139; Niklas Swanström. 'Sino-Russian Relations at the Start of the New Millennium in Central Asia and Beyond'. *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 87 (2014): 483-484; Gilbert Rozman. 'The Russian Pivot to Asia'. *The Asian Forum*. Special Forum 2, no. 6 (2014); James Bellacqua ed. *The Future of China-Russia Relations*. University Press of Kentucky. 2010. pp. 7-8; and Gilbert Rozman. 'The Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership: How Close? Where To?' In Bellacqua, ed. *The Future of China-Russia Relations*. 2010. p. 22. Some have argued that both the economic unattractiveness of the RFE and apprehension are significant factors. See for example Stephen Blank. 'Russian Writers on the Decline of Russia in the Far East and the Rise of China'. In Enders S. Wimbush and Elizabeth M. Portale, eds. *Russia in Decline*. Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation. 2017. pp. 259, 266.

Although less common in recent years, through most of the period of interest, contributors to literature on Russia-China relations would often argue or imply that fear of mass Chinese immigration to the RFE influences Russian foreign policy towards China.⁸⁸ The results of the content analysis presented in chapter 5 do not show evidence that perceptions of a demographic threat in the form of mass immigration from China to the RFE have been prevalent among Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military or Russian foreign policy decisionmakers in the period of interest.

Literature that refers to various Chinese interests and the way they would be negatively affected by an aggressive policy towards Russia in arguments that China does not pose a direct military threat to the RFE is supported by the findings of chapter 5.⁸⁹ One of the main findings of the chapter is that Russia's security policy in the RFE is significantly affected by the perceived socio-economic vulnerability of China in the form of its concentrated urban centers driving nearly all of the country's development progress. The vulnerability contributes (along with a perceived lack of harmful intentions) to Moscow's confidence that it is highly unlikely that China would risk military aggression towards the RFE and therefore frees Russia from the burden of balancing against China's superior conventional military power in northeast Asia.

⁸⁸ For relatively recent examples, see Ilan I. Berman. 'Russia's Fraught Demographic Future'. In Enders S. Wimbush, and Elizabeth M. Portale, eds. *Russia in Decline*. Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation. 2017. p. 43; Bobo Lo. *Russia and the New World Disorder*. Brookings Institution Press, Chatham House. 2015. p. 149; and Niklas Swanström. 'Sino-Russian Relations at the Start of the New Millennium in Central Asia and Beyond'. *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 87 (2014): 484-485.

⁸⁹ See for example see Paul N. Schwartz. 'The Military Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations. In Jo Bekkevold and Bobo Lo, eds. *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2019. p. 101; Stephen Blank. 'Triangularism Old and New: China, Russia, and the United States'. In Jo Bekkevold and Bobo Lo, eds. *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*. 2019. pp. 220-221; and Gilbert Rozman. 'Sino-Russian Relations: A New Era?' *Asia Dialogue*. 18/06/2019. Available at <https://theasiadialogue.com/2019/06/18/sino-russian-relations-a-new-era/>. Accessed 23/02/2021.

It is generally not acknowledged in literature on Russia-China relations that an understanding of China's interests in Central Asia as 'natural', 'logical', or 'understandable' exists in Moscow and that the understanding is important for explaining Russia's economic interaction with China in the region.⁹⁰ This is one of the main findings of chapter 6. In Western literature, there are few explanations of such interaction that include a dominant perception among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers that Russia benefits from the BRI and that the initiative and the EAEU are mutually complementary, producing a synergistic effect. This is another main finding of chapter 6. Finally, the chapter offers support for arguments in the literature that the negative effects of economic competition between Russia and China in Central Asia are mitigated by diplomatic efforts on both sides consisting of mutual accommodation and compromise and restraint on China's side.⁹¹

Literature on security interaction between Russia and China in Central Asia consists of some claims that Moscow is put at ease by Beijing's respect for Russia's 'special interests' in Central Asia demonstrated by its restraint, which are supported by the findings of chapter 7.⁹² Some contributors to the literature have found no severe conflicts of interest between Russia and China

⁹⁰ For a notable exception see Andrew Kuchins. 'Russian Perspectives on China: Strategic Ambivalence'. In James Bellacqua, ed. *The Future of China-Russia Relations*. University Press of Kentucky. 2010. p. 43.

⁹¹ See for example Maximilian Hess. 'Russia and Central Asia: Putin's Most Stable Region?' *Orbis* 64, no. 3 (2020): 421-433; Samuel Charap et al. 'Russia and China: A New Model of Great-Power Relations'. *Survival* 59, no. 1 (2017): 25-27, 33-34; Marcin Kaczmarek. 'The Asymmetric Partnership? Russia's Turn to China'. *International Politics* 53, no. 3 (2016): 415-434; and Marcin Kaczmarek. *Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order*. Routledge. 2015. pp. 100-101.

⁹² See for example Kaczmarek. 'The Asymmetric Partnership? Russia's Turn to China'. 2016. pp. 425-426, 431-432; Marcin Kaczmarek. *Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order*. Routledge. 2015. pp. 94, 100-101, 165-169.

in the region in the area of security,⁹³ while others have.⁹⁴ The work of the former is supported by another main conclusion of chapter 7 that among Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military, and likely among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers, is a dominant perception that there are little or no significant conflicts of interest regarding security policies in Central Asia. One area that has apparently received little attention in the literature is the effect of Russian decisionmakers' perception of China's need for a 'reliable' strategic rear in Central Asia on Russia's security-related policy interaction with China in the region. The results of the content analysis indicate that this is a serious consideration when determining how Russia should interact with China in Central Asia in the security realm. It is arguable that Russia's continued dominance in the security realm provides comfort in the face of China's expansion in the region, as Moscow maintains a considerable amount of influence that may be used to hinder Chinese access in the event of a conflict with the US.

Contribution to Existing Literature

This thesis contributes a rigorous and systematic analysis of Russia's foreign policy towards China to the literature on Russia-China relations building on the work of Kuhrt, Wishnick, Charap, Drennan, Noël, and Bekkevold. The conclusion of the analysis consists of a multilevel multicausal explanation reached by means of identification of intentions and dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers and the elaboration of the explanation with a

⁹³ See for example Morena Skalamera. 'Russia's lasting influence in Central Asia'. *Survival* 59, no. 6 (2017): 124-126, 130; Thomas Ambrosio. 'The Architecture of Alignment: The Russia-China Relationship and International Agreements'. *Europe-Asia Studies* 69, no. 1 (2017): 137; and Marcin Kaczmarek. *Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order*. Routledge. 2015. pp. 87, 92-94, 99-101.

⁹⁴ See for example Paul Goble. 'Russian Military Seeking to Counter Growing Chinese Role in Central Asia'. The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 17, no. 88 (2020). Available at <https://jamestown.org/program/russian-military-seeking-to-counter-growing-chinese-role-in-central-asia/>. Accessed 27/02/2021; Bobo Lo. *Russia and the New World Disorder*. Brookings Institution Press, Chatham House. 2015. pp. 149-150; and James Bellacqua, ed. *The Future of China-Russia Relations*. University Press of Kentucky. 2010. pp. 5-6.

discussion of structural constraints on Russia's foreign policy towards China from 2000 to 2020. The study also contributes to the literature on managing decline by proposing that one of the ways a great power may manage its decline relative to a rising power is by participating in the institutions and projects of the rising power in the interest of information access that strengthens the ability of the declining power to protect its interests.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 explains the theoretical approach and methodology of the thesis.

Chapter 3 provides information on the Russian institutions that published the texts selected for the content analysis and the experts whose work was targeted for analysis. The chapter also presents the results of the quantitative aspect of the content analysis, which reveals trends in Russian expert thought on China.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the content analysis that are relevant to Russian foreign policy decisionmakers' perceptions of the economic relationship between the RFE and China.

Chapter 5 presents the results of the content analysis that are relevant to Russian foreign policy decisionmakers' perceptions of the security of the RFE *vis-à-vis* China.

Chapter 6 presents the results of the content analysis that are relevant to Russian foreign policy decisionmakers' perceptions of the economic interaction between Russia and China in Central Asia.

Chapter 7 presents the results of the content analysis that are relevant to Russian foreign policy decisionmakers' perceptions of the security interaction between Russia and China in Central Asia.

Chapter 8 provides a conclusion to the thesis.

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Chapter 2: Theory and Method

This chapter elaborates the theoretical approach and methodology of the thesis. It explores how Russia's foreign policy towards China may be viewed through lenses of various international relations (IR) theories and establishes six hypotheses that explain the dominant perception of an absence of threat from China to Russia among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers. The chapter then explains the project's use of an integrative analytical framework and content analysis to test the hypotheses.

Informing Analysis with IR Theories

IR theories come into play at various stages in this study in important ways. First, they were integral in the formulation of the primary research question: Why is Russia not threatened by the rise of China?¹ This question stems from a realist outlook of international relations and the context of the relationship between the two states, which includes a drastic shift in the balance of power within a few decades that has the potential to result in balancing, confrontation, or conflict. Second, IR theories serve as foundations of the hypotheses that are to be tested. Third, IR theories have influenced the methodological approach in that the research method was chosen based on its suitability to test the hypotheses. What follows is a discussion of possible answers to the primary research question borrowed from various schools of thought in IR. Some are argued against, some are dismissed as insufficiently testable, and some are advanced to the level of hypothesis.

¹ This is a simplified version of the research question of this thesis. As explained in the previous chapter, the explanandum of the study is that there has been a dominant perception of an absence of threat from China to Russia among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers from 2000 to 2020.

Realism

Classical realists from Thucydides to Morgenthau primarily treat threat as a material condition brought on by shifts in the balance of power. Thucydides argues that the rise of Athens made war with Sparta inevitable,² while Morgenthau argues that the balance of power or equilibrium of states is necessary to maintain stability, and it is in their interest to prevent any one state from rising to preeminent power because the ascending state will eventually ‘encroach upon their interests and rights, and might ultimately destroy them’.³

Balance of power theory is also a central tenet of neorealism (or structural realism). Neorealists maintain that a state objectively threatens another when it has more material capabilities because no state can ever be sure of the intentions of other states.⁴ Balance of power logic holds that states respond to such threats either by building up their own material capabilities, forming alliances with other states, or both. This behavior is referred to as balancing.

Another concept in balance of power theory is bandwagoning, which is when a state aligns with the threatening state. According to Schweller, scholars engaged in debate over balancing and bandwagoning behavior erroneously treat the concept of bandwagoning as the opposite of balancing.⁵ The scholar argues that bandwagoning is more than just ‘giving in to threats’, and that ‘the goal of bandwagoning is usually self-extension: to obtain values coveted’.⁶ Schweller explains that there are different types of bandwagoning: jackal bandwagoning, piling on, wave of

² Thucydides. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. London: Penguin Books. 1972. p. 49.

³ Morgenthau, Hans. *Politics Among Nations*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1948. pp. 126-127.

⁴ Waltz, Kenneth N. *Theory of International Politics*. p. 113; Grieco, J.M. ‘Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism’. *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): 497-500; and John J. Mearsheimer. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York, London: W.W. Norton. 2001. pp. 3, 45-6.

⁵ Schweller, Randall L. ‘Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back in’. *International Security* 19, no. 1 (1994): 72-107.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

the future, and the contagion or domino effect.⁷ As the former two types of bandwagoning refer to alignment in war time, the latter two have the most potential to explain Russia's behavior towards China from 2000 to 2020. Wave of the future bandwagoning occurs when states align themselves with rising or more powerful states because they believe that they lead the way in a sort of inevitable progress. Schweller uses the bandwagoning of smaller states with the Soviet Union as an example, pointing out that many of them believed that communism was the way the world was heading.⁸ The contagion or domino effect occurs when an external force 'touches off a chain reaction, fueling the bandwagon at ever-greater speeds'.⁹ The spread of revolution through states in a region in which the countries are closely tied is used as an example.¹⁰

The wave of the future bandwagoning concept may in a sense be applicable to much of Russia's China policy throughout the period of interest. The wave of the future brought on by China, as perceived by Russia, is its great contribution to the shift of the center of global wealth and power from the Atlantic to the Pacific. China's leadership in this shift is attributed to its rapid economic growth which has already carried its economy past the US to take first place in GDP in PPP and continues to have a significantly higher annual growth average than the US.¹¹ The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation adopted in 2000 takes note of the Asia-Pacific's dynamic development, and states that developing relations with China is crucial for Russia's foreign policy.¹² As the analysis of Russia's official rhetoric on China from 2000 to 2020 in the Appendix shows, high-ranking government officials consistently subscribe to the view that

⁷ Ibid., pp. 93-99.

⁸ Ibid., p. 96.

⁹ Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 98-99.

¹¹ PricewaterhouseCoopers. 'The World in 2050'. February 2017. <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/economy/the-world-in-2050.html>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

¹² Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. June 28, 2000. Available at <https://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm>. Accessed 06/07/2020.

Russia must strengthen ties with China in order to seize the opportunity to benefit from its rapid growth. The main benefit sought after by the policy is the development of the Russian Far East (RFE) and Siberia. However, this development has been slow. Infrastructure in the regions remains relatively poor and human capital and Chinese investment in the regions remain low while China's primary interest continues to be access to the regions' natural resources rather than cooperating with Russia to develop the regions socio-economically. Although the benefit of developing Russia's eastern territories has not been fully realized, Russia's efforts to strengthen its relations with China for this purpose could be understood as wave of the future bandwagoning. However, this does not answer the question of why Russia is not threatened by the rise of China. Russia remains vulnerable to China in several ways. Realists may expect Russia's foreign policy to be one of mitigating such vulnerabilities and attempts to balance against China's rise, thus Russia's China policy in this period may seem anomalous from the perspective of balance of power theory.

Walt, a self-proclaimed neorealist unsatisfied with the explanatory power of balance of power theory, sought to modify it. In doing so, the scholar formulated balance of threat theory in *Origins of Alliances* (1987). According to balance of threat theory, a state will not necessarily balance against a state that is more powerful or rising in power.¹³ Instead of focusing solely on aggregate material capabilities, Walt incorporates perceptions of intention as a major factor in understanding the balancing behavior of states. In short, states feel less of a need to balance against powerful states that they perceive as having non-threatening intentions. Walt argues that perceptions matter in international relations and balancing behavior, but in doing so the scholar opens the black box of the state, thereby attracting both criticism from neorealists and attention

¹³ Walt, Stephen M. *The Origins of Alliances*. Cornell University Press. 1987.

from social constructivists. Because of the scholar's inclusion of perceptions of intentions in his theory he has been called a 'minimal realist' and accused of contributing to the theoretical degeneration of realism.¹⁴ Balance of threat theory maintains that perceptions of threatening intentions matter, however, Walt does not venture to explain how perceptions of threat emerge in the first place. Therefore, the theory cannot fully explain why Russia is not threatened by the rise of China. Nevertheless, balance of threat theory offers an important, albeit vague answer to the question: Russia does not perceive China as having harmful intentions towards it.

Regarding threats to state survival, realist IR scholars have paid most of their attention to military threats posed by other states, and Walt is no exception. When there is an absence of hostile rhetoric, as is the case in China's rhetoric on Russia, it is safe to assume that the job of determining whether China has harmful intentions mostly lies with the Russian military, intelligence services, and research institutes in performing assessments of Chinese military capabilities and posturing. Intelligence services would not serve as an effective source of data, however the Russian Ministry Defense and other institutions in Russia publish on China regularly and provide enough empirical material to carry out a substantial analysis. Therefore, this thesis establishes its first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Russian foreign policy decisionmakers do not perceive the rise of China as a threat because they believe China has harmless or benign intentions towards Russia.

Another theory in the school of realism that may help answer the research question of this thesis is offense-defense theory. The sizable body of literature on offense-defense balance reaches a level of complexity that is not appropriate for discussion here. It is only important to consider the

¹⁴ Legro, Jeffrey W. and Andrew Moravcsik 'Is Anybody Still a Realist?' *International Security* 24, no. 2. (1999): 5-55.

main proposition of the theory and the role of nuclear weapons. Offense-defense theory holds that when defenses have an advantage war is less likely, and when offenses have an advantage war is more likely.¹⁵ From 2000 to 2020, war between Russia and China remained very unlikely. From the perspective of offense-defense theory, one of the main reasons for the period of peace between the two states is the effectiveness of defenses and the overwhelming costs of an attack, both of which are the result of a strong nuclear deterrent on each side. According to the theory, the answer to the question of why Russia is not threatened by the rise of China would be that Russian officials believe that China, regardless of its intentions, is deterred by Russia's nuclear forces. Again, publishing institutions in Russia provide a sufficient amount of data for a substantial analysis that could determine whether nuclear deterrence is considered a main factor in the rationale behind the view that China's rise does not threaten Russia. Therefore, this thesis establishes its second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider nuclear deterrence to be one of the main reasons why the rise of China does not threaten Russia.

Another realist theory worth considering is balance of interests theory. Schweller, like Walt, was dissatisfied with the explanatory power of balance of power theory and sought to modify it. The scholar argues that, while the distribution of material capabilities matter, state behavior varies primarily with state preferences.¹⁶ According to balance of interests theory, threat arises from the incompatibility of state interests. Although many have considered balance of interests a realist theory, the extent to which it should be considered realist is debatable. If the standard by which such an extent is judged is the level of coherence with realist core assumptions and causal

¹⁵ Jervis, Robert. 'Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma'. *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 186-199.

¹⁶ Schweller, Randall L. *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1998.

mechanisms, balance of interests theory is not realist.¹⁷ Regardless of the paradigmatic classification of balance of interests, the theory, like balance of threat theory, provides an important yet vague answer to the research question of this thesis: Russia is not threatened by the rise of China because their interests are non-conflictual. There is a wealth of data in the form of texts provided by institutions in Russia that publish the work of experts on international affairs, foreign policy, and security that may be used to determine the veracity of this answer. The texts may be analyzed to determine whether the compatibility or non-conflictual nature of the interests of Russia and China is considered a main factor in the rationale behind the view that China's rise does not threaten Russia. Therefore, this thesis establishes its third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider the compatibility or non-conflictual nature of the interests of Russia and China to be one of the main reasons why China's rise does not threaten Russia.

Neoliberalism

Regarding threats in IR, neoliberals share the same starting point as neorealists: states are self-interested unitary actors, anarchy forces states into policies of self-help, and threats are mostly an objective condition brought on by the balance of power. Neoliberals differ from neorealists on the extent to which they believe anarchy, the security dilemma, and the prisoner's dilemma can be attenuated by international institutions or regimes.¹⁸ Of interest in this thesis is the neoliberal

¹⁷ Legro and Moravcsik 'Is Anybody Still a Realist?' pp. 29-32.

¹⁸ There has been a great deal of debate in the field regarding the definitions of international institutions and regimes. In many of the definitions, the terms overlap considerably. For example, Keohane defines institutions as 'persistent and connected sets of rules (formal and informal) that prescribe behavioral roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations', and Krasner defines international regimes as 'sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations'. Stephen D. Krasner. *International Regimes*. Cornell Studies in Political Economy. 1983. p. 2; and Robert O. Keohane. 'Neoliberal Institutionalism: A Perspective on World Politics'. In (ed.) Robert O. Keohane. *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory*. Boulder: Westview Press. 1989. p. 163.

argument that international regimes ‘reduce uncertainty in the external environment’ and that governments are ‘better able, with regimes in place, to predict that its counterparts will follow predictably cooperative policies’.¹⁹

From a neoliberal perspective, institutions or regimes established between Russia and China since the end of the Cold War may be providing Russian decisionmakers with enough confidence in the predictability of China’s actions to prevent or assuage concerns about the potential threat that China’s rise poses to Russia. An analysis of expert texts in Russia may shed light on the effect of institutions and regimes on Russia’s relationship with China and how they are used in the rationale behind the view that China’s rise does not threaten Russia. Therefore, this thesis establishes its fourth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider the establishment and maintenance of regimes and institutions between Russia and China to be one of the main reasons why China’s rise does not threaten Russia.

Constructivism

Constructivists maintain that threat arises primarily, if not always, as a result of social processes involving non-material factors such as identity, ideas, and norms. The realist logic that the anarchic structure of the international system causes self-help policies and renders any state that is more powerful an objective threat is challenged by constructivists who argue against the causal power of structure. For example, Wendt argues that without Waltz’s assumption that self-help follows logically from anarchy, the rest of his theory of international politics cannot predict

¹⁹ Keohane, Robert O. *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. 1984. pp. 114-5.

much about state behavior because the assumption ‘does the decisive explanatory work’.²⁰

Wendt argues that ‘self-help is an institution, one of various structures of identity and interest that may exist under anarchy ... Concepts of security therefore differ in the extent to which and the manner in which the self is identified cognitively with the other, and ... it is upon this cognitive variation that the meaning of anarchy and the distribution of power depends’.²¹ In this view, a state is not necessarily threatened by a more powerful state. Instead, threats arise through a process of signaling and interpreting, the same process by which identities and interests are formed.²²

The importance of identity in threat perception stems from the notion that ‘identities are the basis of interests’,²³ i.e. ‘interests should be derivable from identity in the sense that an individual’s identity implies his interests’.²⁴ These interests define behavior that may or may not be perceived by an Other as a threat. The idea that identity subsumes interest makes identity the key variable for threat perception. Hopf argues that a constructivist understanding of identity may succeed where balance of threat theory failed in explaining how perceptions of threatening intentions are formed.²⁵ In *Social Construction of International Politics* (2002), the scholar shows that, through a process of mutual constitution of the Self and Other, identities in Moscow in 1955 and 1999 were directly related to how other countries were perceived.²⁶ For example, the USSR’s acknowledgement of its own deviations from the ideal Soviet model of development at home

²⁰ Wendt, Alexander. ‘Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics’. *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 396.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 399-400.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 403-407.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 398.

²⁴ Hopf, Ted. *Social Construction of International Politics*. Cornell University Press. 2002. p. 16.

²⁵ Hopf, Ted. ‘The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory’. *International Security* 23, no. 1 (1998): 186-7.

²⁶ Hopf. *Social Construction of International Politics*.

made Yugoslavia's deviation more tolerable and less threatening to international socialist solidarity and its domestic socialist community.²⁷ Similarly, this acknowledgment of deviance and difference at home made India imaginable as a Soviet ally in 1955, a notion unthinkable only a year earlier.²⁸

In the cases above, the relationship between identity and threat perception is that the more one perceives an Other as similar to the self (as the level of shared identity increases) the less likely that Other will be perceived as a threat, which is the aggregate hypothesis of Rousseau's Construction of Threat Model.²⁹ In analyzing elite American perceptions of China from 1970 to 2002, the scholar argues that 'a purely material explanation for threat perception fails because it cannot explain the timing of the rapid rise and decline in threat assessment as well as an ideational explanation'.³⁰ For example, Rousseau finds that American perceptions of shared identity with China fell and threat perception of China rose drastically after the repression of the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989, although the material balance of power remained relatively stable.³¹

Rousseau makes a compelling argument on the relationship between identity and threat perception. However, the scholar does not include in his model the concept of 'closest Other', which is the Other most similar to the Self. According to Hopf, the closest Other may be the most threatening Other because it has the most potential to replace the Self.³² The scholar explains that 'similarity can promote discord because disputes over authenticity are possible only

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 106-123.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 134-142.

²⁹ Rousseau, David L. *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities: The Social Construction of Realism and Liberalism*. Stanford University Press. 2006.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 169.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 164-182.

³² Hopf. *Social Construction of International Politics*. p. 8.

with actors that are understood as partly oneSelf'.³³ Hopf described China in 1955 as the Soviet Union's closest Other. China was considered by the Soviets to be so similar to the Soviet Union that it was part of the Self and 'Chinese differences from the ideal were the object of closest Soviet attention'.³⁴ The following year saw the onset of the Sino-Soviet split. IR literature has not yet adequately addressed the negative effects of high levels of perceived similarity on the state of inter-state relations.

Other constructivists have identified differences in ideology³⁵ and the breaking of norms³⁶ as linked to threat perception. These approaches have a significant amount of overlap with the identity approach as ideological similarity and a similar degree of adherence to norms can contribute to an overall sense of shared identity and lower threat perception.

While the focus of this thesis is on the perceptions of Russian decisionmakers, it is nevertheless important to take into consideration mass perceptions of China in Russia. This is because mass perceptions or 'common sense' to a certain extent constrains elite projects. Drawing on Gramsci's conception of hegemonic ideology, Hopf argues that 'a common sense that is at odds with an elite hegemonic ideology may impose political, that is, selectoral or electoral, costs on an elite that ignores it'.³⁷ Although elites in Russia are not as easily held accountable by the public as in Western democracies, their projects are also constrained by mass common sense. Hopf et al. explain that 'nondemocratic leaders are still socialized at home and they are unlikely to adopt

³³ Ibid., p. 131.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 125, 131.

³⁵ Haas, Mark L. 'Ideology and Alliances: British and French External Balancing Decisions in the 1930s'. *Security Studies* 12, no. 4 (2003): 34–79.

³⁶ Farnham, Barbara. 'The Theory of Democratic Peace and Threat Perception'. *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 3 (2003): 395–415.

³⁷ Hopf, Ted. 'Common-Sense Constructivism and Hegemony in World Politics'. *International Organization* 67, no. 2 (2013): 323.

policies that do not appeal to their selectorates and publics'.³⁸ Available opinion polls show that since 2006 the Russian public has consistently rated China as one of Russia's closest friends alongside Belarus and Kazakhstan.³⁹ 2006 in particular saw a shift in Russian attitudes on the question of which country Russia should be oriented towards strengthening bilateral relations, with more favoring China than the US.⁴⁰ A poll in 2009 shows a low level of perceived threat from China, which occupies places similar to Romania and Germany in lists of countries 'most unfriendly' or 'hostile' to Russia.⁴¹ However, some ambivalence is also evident in public polls. In a poll asking about the accommodation of immigrants, Russians tended to place the Chinese near the top of the list of nationalities whose accommodation should be limited in Russia alongside natives of the Caucasus and Central Asia.⁴² In a constructivist view of the interaction between mass and elite perceptions, Russian decisionmakers would be less likely to adopt policies that conflict with mass opinion, such as unlimited Chinese immigration to Russia, or a foreign policy aimed at treating China's rise as a threat to national security which requires balancing.

As influential as mass perception may be, it is considered by constructivists to be a structural variable from which we are not able to deduce predictions about foreign policy outcomes.⁴³ A more fruitful constructivist approach to the question of why Russian foreign policy decisionmakers are not threatened by the rise of China would lie in an investigation of the

³⁸ Hopf, Ted, Bentley B. Allan, and Srdjan Vucetic. 'The Distribution of Identity and the Future of International Order: China's Hegemonic Prospects'. *International Organization* 72, no. 4 (2018): 849.

³⁹ Levada Center. 'Soiuzniki i "Vragi" Rossii, Evropeiskaia Integratsiia (Allies and "Enemies" of Russia, European Integration)'. 06/02/2016. Available at <https://www.levada.ru/2016/06/02/13400/>. Accessed 03/06/2020.

⁴⁰ Levada Center. 'Strana i Mir (Country and World)'. 05/05/2006. Available at <https://www.levada.ru/2006/05/05/1-sedov-strana-i-mir/>. Accessed 03/06/2020.

⁴¹ Levada Center. 'Druz'ia i Vragi Rossii (Friends and Enemies of Russia)'. 06/09/2009. Available at <https://www.levada.ru/2009/06/09/druzya-i-vragi-rossii/>. Accessed 03/06/2020.

⁴² Levada Center. 'Intolerantnost' i Ksenofobiia (Intolerance and Xenophobia)'. 10/11/2016. Available at <https://www.levada.ru/2016/10/11/intolerantnost-i-ksenofobiya/>. Accessed 03/06/2020.

⁴³ Hopf. 'Common-Sense Constructivism and Hegemony in World Politics'. 2013. p. 323.

interaction between shared identity and threat perception. Such an approach does not exclude considerations of mass perception, because ‘understandings of the national self are embedded in the taken-for-granted desires and understandings in elite and mass common sense’.⁴⁴ The aforementioned content provided by Russian publishing institutions may be analyzed to determine whether shared identity is a variable associated with threat perception by measuring shifts in perceived similarity and dissimilarity and threat perception. Therefore, this thesis establishes its fifth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Russian foreign policy decisionmakers believe that for reasons of shared identity the rise of China does not threaten Russia.

Psychology in IR

A significant amount of work in the field of psychology has been fruitfully applied in IR. Jervis’s *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (1976) draws on a wide range of theories and experimental findings in psychology to make an invaluable contribution to IR scholarship. Jervis acknowledges that the book is limited in a number of ways. The scholar does not claim to have formulated a theory of perception. Jervis notes inherent difficulties in obtaining evidence when working with perceptions: ‘there is no easy way to determine the accuracy of perceptions. It is hard to know what a person’s perceptions were, and even harder to know whether they were correct’.⁴⁵ The scholar mitigates these difficulties in three ways: he uses only cases for which there is a lot of evidence and about which historians generally agree; when there are disagreements about what happened he brings them to the attention of the reader; and for cases that should be considered plausible or hypothetical, minimally, he shows that ‘certain

⁴⁴ Hopf et al. ‘The Distribution of Identity and the Future of International Order’. 2018. p. 848.

⁴⁵ Jervis, Robert. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. 2nd ed. Princeton University Press. 2017. p. 7.

perceptions were held and could have easily been inaccurate'.⁴⁶ Another limitation is the difficulty of establishing causation and generalizing findings in atypical cases. Contrary to the constructivists in the previous section, Jervis is not concerned with actors' interests, which, according to constructivists, stem from their identities. The scholar argues that this is because interests only rarely explain perceptions and misperceptions, and that 'knowing what a person's interests are does not tell us how he will see his environment or go about selecting the best route to reach his goals'.⁴⁷ In this way, Jervis disputes the causal link between interests and behavior. The scholar uses some misperceptions as examples, such as Chamberlain's misperception that Hitler could be appeased, and argues that it was not in the actor's interest to perceive his environment in a way that caused him to make grave errors.⁴⁸

Jervis writes about many psychological processes relevant to decision making, however, the following will only focus on those relevant to threat perception. Experimental findings on the beliefs of the intentions of others were applied by Jervis to the decision making of statesmen.⁴⁹ Nickel found that 'people will become less angry (and retaliate less) when they believe that their partner intended them little harm—no matter how much they were harmed. Conversely, people become very angry (and retaliate to a greater extent) when they believe that their partner intended them harm—regardless of how much they were harmed'.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 8-9.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 33-5.

⁵⁰ Nickel, Ted. 'The Attribution of Intention as a Critical Factor in the Relation between Frustration and Aggression'. *Journal of Personality* 42, no. 3 (1974): 489.

The belief that one does not intend to harm can in some cases be attributed to trust. Jervis drew on psychological definitions of trust and applied the following understanding of trust to international relations:

‘Trust and trustworthiness should be interpreted similarly. Nation A trusts B in a particular situation when it believes that B will not further its own interests at the expense of A, usually because A believes that B values the prospects of long-run cooperation between the two countries more than it values short-run gains that would accrue by exploiting its immediate power over A. If A trusts B, it will allow situations to occur in which B could harm it, and indeed, if A wants to demonstrate its trust, it may seek such situations’.⁵¹

Trust can in some cases involve cognitive consistency. People tend towards balanced and consistent beliefs because of a need to minimize reality’s complexity and because imbalance and inconsistent beliefs cause discomfort and negatively affect memory.⁵² Regarding the effects of preexisting beliefs on the processing of new information, Jervis explains that ‘we ignore information that does not fit, twist it so that it confirms, or at least does not contradict, our beliefs, and deny its validity’ and that ‘when a statesman has developed a certain image of another country he will maintain that view in the face of large amounts of discrepant information’.⁵³ The scholar argues further that ‘once a new image of another state is established, the other’s actions appear very different than they had before’,⁵⁴ and also points out that ‘many psychological experiments indicate that people do not understand the impact that their beliefs have on their interpretations of new information’.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Jervis. *Perception and Misperception*. p. 44. For psychological definitions of trust see Morton Deutsch. ‘Trust and Suspicion’. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 2, no. 4 (1958): 266-76; and Bernhardt Lieberman. ‘i-Trust: A Notion of Trust in Three-Person Games and International Affairs’. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 8, no. 3 (1964): 271-280.

⁵² Abelson, Robert P., et al. *Theories of Cognitive Consistency: A Sourcebook*. Rand McNally. 1968.

⁵³ Jervis. *Perception and Misperception*. pp. 143, 146.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

The tendency of Russian decisionmakers to have consistent beliefs about China's non-threatening intentions could be explained by cognitive dissonance theory. Cognitive dissonance is the discomfort people feel when they have inconsistent beliefs, thoughts, values, attitudes, or ideas. The theory of cognitive dissonance posits that people seek to reduce dissonance and achieve consonance by avoiding information and circumstances that cause dissonance.⁵⁶

The concept of 'anchoring heuristics' may also shed light on Russia's perception of China as non-threatening. Heuristics are cognitive shortcuts that people use to simplify a complex reality and make decisions in an uncertain environment. The anchoring heuristic refers to the way people tend to process new information in a way that involves comparing it to a past reference point.⁵⁷ According to Stein, with regard to decisionmakers, 'beliefs serve as a conceptual anchor on the processing of new information and the revision of estimates ... The implications for threat perception are considerable; once an estimate of threat is generated, it anchors subsequent rates of revision so that revision is slower and less responsive to diagnostic information. Threat perceptions consequently become embedded and resistant to change. So do beliefs that an adversary will not attack'.⁵⁸

Beliefs are resistant to change, but they are revised or changed under certain circumstances. Specifically, change varies with the amount and frequency of inconsistent information and the degree of centrality of beliefs: as the amount and frequency of inconsistent information increases

⁵⁶ Festinger, Leon. *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*. Tavistock Publications. 1962. pp. 13, 31; Jack Williams Brehm and Arthur Robert Cohen. *Explorations in Cognitive Dissonance*. Wiley. 1962. p. 16; and for a more recent overview see Joel Cooper. *Cognitive Dissonance: 50 Years of a Classic Theory*. Sage. 2007.

⁵⁷ Kahneman, Daniel, Paul Slovic, and Amos Tversky. *Judgement under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press. 1982; and Susan T. Fiske and Shelley E. Taylor. *Social Cognition*. Addison-Wesley. 1984. pp. 250–256, 268–275.

⁵⁸ Stein, Janice Gross. 'Threat Perception in International Relations'. In Leonie Huddy, David Sears, and Jack Levy (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press. 2013. pp. 374–5.

it is more likely people will revise or change their beliefs;⁵⁹ less central beliefs are revised or changed first, while central beliefs are more resistant to change.⁶⁰ As people receive inconsistent information, gradual change in belief occurs with the addition of conditions to the validity of the belief.⁶¹ As the Appendix shows with an analysis of Russia's official rhetoric on China, perceptions of Russian decisionmakers regarding relations with China are consistently positive, and from 2000 to 2020 there is an apparent consensus among high-ranking officials involved in foreign policy that China does not pose a threat to Russia.

Drawing on psychological concepts of trust, cognitive consistency, cognitive dissonance, anchoring heuristics, and studies on when and how beliefs change, it is arguable that Russian decisionmakers' perceptions of China are anchored by the development of Sino-Soviet and Sino-Russian relations at the end of the Cold War and throughout the 1990s, during which China demonstrated its trustworthiness and lack of harmful intentions towards Russia, and that there has not been enough inconsistent behavior from China to allow for a significant change in the belief that China does not intend to harm Russia.

However, a problem arises when one considers how the argument can be tested. The method primarily used in psychology is experimentation, and without access to high-ranking Russian government officials it would be necessary to generalize the findings of an experiment on others (most likely undergraduates) to the officials. There is a divide in the field of IR as to whether such experimental findings are generalizable in such a way. McDermott outlines three main problems for the generalization and theorization based on experimental evidence in IR: first, the

⁵⁹ Crocker, Jennifer, and Renee Weber. 'Cognitive Processes in the Revision of Stereotypic Beliefs'. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 45, no. 5 (1983): 961–977.

⁶⁰ Tetlock, Philip. 'Social Psychology and World Politics'. In Daniel Todd Gilbert et al. (eds.) *The Handbook of Social Psychology*. 4th ed. McGraw-Hill, Oxford University Press. 1998. pp. 868-912.

⁶¹ Higgins, E, and J. Bargh. 'Social Cognition and Social Perception'. *Annual Review of Psychology* 38 (1987): 386.

subjects of the experiment, who are typically university undergraduates, often differ substantially from the people of interest in the study in terms of ‘maturity, experience, background, ego involvement and investment, and strategic incentives’; second, lack of external validity can be attributed to ‘organizational and bureaucratic constraints and material incentives that shape behavior in the real world’; and third, experiments usually last around an hour, while many of the processes of interest ‘often evolve over days, months, or even years’.⁶² Nevertheless, scholars who use experiments to help answer questions in political science often point out that, while contextual factors matter, all humans share the same brain physiology and fundamental psychological processes,⁶³ and that if experiments find information processing biases in the laboratory, then it is likely that they occur in other contexts.⁶⁴

The arguments on the external validity of experiments in IR on both sides of the divide have merit. This study opts not to use an experimental method to test the psychological argument above. Although the subjects under investigation share some of the same psychological processes with those who would participate in the experiment, here it is simply considered too big of a stretch to generalize findings from an experiment on undergraduates to Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

It may be possible to test part of the psychological argument in a non-experimental way. An analysis of the copious amount of data in the form of publications by experts on international affairs, foreign policy, and security in Russia may be used to estimate the level of trust, by

⁶² McDermott, Rose. *Political Psychology in International Relations*. The University of Michigan Press. 2004. pp. 27-8.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 28; and Francis A. Beer et al. ‘War Cues and Foreign Policy Acts’. *The American Political Science Review* 81, no. 3 (1987): 708.

⁶⁴ Schafer, Mark. ‘Images and Policy Preferences’. *Political Psychology* 18, no. 4 (1997): 824–5.

Jervis's definition,⁶⁵ Russia has for China, as well as details of the rationale behind such trust.

Therefore, this thesis establishes its sixth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: Russian foreign policy decisionmakers do not perceive the rise of China as a threat because they believe that China 'values the prospects of long-run cooperation between the two countries more than it values short-run gains that would accrue by exploiting its immediate power over [Russia]'.⁶⁶

Other works in the field of psychology have studied the link between identity and intergroup behavior. Experimental evidence suggests that groups have more positive orientations towards one another when in-group members place their own group in the same identity category as the out-group. Gómez et al. found that Spaniards perceived East European immigrants as less threatening when they learned that some of their group members categorized both Spaniards and Eastern European immigrants as 'European', a superordinate identity that includes both groups.⁶⁷ Similarly, Riek et al. found that perceptions of shared identity between black and white students reduced intergroup threat: when the shared identity of 'American' was made salient, intergroup threat between Democrats and Republicans was reduced.⁶⁸

This experimental evidence supports the constructivist theory discussed in the previous subsection that shared identity or perceptions of similarity reduce perceptions of threat. In this view, it could be that shared identities such as 'members of the SCO', 'BRICS', 'advocates of

⁶⁵ 'Nation A trusts B in a particular situation when it believes that B will not further its own interests at the expense of A, usually because A believes that B values the prospects of long-run cooperation between the two countries more than it values short-run gains that would accrue by exploiting its immediate power over A'. Jervis. *Perception and Misperception*. p. 44.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Gómez, Ángel, et al. 'Responses to Endorsement of Commonality by Ingroup and Outgroup Members'. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 39, no. 4 (2013): 419–431.

⁶⁸ Riek, Blake, et al. 'Does a Common Ingroup Identity Reduce Intergroup Threat?' *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* 13, no. 4 (2010): 403–423.

multipolarity', 'geopolitical rivals of the US', 'advocates for a more equitable world order' and 'Eurasian' contribute to Russian decisionmakers' sense of shared identity with China and reduce their threat perception. The key difference between constructivist and psychological understandings of the interaction between shared identity and threat perception is that constructivists argue that shared identity and threat perception are *mutually constituted*, whereas the experimental evidence mentioned above suggests that changes in shared identity *cause* changes in threat perception. Despite this difference, the experimental evidence furthers the justification of hypothesis 5.

Managing decline

Some theories, hypotheses, and concepts related to the behavior of declining powers are relevant to the case of Russia's foreign policy towards China and may contribute to the multilevel multicausal explanation offered by this thesis. Such theories, hypotheses, and concepts can be found in certain areas of IR literature, including those on retrenchment, status anxiety, preventive motivation for war, and power transition.

MacDonald and Parent's work on retrenchment offers valuable insights that are taken into consideration in the empirical chapters and during the formulation of the conclusions of this thesis. The scholars respond to realists who are pessimistic towards the policy of retrenchment and claim it is not the preferred path of declining powers for various reasons, including the signaling of weakness, which invites predation, and the reputational costs of failing to see through commitments abroad. MacDonald and Parent argue that 'opponents of retrenchment exaggerate the importance of credibility in the defense of commitments'; that 'pessimists overstate the extent to which a policy of retrenchment can damage a great power's capabilities or

prestige'; and that 'critics do not just oversell the hazards of retrenchment; they downplay the dangers of preventive war'.⁶⁹

The scholars argue that the logic of retrenchment is, like that of a firm that is interested in survival, solvency, i.e. ambitions should not exceed means to the point of overstretch and unsustainable action.⁷⁰ According to MacDonald and Parent, it is overstretch through maintaining commitments abroad that opens a declining state to predation.⁷¹ The scholars acknowledge that retrenchment poses some security risks, nevertheless, they argue that 'the more attractive alternative is to seek to reduce foreign policy costs while still defending vital interests against potential predators'.⁷² MacDonald and Parent argue that the policy of retrenchment 'has the advantage of bringing a state's strategic ambitions in line with its shrinking means while providing breathing room for potential reform and revival'.⁷³

The scholars preempt criticism that points out that leaders do not always adopt rational policies as a result of 'motivated biases and cognitive limitations' as well as the ambiguity of indicators of decline, which may cause 'wishful thinking and adherence to prior assumptions'.⁷⁴ Moreover, as prospect theory suggests, loss averse policy makers may be willing to take greater risks when the state is in decline 'even if prudence dictates otherwise'.⁷⁵ MacDonald and Parent argue that such critiques are 'taken too far'.⁷⁶ They explain that, in general, errors in decision making among leaders of declining powers receive disproportionate attention, and that 'defensible'

⁶⁹ MacDonald, Paul K., and Joseph M. Parent. 'Graceful Decline? The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment'. *International Security* 35, no. 4 (2011): 14-16.

⁷⁰ MacDonald, Paul K., and Joseph M. Parent. *Twilight of the Titans: Great Power Decline and Retrenchment*. Cornell University Press. 2018. p. 26.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp 27-28.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

decisions are usually made.⁷⁷ MacDonald and Parent also claim that most decisionmakers of great powers are educated and experienced with ‘a potent combination of political savvy and common sense’.⁷⁸ The scholars acknowledge that this does not make them immune to erroneous judgement, but their characteristics ‘can prevent the more deluded and rigid from achieving positions of authority’.⁷⁹ Leaders of a declining power are also in a situation of ‘elevated risk of policy missteps and setbacks’, which brings ‘strong incentives to shed motivated biases and choose pragmatic solutions’.⁸⁰ Continuing in preemption of the abovementioned critiques, MacDonald and Parent claim that, while decisionmakers often operate not only in the interest of the state, but also in self-interest, ‘policymakers seek first and foremost to further the national interest’, and ‘in practice, there is strong continuity in the national interest, regardless of the particular individual or coalition in charge’.⁸¹

Russian experts tend not to refer to Russia’s foreign policy towards China as one of retrenchment, but the strategy is apparent in certain areas of the policy. For example, Russia does not completely block Chinese economic expansion in Central Asia. One reason for this could be that an unmet demand of inexpensive consumer goods from China may contribute to socio-economic unrest in the region, which would leave Russia little choice but to devote considerably more resources than it already does to ensure security in Central Asia.

Onega focuses on status anxiety among dominant powers encountering rising powers.⁸² The study is relevant to Russia’s foreign policy towards China in that Russia may still be considered

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Onega, Tudor A. ‘Between Dominance and Decline: Status Anxiety and Great Power Rivalry’. *Review of International Studies* 40, no. 1 (2014): 125-152.

militarily dominant in the relationship, at least in certain areas such as Central Asia. Moreover, it maintains a massive nuclear arsenal. China may be considered the rising power in this sense, as it has outspent Russia on defense every year of the period of interest with a growing expenditure gap culminating in figures for 2019 showing Russia's expenditures at \$65 billion and China's expenditures at \$261 billion.⁸³ Russia may be considered the dominant yet relatively declining military power, but economically it is not dominant and is in relative decline.

It is important to note that data on the military expenditures of Russia and China, including that of SIPRI, are not precise figures but estimates. This is due to a lack of transparency regarding certain areas of the expenditures. Because of this, the SIPRI estimates are generally higher than the official defense budgets of Russia and China. For example, Russia's official defense budget for 2019 was \$43 billion and China's was \$178 billion: \$22 billion and \$83 billion less than the SIPRI estimates mentioned above, respectively.⁸⁴ Despite the discrepancies between the official budgets and estimates of military expenditures provided by SIPRI and others,⁸⁵ based on available data, it can be reasonably argued that China has dedicated more resources to the development of its military capabilities and as a result they are growing/strengthening at a faster

⁸³ SIPRI. 'Military Expenditure by Country, in Constant (2018) US\$ m., 1988-2019'. Available at <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>. Accessed 09/07/2020.

⁸⁴ TASS. 'Raskhody RF na Natsional'nuu Oboronu v 2018 Godu Sostaviat Bolee 2,77 Trln Rublei (Russian Spending on National Defense in 2018 Will Amount to More Than 2.77 Trillion Rubles)'. 29/09/2017. Available at <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/4604078>. Accessed 09/04/2021; and Mu Xuequan (ed.). 'China Focus: China to Lower Defense Budget Growth to 7.5 Percent'. Xinhua. 05/03/2019. Available at http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-03/05/c_137871426.htm. Accessed 10/04/2021.

⁸⁵ For other estimates of Russia's military expenditures, please see Erik Andermo and Martin Kragh. 'Secrecy and Military Expenditures in the Russian Budget'. Post-Soviet Affairs 36, no. 4 (2020): 297-322; and Keith Crane et al. 'Trends in Russia's Armed Forces: An Overview of Budgets and Capabilities'. Rand Corporation. 2019. pp. 3-26. Available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2573.html. Accessed 10/04/2021. For other estimates of China's military expenditures, please see Office of the Secretary of Defense of the United States. 'Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020'. 01/09/2020. p. 140. Available at <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF?fbclid=IwAR0P56sTP7J83TN2ebe2QkqHU40D2LjxHv5wuAEdmNhBP3Wka-ZJgC63mko>. Accessed 10/04/2021; and International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). *The Military Balance*. 2020. p. 259.

pace than Russia's (at least in terms of conventional capabilities, but possibly also in terms of nuclear capabilities). Therefore, although Russia's capabilities are also developing, they may be conceived of as being in relative decline as China gradually approaches parity with Russia overall.

Onega's third criteria for status after military power and economic power is prestige. The scholar argues that 'if a higher-ranked state's standing in any of these three dimensions is seen as at risk due to the competition of a rising state, it will experience status anxiety'.⁸⁶ However, according to Onega, a power experiencing decline in any of the three abovementioned criteria, in certain circumstances, may not experience status anxiety: 'status anxiety will be nil if the state declines by comparison to a state that is not seen as a status competitor'.⁸⁷ The degree of status anxiety also depends on the number of criteria in relative decline, e.g. if a state is relatively in military decline but not economic decline or in decline in terms of prestige, then this state experiences less status anxiety than a state in relative decline in terms of both its military and economic power or prestige.⁸⁸

It is difficult to measure prestige. Given statements from high-ranking officials, it would be reasonable to argue that it is likely that they experience some status anxiety regarding its great power status in the Asia-Pacific region (APR) due mostly to the underdevelopment and continuing depopulation of the RFE. But, as this study shows, the underdevelopment and depopulation of the RFE and its resulting negative effect on Russia's great power status in the

⁸⁶ Onega. 'Between Dominance and Decline'. 2014. p. 135.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

APR is largely not attributed to the activities of other states, including China, but rather to domestic problems and the failure of Moscow to effectively address such problems in the RFE.

In the case of Russia and China, it can be comfortably said that Russia suffers decline as the dominant party in one of three of Onega's criteria: military power. There is not enough evidence to suggest that it is likely that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers experience much status anxiety with regard to its relative decline in military power *vis-à-vis* China. Despite China's conventional military superiority over Russia in northeast Asia and the countries' military expenditures gap, the study shows that Russian officials do not perceive China as a challenger to its status as a great military power. This is mainly due to Russia's stable military power relative to that of China in Central Asia, China's recognition of Russia's 'privileged' interests and role as the primary security provider in the region, and Russia's maintenance of a massive nuclear arsenal.

Levy addresses motivation for preventive war among dominant declining powers.⁸⁹ The scholar focuses mainly on military power, arguing that 'the preventive motivation for war arises from the perception that one's military power and potential are declining relative to that of a rising adversary, and from the fear of the consequences of that decline'.⁹⁰ This argument is relevant to Russia's foreign policy towards China because its military power is in relative decline. Levy is careful to emphasize that perceptions of military power and of the intentions of the rising power matter for the motivation for preventive war, not just objective indicators of power.⁹¹ The scholar argues that the preventive motivation of declining powers for war is 'an intervening variable between a state's decline in relative military power and potential and a decision for war', which

⁸⁹ Levy, Jack S. 'Declining Power and the Preventive Motivation for War'. *World Politics* 40, no. 1 (1987): 82-107.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

‘is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for war, but contributes to war in combination with other variables and other causal sequences’.⁹² These other variables include the ‘perception of the inevitability, or at least high probability, of a future war’ with the rising power, ‘historical antagonisms’, ‘ideological conflicts’, ‘misperceptions, policy makers' orientations towards risk and uncertainty, domestic politics’, ‘the policy preferences and political influence of the military’, and ‘bureaucratic political considerations, particularly the policy preferences of the military and their influence in the policy-making process’.⁹³

The most relevant of Levy’s variables that contribute to a preventive motivation for war are perceptions of harmful intentions, the perception of inevitability or high probability of a war with the rising power in the future, and ideological conflicts. This study shows that the dominant views among Russian experts and foreign policy decisionmakers contain none of these.

Historical antagonisms, which Russia and China experienced most recently during the Sino-Soviet split, have largely subsided mainly due to the de-ideologization of their relations.

Kupchan et al. published a study in 2001 on peaceful transition of power and change of international order.⁹⁴ Russia as the declining military power may not be considered a hegemon, however, the study provides useful insight for an analysis of the bilateral shift of the balance of power between Russia and China. The scholars argue that ‘peaceful transition results from implicit and explicit negotiation over ideas and identity much more than from adjustments to or negotiation of the material balance of power’.⁹⁵ In the context of a shift in the balance of power, ideational convergence between the declining and rising power ‘enables them to resolve, or in

⁹² Ibid., p. 105.

⁹³ Ibid., pp. 88, 98, 101, and 104.

⁹⁴ Kupchan, Charles, et al. *Power in Transition: The Peaceful Change of International Order*. New York: United Nations University Press. 2001.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

some cases renders irrelevant, their contest over material power'.⁹⁶ Deviating from realism, Kupchan et al. argue that 'perceptions of the character of the politics that wield power, not perceptions of the balance of power per se, are the focal point of the inquiry'.⁹⁷ According to the scholars, the mutual formation of benign images of the declining and rising powers is central to peaceful transition, and in the study they aim to determine the conditions under which such formation happens and allows for the establishment of a 'mutually acceptable and legitimate' international order.⁹⁸

This thesis shows that negotiations of ideas and identity have contributed to the dominant perception among Russian experts and foreign policy decisionmakers that the rise of China does not pose a threat to Russia. As explained in the previous chapter, their ideational convergence has mainly been centered on the fight against the 'three evils' of terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism and the 'Shanghai Spirit', which includes mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for cultural diversity, and the pursuit of common development. Russia and China have also engaged in ideational convergence with the de-ideologization of their relations, the rejection of unipolarity in favor of multipolarity, and the promotion of the foreign policy principle of non-interference in internal affairs.

Kupchan et al. describe the mutual formation of benign images as the foundation of their causal chain and a necessary condition.⁹⁹ The scholars argue that the most prominent causal mechanisms for the mutual formation of benign images include: the existence of external threats, which 'creates incentives for both parties to find ways of reducing the number of potential

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 9.

enemies they face'; 'the exercise of strategic restraint', which 'communicate[s] benign intentions and a state's willingness to forgo opportunities for individual gain; 'the prior existence of an emotive affinity and shared identity', which 'facilitates the mutual construction of benign images'; and finally, the formation of benign images is facilitated by 'reconciliation and open dealing with the past ... especially when the parties in question have engaged in direct conflict'.¹⁰⁰ This thesis provides evidence that a benign image of China has been formed among Russian experts and Russian foreign policy decisionmakers. The dominant view includes China's practice of restraint in the interest of maintaining good relations with Russia. Additionally, Russia and China have a common adversary or rival, the US, which has likely facilitated the formation of a benign image of China.

According to Kupchan et al. another necessary condition for peaceful power transition is an agreement on international order. Such an agreement is formed through negotiation over both security and economic issues, including 'rules for managing security matters: when, in what circumstances, and against whom the use of force is justified; through what mechanisms to deal with territorial change; what geographic spheres of influence and functional division of labor to establish', and 'rules and mechanisms that govern international trade and investment', such as 'organizing principles (such as mercantilism versus free trade) and the more discrete rules and institutions that govern international business'.¹⁰¹

This study shows that ideational convergence regarding international order and a negotiation on a division of labor in Central Asia has contributed to perceptions of a lack of severe and unmanageable conflicts of interest between Russia and China, which has contributed most

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 12.

towards the perception of an absence of threat from China. The countries advocate multipolarity and reject interference in internal affairs of sovereign states. They agree that the funding of democratizing forces in other states is a violation of the principle of non-interference and that the uses of force based on R2P have not been justified.

Kupchan et al. describes legitimacy as a ‘capstone’ condition that affects the resilience of the benign images and agreed-upon international order.¹⁰² The scholars stress that the development of legitimacy involves agreement not only ‘on hierarchy and a set of core rules on the conduct of foreign policy, but also on a set of deeper normative principles. Rather than being based on causal assumptions and followed because of their practical appeal, normative principles are based on values and followed because of their moral appeal’.¹⁰³ Kupchan et al. argue that legitimacy makes peaceful power transition and a new international order more resilient for three reasons: ‘first, legitimacy engenders a shared identity and sense of we-ness’; ‘second, embedding order in a legitimating framework makes that order more able to accommodate change’; and ‘third, legitimacy ensures greater continuity by broadening the social base that supports reconciliation and accommodation’.¹⁰⁴ This thesis shows that, as explained above, throughout the period of interest there has been normative convergence between Russia and China, and that Russia-China relations have been highly institutionalized. These factors have contributed to a perception of an absence of threat from China among Russian experts and foreign policy decisionmakers.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

An Integrative Analytical Framework and Methodology

In pursuit of the aim to form a multilevel explanation, this thesis employs an analytical framework which integrates agency and structure and spans multiple levels of analysis. As every social act, including a foreign policy, is impossible without both agency and structure, such an integrative framework is necessary to construct a complete explanation.

The agency-structure problem is, quite simply put, a long-standing social philosophical conundrum over whether humans have free will or their behavior is determined or constrained by social or material structures. If both agency and structure always matter in social behavior, how do they interact? Is one more prominent than the other during certain social acts? If so, under what conditions? Here, it is only necessary to cover the most recent developments in the theorization of the relationship between agency and structure leading up to the development of the approach borrowed by this thesis.

Giddens's structuration theory is a well-known attempt to synthesize agency and structure into a *duality*, rather than a *dualism*. At the heart of his theory is what the scholar calls the duality of structure, explained as follows:

‘By the duality of structure, I mean the essential recursiveness of social life, as constituted in social practices: structure is both medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices. Structure enters simultaneously into the constitution of the agent and social practices, and “exists” in the generating moments of this constitution’.¹⁰⁵

Giddens conceptualizes the interaction between agency and structure as a dialectic relationship in which both *presuppose* each other. Archer criticizes structuration theory in pointing out that Giddens's agency and structure are so conflated that the conceptualization of their relationship

¹⁰⁵ Giddens, Anthony. *Central Problems in Social Theory*. London: Macmillan. 1979. p. 5.

makes empirical analysis of their interplay impossible.¹⁰⁶ Archer and Taylor both argue that because of the extent of conflation of agency and structure in structuration theory Giddens is unable to explain the change of each over time.¹⁰⁷ In addressing the agency-structure problem, Archer formulates a conceptualization of the interaction between agency and structure—morphogenesis—which disentangles the two to the extent necessary to account for change over time. The scholar describes morphogenesis in the following way:

‘Action of course is ceaseless and essential both to the continuation and further elaboration of the system, but subsequent interaction will be different from earlier action because conditioned by the structural consequences of that prior action. Hence the morphogenetic perspective is not only dualistic but sequential, dealing in endless cycles of structural conditioning/social interaction/structural elaboration—thus unravelling the dialectical interplay between structure and action’.¹⁰⁸

In tackling the agency-structure problem in foreign policy analysis, Carlsnaes formulates an analytical framework using Archer’s morphogenesis as a theoretical underpinning. The scholar explains his ‘tripartite analytical procedure’ as follows:

‘this framework in its original, static form would proceed in terms of first giving a description of the current reasons for this application, i.e., the choices and preferences explicitly underlying this decision. These in turn could then (if more than an “intentional” account is desired) be explained causally in terms of the relevant values and perceptions informing the decision-makers’ intentional behavior in this particular instance ... Third, these “dispositional” factors

¹⁰⁶ Archer, Margaret. *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory*. Cambridge University Press. 1996. p. 80.

¹⁰⁷ Archer, Margaret. ‘Structuration Versus Morphogenesis’. In S. N. Eisenstadt and H. J. Helle (eds.) *Macro-Sociological Theory: Perspectives on Sociological Theory*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications. 1985. p. 72; and Michael Taylor. ‘Structure, Culture and Action in the Explanation of Social Change’. *Politics and Society* 17, no. 2 (1989): 149.

¹⁰⁸ Archer, Margaret. ‘Morphogenesis versus Structuration: On Combining Structure and Action’. In Tom Brock et al. (eds.) *Structure, Culture and Agency: Selected Papers of Margaret Archer*. Routledge: London and New York. 2017. p. 105.

could then in turn be elaborated in terms of “structural” factors constraining ... foreign policy’.¹⁰⁹

Carlsnaes’s integrative analytical framework consists of three dimensions: intentional, dispositional, and structural, which take into account both agency and structure and span levels of analysis from the individual to the structural. At the intentional dimension, the thesis analyzes the choices and preferences underlying Russia’s China policy, or the reasons for its adoption and execution, throughout the period of interest. The best source of such choices, preferences, and reasons (hereafter ‘intentional factors’) is Russia’s official rhetoric in the form of official documents and statements and speeches given by government officials.

Arguably, one of the best sources of the intentions of a state is its official rhetoric in the form of fundamental official documents and speeches and statements given by government officials. Perceptions of high-ranking government officials are some of the most influential on foreign policy. The ‘true’ perceptions of government officials are difficult to access. Even if interviews were granted, one would still confront the ‘Other Minds’ problem,¹¹⁰ i.e. it would remain unclear whether the officials are telling the interviewer what they really think and conveying perceptions that truly form the basis of their decisions or are simply reciting well-rehearsed government positions with which they do not necessarily completely agree. Perceptions that reveal intentions found in official rhetoric can be just as problematic as interviews. It is not clear whether the perceptions conveyed in the rhetoric reflect the true perceptions of the officials responsible for foreign policy decision making. It is, nevertheless, useful to consider recurring themes in Russia’s official rhetoric on China throughout the period because, as Light argues, they can offer

¹⁰⁹ Carlsnaes, Walter. ‘The Agency-Structure Problem in Foreign Policy Analysis’. *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1992): 265.

¹¹⁰ Hollis, Martin and Steve Smith. *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*. Oxford University Press. 1990. pp. 171-176.

valuable insight into influential Russian perceptions.¹¹¹ Moreover, here, the ‘Other Minds’ problem is mitigated in two ways. First, in this thesis, the identification of the intentional factors underlying Russia’s China policy is a descriptive exercise that is not meant to have much explanatory value. As explained in the previous chapter, the bulk of the explanatory value of the thesis is in the identification of the dispositional factors (perceptions and values) on which the intentional factors are based. This is done in the following five chapters. Second, the uncertainty regarding the veracity of the perceptions and intentional factors identified in Russia’s official rhetoric can be mitigated through careful approximation of the extent to which such perceptions and intentions are consistent with Russia’s foreign policy actions, which is done in chapters 4-7. In accordance with Carlsnaes’s analytical framework, the thesis will identify intentional factors underlying Russia’s foreign policy towards China, and then attempt to explain them, and therefore the foreign policy, by identifying dispositional factors in chapters 3-7. Finally, the explanations are elaborated with the identification of structural constraints on the foreign policy in the concluding chapter.

Intentional factors

Russia’s official rhetoric on China from 2000 to 2020 is consistently positive and optimistic. It largely revolves around four major themes: economic opportunity, regional and global stability, shared interests, and the establishment of a more equitable world order. The theme of economic opportunity anchors rhetoric on how Russia should behave towards a rapidly rising China. The apparent consensus among high-ranking Russian government officials is that Russia should seize opportunities presented by China’s economic growth by strengthening ties with China and

¹¹¹ Light, Margot. ‘Russian Foreign Policy Themes in Official Documents and Speeches: Tracing Continuity and Change’. In David Cadier and Margot Light (eds.) *Russia's Foreign Policy: Ideas, Domestic Politics and External Relations*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2014. p. 14.

engaging in joint projects in order to develop the RFE and Siberia. The theme of regional and global stability appears frequently in the form of Russia and China's role in regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), where the countries coordinate to fight terrorism, separatism, extremism, and organized crime, and their role in global governing bodies such as the UN Security Council where they coordinate to check unilateral and destabilizing action. The theme of shared interests is characterized by explanations of how the mostly non-conflictual nature of Russia and China's interests is what makes much of the relationship's healthy development possible and includes signals of intention to continue such development. It is also explained that many of these shared interests are natural coincidences of their respective national interests, while others required coordination and communication to establish. The theme of the establishment of a more equitable world order solidifies Russia's rhetoric with continuous reaffirmation of a shared global vision and signals the intention to continue cooperation with China towards the realization of their vision.

There has been no official rhetoric over the period of interest that has indicated Russia's intention to attempt to contain or balance against the rise of China either alone or in coordination with other states. Officials have consistently denied that China poses a threat to Russia over the last two decades.¹¹² The detailed analysis of Russia's official rhetoric on which this summary is based can be found in the Appendix.

¹¹² See for example Vladimir Putin. 'Press-Konferentsiia po Itogam Rabochego Vizita v Kitai (Press Conference Following a Working Visit to China)'. Beijing. 27/04/2019. Available at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60396>. Accessed 25/04/2020; Andrei Denisov. 'Interviu Posla Rossii v Kitae A.I. Denisova Informagentstvu TASS (Interview with Russian Ambassador to China A.I. Denisov to TASS News Agency)'. 08/02/2017. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/about/professional_holiday/news/-/asset_publisher/I5UF6lkPfgKO/content/id/2631010. Accessed 24/04/2020; Vladimir Putin. 'Russia and the Changing World'. RT. 27/02/2012. Available at <https://www.rt.com/politics/official-word/putin-russia-changing-world-263/>. Accessed 07/07/2020; Sergei Lavrov. 'Stenogramma Otvetov na Voprosy Rossiiskikh SMI (Transcript of Replies to Russian Media Questions)'. Beijing. 27/09/2010. http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/234542. Accessed 07/07/2020; Sergei Razov. 'Otnosheniia

Dispositional factors

According to the analytical framework, dispositional factors, which include perceptions and values, explain intentional factors.¹¹³ The process by which dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers form or reform upon receiving new information or communication is opaque. As discussed in the section on psychology in IR above, studies have revealed tendencies in the way humans process new information and under what circumstances new information changes or does not change preexisting beliefs. Unfortunately, knowing that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers likely share these tendencies does not help us know what expert information reaches them or whether or how the information affects the decisionmakers' preexisting dispositional factors. The thesis refers to such effects as contributions to the formation of dispositional factors. Direct contributions include those that occur through direct communication, e.g. the expert has served as an advisor, has spoken with the official at a meeting such as those held by the Valdai Club, the official has read the expert's work, etc. Indirect contributions include those that occur through indirect communication and depend on at least one link, e.g. an advisor of the official has communicated with, or read the work of, the expert, and incorporates information received in advice given to the official. A contribution to the formation of dispositional factors may consist of a change in, or reinforcement of, the official's preexisting dispositional factors. A change occurs when preexisting dispositional factors are

Vnushaiut Optimizm (Relations are Encouraging)'. Rossiyskaya Gazeta. 13/10/2009. Available at <https://rg.ru/2009/10/13/razov-kitay.html>. Accessed 07/07/2020; Konstantin Vnukov. 'Interview K.V.Vnukova po Problematike Rossiisko-Kitaiskikh Otnoshenii, (Interview K.Vnukov on the Problems of Russian-Chinese Relations)'. 12/03/2007. http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/379828. Accessed 07/07/2020; Sergei Lavrov. 'Stenogramma Otvetov na Voprosy Deputatov (Transcript of Replies to questions of deputies)'. Moscow. 20/05/2005. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/438124. Accessed 07/07/2020.; and Igor Ivanov. 'Transcript of the Press Conference with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov'. Interfax News Agency. 18/10/2002. http://www.mid.ru/en/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/542880. Accessed 07/07/2020.

¹¹³ Carlsnaes. 'The Agency-Structure Problem in Foreign Policy Analysis'. 1992. p. 265.

affected by views expressed by the expert in a way that makes them more aligned with, or less contradictory to, the expert's view. Reinforcement occurs when the view conveyed by the expert validates the official's preexisting dispositional factors in a new context, e.g. in the wake of a recent foreign policy action by China that has implications for Russia's interests. Whether expert views contribute to the dispositional factors of officials by *changing* them is a matter of persuasion.

Just as there have been studies on how humans process new information, there have been studies on persuasion resulting in theories and models attempting to explain how and in what contexts humans are persuaded by others. It is worth providing a brief overview in order to enlighten this study's consideration of how the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers can be analyzed.

Social judgement theory holds that the result of an attempt to persuade depends on how the recipient of the information assesses the position being supported by the persuader.¹¹⁴ Such assessment begins with the determination of whether the position on a certain issue being communicated by the persuader is shared or not. The position of the recipient relative to that of the persuader is not dichotomous, but rather, it lies on a scale from 'shared' to 'not shared', including neutral non-commitment and degrees on either side, e.g. moderately in favor or moderately against. The issue can also be broken down into smaller issues that constitute the whole, each of which may be assigned a judgement on the 'shared – not shared' scale. The result of the effort to persuade someone that does not share the persuader's position depends not only

¹¹⁴ Sherif, Carolyn W., Muzafer Sherif, and Roger Nebergall. *Attitude and Attitude Change: The Social Judgment-Involvement Approach*. Philadelphia: Saunders. 1965; and Muzafer Sherif and Carl I. Hovland. *Social Judgment: Assimilation and Contrast Effects in Communication and Attitude Change*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1961.

on the extent to which they are against the position but also on the level of recipient's ego-involvement in the issue. Ego-involvement refers to the degree to which the recipient's position on the issue is part of their identity or sense of self. This was measured by degrees of involvement or membership in certain groups that are in some way engaged in the issue. Social judgement theory predicts that the more divergent the recipient's position towards the issue from the persuader's and the higher their ego-involvement in the issue the more resistant they are to change. It is important to note that ego-involvement and the holding of an extreme position are not conflated by the theory.¹¹⁵ A person can hold an extreme position on an issue without that position necessarily being strongly connected to their identity, just as a person can hold a moderate position on an issue while having a strong connection with the position to their identity.

The summative model formulated by Fishbein posits that a person's attitude towards an object or issue is a function of the strength of their salient beliefs about the object or issue and their evaluation of these beliefs represented by the formula $A_o = \sum b_i e_i$.¹¹⁶ A_o represents the attitude towards the object, b_i represents belief strength, and e_i represents the evaluation of the belief. The formula may be read as 'attitude towards the object equals the sum of the product of belief strength and evaluation of the belief'. There can be as many beliefs and their evaluations in the formula as necessary. For example, if there are three salient beliefs in question, the formula would appear as $A_o = \sum (b_1 e_1 + b_2 e_2 + b_3 e_3)$. The summative model provides a measurement of

¹¹⁵ Sherif, C. W. 'Social Values, Attitudes, and Involvement of the Self'. In M. M. Page (ed.). *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation 1979: Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. 1980. p. 36; and Sherif and Hovland. *Social Judgment: Assimilation and Contrast Effects in Communication and Attitude Change*. 1961. p. 171.

¹¹⁶ Fishbein, M. 'A Behavior Theory Approach to the Relations between Beliefs about an Object and the Attitude toward the Object'. In M. Fishbein (ed.). *Readings in Attitude Theory and Measurement*. New York: Wiley. 1967. pp. 389-400; and M. Fishbein. 'A Consideration of Beliefs, and Their Role in Attitude Measurement'. In M. Fishbein (ed.). *Readings in Attitude Theory and Measurement*. New York: Wiley. 1967. pp. 257-266.

attitude that can be useful for efforts of persuasion. O’Keefe explains that the model can be used for this purpose in three main ways: (1) the evaluation of a belief may be changed, (2) the strength of a belief may be changed, and (3) the set of beliefs may be changed.¹¹⁷ The scholar explains and provides examples:

‘a persuader might try to make some existing positive belief even more positively evaluated (“Senator Smith is, as you know, respected in the Senate, but you may not realize just how desirable that attribute is—it means Senator Smith can be more effective in passing legislation to help our state”) or to make some existing negative belief less negatively evaluated (“Sure, Senator Smith was only an average student—but then again, being an average student isn’t so bad”) ... to encourage a more positive attitude, a persuader might try to weaken the strength of an existing negative belief (“It’s not likely that Senator Smith accepted bribes, because Senator Smith is already very wealthy”) or to enhance the strength of an existing positive belief (“You already know it’s true that Senator Smith has worked hard for the people of this state—but you don’t know just how true that is”) ... the set of salient beliefs might be changed ... in two ways. One is to add a new belief of the appropriate valence (“You might not realize it, but Senator Smith has been quietly working to fix the government’s budget problems”). The other is to change the relative salience of existing beliefs (“Have you forgotten that five years ago Senator Smith helped keep XYZ Industries from moving out of state?”).¹¹⁸

According to the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) proposed by Petty and Cacioppo, attentive recipients of communication intending to persuade undergo cognitive processes to ‘make sense’ of it involving reason, a lack of reason, and motivation.¹¹⁹ The model posits that there are two main methods of persuasion: one by a central route and another by a peripheral route. The central route uses elaborate methods that usually involve more detailed communication over a longer period and are most effective in causing long-term change given two conditions: (1) the recipient

¹¹⁷ O’Keefe, D.J. *Persuasion: Theory and Research*. Sage Publications. 2015. pp. 106-107.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Petty, R. E., and J.T. Cacioppo. *Communication and Persuasion: Central and Peripheral Routes to Attitude Change*. New York: Springer-Verlag. 1986; and R.E. Petty, and J.T. Cacioppo. ‘The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion’. In L. Berkowitz (ed.). *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*. New York: Academic Press. 1986. pp. 123-205.

is motivated to receive and process the information provided by the persuader and (2) is capable of understanding the information. Without both conditions being met, the central route is not likely to be successful. According to the ELM, if a persuader deems the central route likely to fail because one or neither of the conditions are met, they should use the peripheral route which uses emotional and superficial messaging that may result in short-term attitude change in the recipient but is unlikely to result in long-term change.

The heuristic-systematic model (HSM) set forth by Chaiken is similar to the ELM in that it posits that messages from the persuader are processed by the recipient by two means: systematic (similar to the ELM's central route) and heuristic (similar to the ELM's peripheral route).¹²⁰ The main differences between the HSM and the ELM is the latter's elaboration of the recipient's use of heuristics when processing the persuader's message and the interaction between the heuristic and systematic means of processing. When less attention is being paid to the persuader's message due to a lack of motivation or ability to understand, the recipient relies on heuristics, i.e. cognitive shortcuts that people use to simplify a complex reality and make decisions in an uncertain environment. According to the HSM, as a persuader's message reaches higher levels of elaboration, if the recipients have not already begun to rely solely on heuristic means of processing, they may use both systematic and heuristic means of processing either independently or interactively.

A final model warranting discussion here is the unimodel, which challenges the dual-processing approach of models like the ELM and HSM, arguing that despite the method of persuasion and

¹²⁰ Chaiken, S. et al. 'Heuristic and Systematic Processing Within and Beyond the Persuasion Context'. In J. S. Uleman and J.A. Bargh (eds.). *Unintended Thought*. New York: Guilford Press. 1989. pp. 212-252; S. Chaiken. 'Attitudes and Attitude Change'. *Annual Review of Psychology* 38, no. 1 (1987): 575-630; and S. Chaiken. 'Heuristic Versus Systematic Information Processing and the Use of Source Versus Message Cues in Persuasion'. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 39, no. 5 (1980): 752-766.

processing (peripheral/heuristic or central/systematic), the same evidence is being processed by the recipient and therefore it is only necessary to have a singular model of persuasion.¹²¹

Proponents of the model deny the existence of a qualitative difference between the results of persuasion that are reached through peripheral/heuristic and central/systematic means, arguing that the evidence delivered by persuaders and processed by recipients through both means is functionally equivalent.

Just as psychological studies on how humans process new information help us understand how new information is likely processed by Russian foreign policy decisionmakers, theories and models of persuasion help us understand the ways and contexts in which expert communication may result in a change in the decisionmakers' dispositional factors regarding China. From a methodological standpoint, certain processes must be observable (and, for some, measurable) for these theories and models of persuasion to be useful to the present research. First, it would be necessary for the content of the communication conveyed by the persuader to the participant to be observable. Second, as persuasion implies a change (minor or major) in dispositional factors regarding the issue, preexisting dispositional factors would need to be observable in order to determine whether persuasion has taken place. Third, if a change in dispositional factors has taken place, it would be helpful for the sake of formulating a detailed explanation to observe how the persuader's communication was processed: by peripheral/heuristic or central/systematic means, or by a combination of both. Fourth, the level of ego-involvement in the issue should be

¹²¹ Bohner, G., H.P. Erb, and F. Siebler. 'Information Processing Approaches to Persuasion: Integrating Assumptions for the Dual- and Single-Processing Perspectives'. In W.D. Crano and R. Prislin (eds.). *Attitudes and Attitude Change*. New York: Psychology Press. 2008. pp. 161-188; A.W. Kruglanski, et al. 'Persuasion According to the Unimodel: Implications for Cancer Communication'. *Journal of Communication* 56 (2006): 105-122; A.W. Kruglanski, and E.P. Thompson. 'The Illusory Second Mode or, the Cue is the Message'. *Psychological Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (1999): 182-193; and A.W. Kruglanski, and E.P. Thompson. 'Persuasion by a Single Route: A View from the Unimodel'. *Psychological Inquiry* 10, no. 2 (1999): 83-109.

observable and measurable. And fifth, the salient beliefs and evaluations of those beliefs about the issue should be observable and measurable.

An ideal study using theories and models of persuasion would include subjects who were accessible and receiving communication meaning to persuade that is known to the researcher; whose preexisting dispositional factors and ego-involvement are made known and measured; who would report their dispositional factors (changed or unchanged) after the communication was delivered; who would describe how they processed the communication (allowing the researcher to determine the extent of peripheral/heuristic or central/systematic processing); and who would have no (or very little) reason to lie about their preexisting dispositional factors or their changed or unchanged dispositional factors after the communication was delivered.

Unfortunately, inherent to the study of Russia in IR and Russian foreign policy is a lack of access to Russian foreign policy decisionmakers, a lack of reliable information regarding the communications they receive and take seriously regarding a certain issue (in the case of this study, China), and a lack of information as to how such communication is processed. Moreover, even if there were access, there would be concerns about the willingness of the decisionmakers to truthfully report their dispositional factors before and after receiving the communication and details of the way they processed the communication. Because of these limitations, studies in the field tend to rely on what is said in official documents, what is said by decisionmakers in statements, press conferences, interviews by the media, etc., anonymous interviews with lower-level government officials, and analyses of Russia's foreign policy actions and the international structural environment in which they take place. Such studies have yielded many credible insights on which the present research intends to build.

In addition to analyzing Russia's official rhetoric, foreign policy actions, and structural constraints, this thesis seeks to identify the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers while mitigating problems posed by a lack of access and the abovementioned 'Other Minds' problem. It does so by means of a content analysis of texts written by Russian experts on international affairs, foreign policy, and security and published by prominent think tanks, journals, and research institutes in Russia. Expert texts as a source of dispositional factors were chosen for three main reasons. First, Russian decisionmakers are difficult to access for interviews, and even if interviews were granted the answers to questions would likely resemble official rhetoric. Second, as explained in chapter 3, the connections between knowledge production in Russia on international affairs, foreign policy, and security and the Russian government, while not absolute, are nevertheless strong. Several of the publishing institutions themselves are directly or indirectly connected to, or even legally owned and operated by, the government. Many of the experts who wrote the texts analyzed have held or currently hold positions in the government or military or are in close proximity to high-ranking officials. And third, experts provide more detailed analysis in their work than officials do in their rhetoric, which can lead to deeper insight into the reasons behind Russia's behavior towards China over the period of interest.

With the advent of reliable crowdsourcing, content analysis in the social sciences may be done at scales that were not previously possible. A content analysis may now be done not by two coders analyzing hundreds of texts but by hundreds of coders analyzing tens of thousands of texts, thereby producing a more complete picture of the social phenomenon in question.

In this thesis, the role of dispositional factors in Russia's foreign policy is considered foundational. According to Carlsnaes's analytical framework, the intentional factors, i.e. choices

and preferences, underlying a foreign policy decision have a teleological relationship with foreign policy action.¹²² In contrast, dispositional factors have a causal relationship with foreign policy action because they explain why the decisionmakers have the intentions.¹²³ In this view, explaining a foreign policy is not a matter of determining whether dispositional factors had a role in decisionmaking or an impact on an outcome because there would be no foreign policy without dispositional factors. Rather, it is a matter of identifying the dispositional factors that informed the intentions of decisionmakers.

The dispositional factors that explain the intentions underlying Russia's foreign policy towards China are observable, but, as explained above, in a limited way. In this study, the views of Russian experts are analyzed and the dominant views among them regarding issues related to the four main foreign policy areas of focus are identified. A view is said to be dominant if it is the one found to be held by most experts.

The question then becomes whether or how the dominant expert views have affected the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers. The affect may be observed by comparing the dominant views to certain foreign policy decisions or actions. There are two possible results (referred to as cases below) when the comparison is made: (1) the policy is consistent with the dominant view; and (2) the policy is not consistent with the dominant view. For a policy to be considered consistent with a dominant view, at a minimum, there should be no logical contradictions between the two.

For each case, there are four possible scenarios regarding whether the dominant view was communicated (directly or indirectly) to the official and whether the official's dispositional

¹²² Carlsnaes 'The Agency-Structure Problem in Foreign Policy Analysis'. 1992. pp. 254-255.

¹²³ Ibid.

factors were changed, reinforced, or unchanged by the dominant view: (1) the dominant view was successfully communicated, and the official's dispositional factors changed; (2) the dominant view was successfully communicated, and the official's dispositional factors were reinforced; (3) the dominant view was successfully communicated, and the official's dispositional factors were not changed; and (4) the dominant view was not successfully communicated, and the official's dispositional factors were not changed.

| | Communication successful? | Dispositional factors changed? | Dispositional factors reinforced? | Dispositional factors unchanged? |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Scenario 1 | Yes | Yes | No | No |
| Scenario 2 | Yes | No | Yes | Yes |
| Scenario 3 | Yes | No | No | Yes |
| Scenario 4 | No | No | No | Yes |

Figure 1

In each area of Russia's foreign policy towards China analyzed in the empirical chapters, the case can be determined with a reasonable degree of certainty, but the same cannot be said regarding the scenario. As explained above, it cannot be directly observed whether a dominant expert view was successfully communicated or, in the event that it is successfully communicated, whether the official's dispositional factors were changed or reinforced because of a lack of access and the 'Other Minds' problem. For this reason, the thesis argues in terms of likelihood regarding which scenario has taken place.

To estimate the likelihood that the dominant view among experts on a given foreign policy area has been successfully communicated directly or indirectly to the official, the thesis considers whether the experts are potentially influential. The potential influence of an expert is generally

based on their connections to the Russian government or military, their qualifications, and the government or military connections of the institutions through which they publish.

It is not entirely necessary for experts to have a doctorate or to have served the Russian government to be considered to have views that likely have potential influence over Russia's foreign policy. For instance, Fyodor Lukyanov is considered by the study to be likely to have potential influence because of his sheer proximity to decisionmakers, regardless of his lack of a doctorate and lack of history of service. In order to address the issue of potential bias due to the categorization based on qualifications and history of government or military service, experts who were outliers in their category were considered on a case-by-case basis regarding their potential influence.

Potential influence is considered by the study to be positively correlated with the success of communication of a view to an official, i.e. the more potential influence the holders of the dominant expert view have the more likely the view is successfully communicated, and vice versa. If the dominant view is held by experts with a low level of potential influence on average, scenario 4 would be deemed most likely. If the dominant view is held by experts with a high level of potential influence on average, scenarios 1, 2, and 3 would be deemed more likely than scenario 4.

In the event that scenarios 1, 2, and 3 are all deemed more likely than scenario 4 because of the high level of influence of the experts holding the dominant view identified, the estimation of the individual likelihoods of scenarios 1, 2, and 3 relative to each other is a matter of judging which is more likely given the case. For example, if case 1 is determined, scenarios 1 and 2 would be

considered more likely to have taken place than scenario 3. If case 2 is determined, scenario 3 would be considered more likely than scenarios 1 and 2.

| | Case 1 | Case 2 |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Scenario 1 | Likely | Unlikely |
| Scenario 2 | Likely | Unlikely |
| Scenario 3 | Unlikely | Likely |

Figure 2

At this stage, in the event that case 1 is determined, the next step would be to estimate the likelihoods of scenario 1 and scenario 2 relative to each other. This is where the analysis approaches the black box. In case 1, the foreign policy in question is consistent with the dominant view of the experts. In scenario 1, the communication of the view is successful, and the dispositional factors of the official were changed as a result, meaning that the official's dispositional factors prior to receiving the communication were significantly different. In scenario 2, the communication is also successful, but the dispositional factors of the official were not changed but reinforced, meaning the official's dispositional factors prior to receiving the communication were significantly similar. Without knowing the official's preexisting dispositional factors because of a lack of access and the 'Other Minds' problem, an estimation of which scenario (1 or 2) is more likely given case 1 is not possible.

Despite this limitation, inferences can be made from the estimation of the likelihoods of scenarios 1 and 2 given case 1. In scenario 1 given case 1, a change in the dispositional factors of the official has resulted from the communication of the dominant view making them more aligned or less contradictory to the dominant view. This would mean that the dispositional

factors inherent in the dominant view identified are now shared to the point that the policy is consistent with the view. Therefore, the dispositional factors inherent in the view would explain the policy. In scenario 2 given case 1, the preexisting dispositional factors of the official have been reinforced as a result of receiving the communication of the dominant view. This would mean that the official already shared the dominant view to a significant extent. Therefore, the dispositional factors inherent in the view would explain the policy.

Each of the four empirical chapters (4 and 5 on the Russian Far East and 6 and 7 on Central Asia) includes an analysis of expert views and an estimation of their potential influence. If the potential influence of the holders of the dominant views identified is estimated to be low on average, the chapter will conclude that scenario 4 is most likely. In the ‘Policy’ sections of each of the chapters, which follow the analyses of expert views and estimations of their potential influence, Russia’s policy regarding its interaction with China is analyzed. If the potential influence of the holders of the dominant views was estimated to be high, then these sections will consider whether the policies are consistent with the views and argue that they are or are not. Based on the argument, the chapters will conclude that scenarios 1 or 2 are most likely or that scenario 3 is most likely. The flowchart in figure 3 summarizes this process.

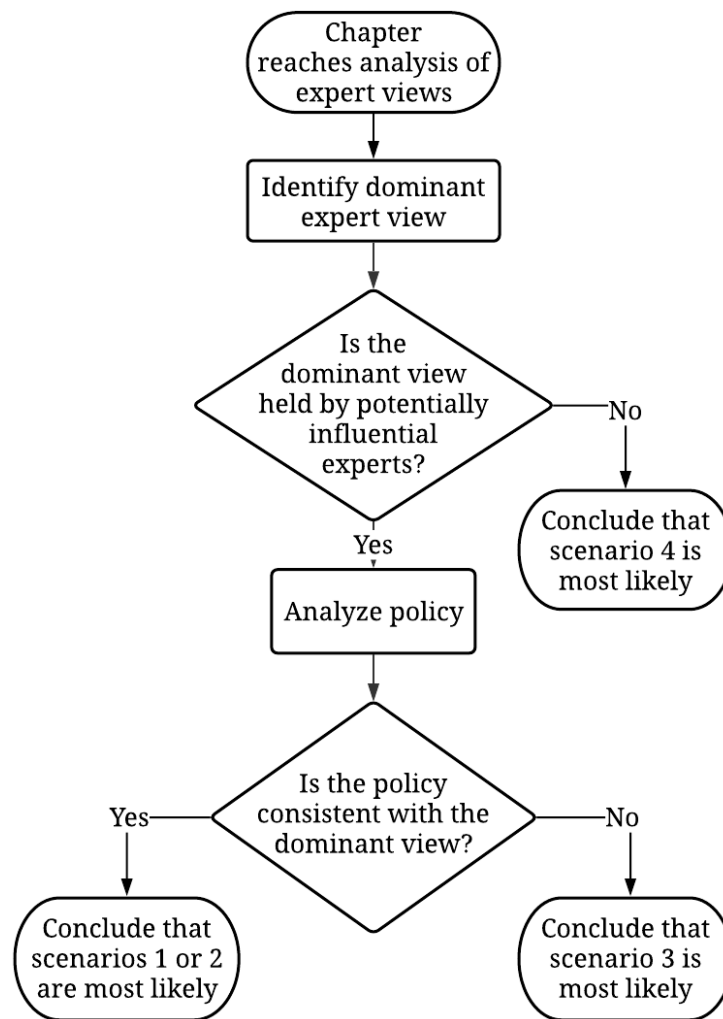


Figure 3

Given that the analysis targets texts that are published in Russia on a very important subject of international affairs, it is important to address the possibility of censorship of such texts. Studies have shown that state-controlled media have used methods of framing regarding anti-regime protests along the dichotomy of freedom of protest – disorder, and even the manufacturing of negative stories on anti-regime protests in the interest of regime survival.¹²⁴ In Russia, critical

¹²⁴ Lankina, Tomila, et al. 'How Russian Media Control, Manipulate, and Leverage Public Discontent: Framing Protest in Autocracies'. In Karrie Koesel et al. (eds.) *Citizens and the State in Authoritarian Regimes: Comparing China and Russia*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2020. pp. 137-159.

journalists may, as Repnikova claims, write about whatever they want and never engage in self-censorship, yet they face indirect official dissatisfaction in the aftermath of publication through ‘reprimands from their owners, legal warnings and restrictions, and encounters with unexpected violence’.¹²⁵

The position this study takes is that the texts analyzed for this thesis consist of genuine knowledge production. Four factors justify this position. First, the texts, many of which are written by highly qualified experts who have served in the Russian government or military, in addressing the implications of China’s rise and specific activities for Russia’s interests there are no direct challenges to the survival of the current regime in Moscow. Second, expert knowledge in Russia on the topic consists of a wide variety of views, some of which differ greatly from the official line, indicating freedom of expression among experts at least on topics that are not directly relevant to domestic regime legitimacy or survival. Third, there is demand in the Russian government and military for genuine knowledge on complex issues such as Russia’s relationship with a rising China. Analysis by highly qualified experts supplements information gathered by intelligence agencies and provides knowledge characterized by ingenuity and outside-the-box thinking.

Fourth, there are three main alternatives to the position that the texts consist of genuine knowledge production, all of which are less likely. First, the government monitors the publications and engages in selective censorship while allowing some views against the government line for the purpose of creating the illusion of a genuine debate. Second, the Russian government engages in a large-scale secret disinformation operation with all the experts on the

¹²⁵ Repnikova, Maria. ‘Critical Journalists in China and Russia: Encounters with Ambiguity’. In Karrie Koesel et al. (eds.) *Citizens and the State in Authoritarian Regimes: Comparing China and Russia*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2020. pp. 117-134.

government's payroll. Some views against the government line are allowed or ordered for the purpose of creating the illusion of a genuine debate. Third, there is minimal or no direct government censorship, but the experts engage in self-censorship publishing analyses with which they do not necessarily agree.

The first alternative is unlikely due to a lack of incentive. The dominant views conveyed in expert texts is that over the period of interest China has not posed a threat to Russia. The incentive to censor pieces that convey contradictory views would presumably be to prevent the West (mainly the US) from knowing that there is widespread concern about the rise of China among Russian experts, which would signal uneasiness on Russia's side of the relationship. The US learning of such concern may be motivated to pursue rapprochement with Russia to balance against China (which would have to be done by an administration that is willing to make large compromises on issues such as sanctions and the missile defense system in Europe). The problem with this alternative is that Russia would benefit from improved relations with the US, therefore, it would have no reason to want to prevent this. While it is unlikely that Russia would engage in relations with the US that would jeopardize its good relations with China, there would still be benefits from US attempts for better relations. If anything, there would be incentive to conduct a disinformation operation to falsely signal to the US that there is widespread concern among experts about the rise of China (with Beijing in the loop). However, not only is such an operation highly unrealistic, but it is also unsustainable.

The second alternative is unlikely because of the sheer scale of expert material produced on China, which would require significant resources to produce merely for the purpose of disinformation. Additionally, there is a lack of incentive for such an operation for reasons explained in the previous paragraph.

The third alternative is unlikely because of a lack of incentive for the experts to produce bogus work. It is difficult to believe that the experts, many of whom have doctorates and have served in the Russian government or military, are publishing analyses with which they do not agree for no reason.

The identification of dispositional factors and testing of the hypotheses is done by means of a content analysis. Texts produced by the international affairs, foreign policy, security expert communities in Russia from 1 January 2000 to 31 December 2017¹²⁶ were targeted for analysis. Coding of the texts was done using a crowd-sourcing method. Crowd-sourcing is a quick and cost-effective way to code content in a transparent and replicable manner,¹²⁷ and it is being used by a growing number of researchers in the Social Sciences.¹²⁸ Crowd-sourcing operates on the principle of the ‘wisdom of crowds’, which has roots in the thought of Aristotle,¹²⁹ and holds simply that the many are smarter than the few. An example traditionally cited comes from an event in Plymouth in 1906 when a crowd of about 800 guessed the weight of an ox, and the average guess was within 1% of the actual weight while many of the individual guesses were significantly erroneous.¹³⁰ A wealth of empirical evidence suggests that in the realm of data creation, expert work can be matched or even improved upon by aggregate judgements of non-experts.¹³¹

¹²⁶ Hereafter simplified to 2000 to 2018.

¹²⁷ Benoit, Kenneth, et al. ‘Crowd-Sourced Text Analysis: Reproducible and Agile Production of Political Data’. Cambridge University Press for the American Political Science Association. 2016.

¹²⁸ Bohannon, John. ‘Human Subject Research. Social Science for Pennies’. New York, N.Y. *Science* 334, no. 6054 (2011): 307.

¹²⁹ Lyon, Aidan, and Eric Pacuit. “The Wisdom of Crowds: Methods of Human Judgement Aggregation.” In P. Michelucci (ed.) *Handbook of Human Computation*. Springer. 2013. p. 599.

¹³⁰ Galton, F. “Letters to the Editor: The Ballot-Box.” *Nature* 75 (1907): 900-1; and F. Galton. ‘Vox Populi’. *Nature* 75 (1907): 450-1.

¹³¹ Alonso, O. and S. Mizzaro. ‘Can We Get Rid of TREC Assessors? Using Mechanical Turk for Relevance Assessment’. Paper read at Proceedings of the SIGIR 2009 Workshop on the Future of IR Evaluation; P. Hsueh, P. Melville, and V. Sindhwani. ‘Data Quality from Crowdsourcing: A Study of Annotation Selection Criteria’. Paper

The content analysis was performed by coders recruited through a crowdsourced data creation platform provided by Appen.¹³² Quality is ensured by requiring coders to pass a quiz before being allowed to work, and by hidden ‘test questions’ among real questions once the coder has started working. The quiz is made up of five test questions created by the author of the job, and randomly selected from the list of test questions. The test questions are indistinguishable from the tasks completed by the coders. To create a test question, the author must select a text and complete the task by answering the same questions the coders are asked and give a clear explanation of why certain answers were given. In addition to the quality control ensured by the test questions, the process of their creation allows for a high level of familiarization with the content for the author. The coders are only allowed to begin working on the job once they pass the quiz by answering at least four out of five of the test questions correctly. Once the coders have passed the quiz and begun working, on each page of work consisting of five texts, one text is a hidden test question. Coders are only allowed to do as many pages of work as there are test questions, as each test question is not given more than once. If the coders do not maintain a 70% or higher success rate on the test questions, they are automatically removed from the job. In the event the coder answers a test question incorrectly the answers and explanations for the answers given by the author are shown. This allows for a ‘training’ feature in addition to the instructions. Coders who are removed from the job because of a low success rate on test questions are still paid for their work, but their work becomes ‘untrusted’ and is not used in the formulation of the

read at Proceedings of the NAACL HLT 2009 Workshop on Active Learning for Natural Language Processing; R. Snow, B. O'Connor, D. Jurafsky, and A. Ng. ‘Cheap and Fast—But is it Good? Evaluating Non-Expert Annotations for Natural Language Tasks’. Paper read at Proceedings of the Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing. 2008; O. Alonso, and R. Baeza-Yates. ‘Design and Implementation of Relevance Assessments Using Crowdsourcing’. In P. Clough et al. (eds.) *Advances in Information Retrieval*. Springer Berlin, Heidelberg. 2011; and Panagiotis G. Ipeirotis, Foster Provost, Victor S. Sheng, and Jing Wang. ‘Repeated Labeling Using Multiple Noisy Labelers’. *Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery* 28 (2013): 1-40.

¹³² Available at <https://appen.com/>. Accessed 03/06/2020.

results of the job. The author of the job may also monitor the work in real time and remove workers at will. Each paragraph received codes from at least five coders. Only texts that received codes with a 0.7 confidence score or higher were included in the results. Confidence scores indicate the level of agreement between coders and are weighted by the coders 'trust scores' (rate of success on test questions).¹³³

The analysis tested all six of the hypotheses. The following is the set of questions and answer options given to coders for every paragraph.

Is there a perception that China either threatens or does not threaten Russia?

- Perception that China threatens Russia
 - o What type of threat?
 - Military
 - Economic and/or trade
 - Environmental
 - Demographic (population size, growth of population, migration, etc.)
 - Development projects and/or investments
 - Cultural (religion, race, history, customs, language, values, etc.)
 - Ideological
 - Legal (domestic or international)
 - Goals, interests
 - Regime type (democratic, authoritarian, 'strong leader', centralization of power, single-party rule, etc.)
 - Other (please type)
 - o Which statement best explains why, according to the text, China threatens Russia?
 - China has harmful intentions towards Russia
 - China is not deterred by Russia's military power (including nuclear weapons)
 - Russia and China have conflicting interests
 - China is not interested in long-term cooperation with Russia and it exploits its power over Russia for short-term gains
 - China's economic power and/or trade practices threaten Russia
 - Russia and China have conflicting views, beliefs, ideas, or norms
 - Russia and China identify as members of opposing groups or blocs
 - China is not willing to stand with Russia to oppose the West

¹³³ For a more detailed explanation of how confidence scores are calculated see <https://success.appen.com/hc/en-us/articles/201855939-How-to-Calculate-a-Confidence-Score>. Accessed 12/07/2020.

- Institutions are insufficient to constrain China's behavior and/or make it more predictable
 - There is uncontrolled immigration from China
 - Because Russia and China have different regime types (democratic, authoritarian, 'strong leader', centralization of power, single-party rule, etc.), it is more likely that it will harm Russia
 - None of the above
- Perception that China does not threaten Russia
 - What type of reasons are given for why China does not threaten Russia?
 - Military
 - Economic and/or trade
 - Environmental
 - Demographic (population size, growth of population, migration, etc.)
 - Development projects and/or investments
 - Cultural (religion, race, history, customs, language, values, etc.)
 - Ideological
 - Legal (domestic or international)
 - Goals, interests
 - Regime type (democratic, authoritarian, 'strong leader', centralization of power, single-party rule, etc.)
 - Other (please type)
 - Which statement best explains why, according to the text, China does not threaten Russia?
 - China does not have harmful intentions towards Russia
 - China is deterred by Russia's military power (including nuclear weapons)
 - China and Russia have compatible or non-conflictual interests
 - China is interested in long term cooperation with Russia, and actions that threaten or harm Russia would hinder such cooperation
 - China's economic power and/or trade practices present an opportunity, not a threat
 - Russia and China have similar views, beliefs, ideas, or norms
 - Russia and China identify as members of the same group or bloc
 - Russia and China stand together to oppose the West
 - Institutions constrain China's behavior and / or make it more predictable
 - Immigration from China is controlled
 - Because Russia and China have similar regime types (democratic, authoritarian, 'strong leader', centralization of power, single-party rule, etc.), it is less likely that it will harm Russia
 - None of the above
- No
 - What about China is discussed or analyzed?
 - Military
 - Economy and/or trade

- Environment
- Demography (population size, growth of population, migration, etc.)
- Development projects and/or investments
- Culture (religion, race, history, customs, language, values, etc.)
- Ideology
- Law (domestic or international)
- Goals, interests
- Regime type (democratic, authoritarian, 'strong leader', centralization of power, single-party rule, etc.)
- Other (please type)

Is there a perception in the text that China and Russia are similar or dissimilar?

- A perception that China and Russia are similar
 - What type of similarity?
 - Military
 - Economic and/or trade
 - Environmental
 - Demographic (population size, growth of population, migration, etc.)
 - Developmental and/or trade
 - Cultural (religion, race, history, customs, language, values, etc.)
 - Ideological
 - Legal (domestic or international)
 - Goals, interests
 - Regime type (democratic, authoritarian, 'strong leader', centralization of power, single-party rule, etc.)
 - Other (please type)
- A perception that China and Russia are dissimilar
 - What type of dissimilarity?
 - Military
 - Economic and/or trade
 - Environmental
 - Demographic (population size, growth of population, migration, etc.)
 - Developmental and/or investments
 - Cultural (religion, race, history, customs, language, values, etc.)
 - Ideological
 - Legal (domestic or international)
 - Goals, interests
 - Regime type (democratic, authoritarian, 'strong leader', centralization of power, single-party rule, etc.)

- Other (please type)
- Both
 - What type of similarity?
 - Military
 - Economic and/or trade
 - Environmental
 - Demographic (population size, growth of population, migration, etc.)
 - Developmental and/or investments
 - Cultural (religion, race, history, customs, language, values, etc.)
 - Ideological
 - Legal (domestic or international)
 - Goals, interests
 - Regime type (democratic, authoritarian, ‘strong leader’, centralization of power, single-party rule, etc.)
 - Other (please type)
 - What type of dissimilarity?
 - Military
 - Economic and/or trade
 - Environmental
 - Demographic (population size, growth of population, migration, etc.)
 - Developmental and/or investments
 - Cultural (religion, race, history, customs, language, values, etc.)
 - Ideological
 - Legal (domestic or international)
 - Goals, interests
 - Regime type (democratic, authoritarian, ‘strong leader’, centralization of power, single-party rule, etc.)
 - Other (please type)
- No

All six of the hypotheses are tested by the lines of questioning that follow the identification of a perception in the text that China either threatens or does not threaten Russia. Because of the complexity of the notion of shared identity, hypothesis 5 is tested with an additional line of questioning regarding perceptions of similarity or dissimilarity between Russia and China in the

texts.¹³⁴ After specifying the type of threat posed by China or the reasons why China does not pose a threat, coders are asked to select a sentence that best describes why China threatens or does not threaten Russia. The answer options for the question of why, according to the text, China threatens Russia have opposite answer options for the question of why, according to the text, China does not threaten Russia. A significant difference in the number of selections of answer options across each of the pairs of answers would provide evidence of certain dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers and allow for the confirmation or rejection of the hypotheses. For example, if, out of all the codes that classify texts as either indicating that China threatens Russia because they have conflicting interests or that China does not threaten Russia because they have compatible or non-conflictual interests, the latter receives 80% of the total codes received between the two, this would be considered evidence in favor of confirmation of hypothesis 3.¹³⁵

It may be helpful to clarify which of the pairs of answer options are given with the intention of testing the other hypotheses. The answer options meant to test hypothesis 1,¹³⁶ which concerns perceptions of intentions, are ‘China has harmful intentions towards Russia’ and ‘China does not have harmful intentions towards Russia’; hypothesis 2,¹³⁷ which concerns nuclear deterrence: ‘China is not deterred by Russia’s nuclear weapons’ and ‘China is deterred by Russia’s nuclear weapons’; hypothesis 4,¹³⁸ which concerns institutions: ‘Institutions are insufficient to constrain

¹³⁴ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers believe that for reasons of shared identity the rise of China does not threaten Russia.

¹³⁵ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider the compatibility or non-conflictual nature of the interests of Russia and China to be one of the main reasons why China’s rise does not threaten Russia.

¹³⁶ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers do not perceive the rise of China as a threat because they believe China has harmless or benign intentions towards Russia.

¹³⁷ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider nuclear deterrence to be one of the main reasons why the rise of China does not threaten Russia.

¹³⁸ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider the establishment and maintenance of regimes and institutions between Russia and China to be one of the main reasons why China’s rise does not threaten Russia.

China's behavior and/or make it more predictable' and 'Institutions constrain China's behavior and / or make it more predictable'; hypothesis 5,¹³⁹ which has two pairs of answer options and concerns shared identity: 'Russia and China have conflicting views, beliefs, ideas, or norms' and 'Russia and China have similar views, beliefs, ideas, or norms' and 'Russia and China identify as members of opposing groups or blocs' and 'Russia and China identify as members of the same group or bloc'; and hypothesis 6,¹⁴⁰ which concerns trust: 'China is not interested in long-term cooperation with Russia and it exploits its power over Russia for short-term gains' and 'China is interested in long term cooperation with Russia, and actions that threaten or harm Russia would hinder such cooperation'.

The additional line of questioning on perceptions of similarity or dissimilarity between Russia and China results in coding that can be tested for significant correlation between shifts in such perceptions and shifts in threat perception over time. If hypothesis 5 is to be confirmed, we should see threat perception decrease as perceptions of similarity (or shared identity) increase, and vice versa, and perceptions of the absence of threat decrease as perceptions of dissimilarity increase, and vice versa. The coding is meant to shed light on other dispositional factors by revealing the intensity of focus on, and attitudes towards, (1) immigration from China, (2) regime type of China, and (3) China's relationship with the West, particularly China's willingness to oppose Western hegemony alongside Russia.

The qualitative aspect of the content analysis (the results of which are presented in chapters 4-7) targets texts containing paragraphs that received codes indicating the presence of a perception of

¹³⁹ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers believe that for reasons of shared identity the rise of China does not threaten Russia.

¹⁴⁰ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers do not perceive the rise of China as a threat because they believe that China 'values the prospects of long-run cooperation between the two countries more than it values short-run gains that would accrue by exploiting its immediate power over [Russia]'.

threat or a perception of an absence of threat from China and is extended to include texts published from 2018 to early 2020.

Expert views are categorized based on the likelihood that they have reached and directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers. The thesis argues in terms of likelihood because, as explained above, direct observation of the dispositional factors on which decisions of Russian officials are based is not possible because of a lack of access and the ‘Other Minds’ problem. Based on the qualifications of the experts, their connections to the Russian government or military, and the connections of the institutions through which they publish, their views are categorized in one of four levels: likely to have influence, not unlikely to have influence, not likely to have influence, and unlikely to have influence. It is understandable that the pairs of terms ‘likely’ and ‘not unlikely’, and ‘not likely’ and ‘unlikely’, may be considered synonyms. These should be considered mere labels for levels of likely influence. To avoid semantic confusion, the levels should be considered to have the following values of likelihood: ‘Likely’ – 75%-99%, ‘not unlikely’ – 50%-74%, ‘not likely’ – 25%-49%, and ‘unlikely’ – 0%-24%. Due to space considerations, views that are deemed not likely or unlikely to have influence are not discussed, as scenario 4 has been deemed most likely. Some views are considered to have an unclear level of potential influence and are therefore excluded. For example, since the affiliations of Dmitri Trenin and Alexander Gabuev with Western organizations may cause bias towards their work, it has been excluded due to a lack of confidence in its categorization.

Conclusion

This chapter explores understandings of threat perception in broad schools of thought in IR, IR theories, and applications of political psychology in IR and formulates hypotheses based on

theories of balance of threat, balance of interests, and offence-defense balance, neoliberal theory on the effects of regimes and institutions on state behavior, constructivist theory on the interaction between shared identity and threat perception, and a politico-psychological notion of trust between states. The chapter also elaborates the project's integrative analytical framework and research methodology. The framework, originally formulated by Carlsnaes, consists of three dimensions: intentional, dispositional, and structural. It is explained that, at the intentional dimension, the thesis provides a detailed analysis of Russia's official rhetoric on China in the Appendix and provides a summary of the findings of the analysis in this chapter. Most of the explanatory work of the study is done at the dispositional dimension, where the perceptions and values that informed the intentions behind a foreign policy are analyzed. At this stage, a large number of texts produced by Russia's international affairs, foreign policy, and security expert communities are analyzed using a crowd-sourcing method. A qualitative analysis of the texts guided by the quantitative results of the content analysis is also undertaken. Finally, to elaborate the explanation formulated based on dispositional factors uncovered by the content analysis, the thesis takes into consideration structural constraints in the concluding chapter.

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Chapter 3: Institutions, Experts, and Quantitative Results

This chapter has three main objectives: first, to provide information on the institutions, the publications of which were selected for the content analysis performed for this thesis; second, to provide information on the experts whose work was targeted for the qualitative aspect of the content analysis; and third, to present the quantitative results of the content analysis. The information on the institutions and experts includes estimates of their potential influence on Russia's foreign policy towards China, i.e. the likelihood that certain views they publish contribute to the formation of the dispositional factors (perceptions and values) of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers. This is done by categorizing the institutions based on whether they were founded, are funded, and are led in full, in part, directly, or indirectly by the Russian government or military. The experts are categorized based on their qualifications and proximity to the Russian government or military. This chapter functions as an information base that is referred to in the following four empirical chapters. It also contributes to the explanation of Russia's foreign policy towards China over the period of interest by identifying trends in Russian expert thought revealed by the quantitative aspect of the content analysis.

Institutions

'Institutions' is a hypernym used by this thesis to refer to the entities that published the materials selected for the content analysis. They include think tanks, research centers, journals, newspapers, and radio talk shows. As explained in chapter 2, this section provides information on each institution in order to approximate the amount of potential influence it may have over Russian foreign policy towards China. It does so by evaluating the proximity of each to the Russian government or military. Factors that are taken into consideration during the evaluation

include whether it was founded in full, in part, directly, or indirectly by the government or military, the proximity of the Heads of the institutions, the editorial boards, and members to the government or the military, and whether they are funded in full, in part, directly, or indirectly by the government or military. The criteria for determining whether an institution is led by the state include the legal status of the institution (e.g. a Federal State Budgetary Institution is legally run by the state), and whether the Heads of the editorial boards of the institutions have held or hold a position in the Russian government or military. Figure 1 shows the categorization of the institutions as a result of the evaluation. The check mark indicates that the institution was founded, is funded, or is led by the Russian government or military, and the Xs indicate vice versa. The curved arrow indicates that the institution was either partially or indirectly founded, is funded, or is led by the Russian government or military. The question marks indicate insufficient evidence for accurate categorization.

| | Gov/Mil Founded | Gov/Mil Funded | Gov/Mil Led |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Council on Foreign and Defense Policy | ~ | ? | ✓ |
| Russian International Affairs Council | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Valdai Discussion Club | ~ | ~ | ~ |
| Russia in Global Politics | ~ | ? | ~ |
| Russian Institute of Strategic Studies | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Bulletin of MGIMO | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| National Defense | X | ~ | X |
| Military Thought | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Military-Industrial Courier | X | X | X |
| Strategy of Russia | ~ | ~ | ~ |
| International Life | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Izborsky Club | X | X | X |
| International Processes | X | X | X |
| Red Star | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Independent Military Review | X | X | X |
| Issues of Security | X | X | X |
| Echo of Moscow - Military Council | ✓ | ~ | ? |
| Echo of Moscow - Arsenal | ✓ | ~ | ? |
| Arsenal of the Fatherland | ~ | X | ~ |

Figure 1

Figure 2 categorizes the institutions based on the extent of their connections to the Russian government or military. It does so by grouping together those institutions which have the same number of the connections mentioned above.

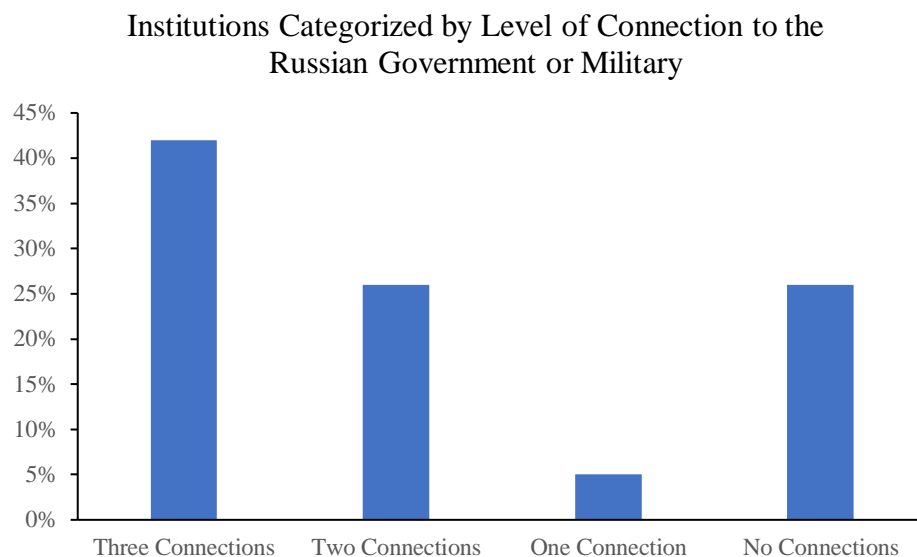


Figure 2

The graph above shows that the largest group of the institutions, 42%, are those that have three connections to the state, i.e. they were founded, are funded, and are led in full, in part, directly or indirectly by the Russian government or military. It is especially noteworthy that 74% of the institutions have at least one of these significant connections with the government or military.

It might be appropriate here to explain the decision to categorize some institutions as government- or military-led, even though they are not legally Federal State Budgetary Institutions. For example, the *Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC)* is categorized as an institution led by the government because of the sheer number of currently serving high-ranking government officials who were appointed to the board of trustees of the institution and are responsible for its management. Think tanks tend to be different in Russia than those in, for example, the US, where think tanks, especially in Washington, ‘function as a consistent source for talented administrators and congressional staff members and as a haven for personnel departing government office either for an “intellectual breather” or because the administration

under which they served failed to be reelected’.¹ In Russia, it is very common for an official to simultaneously serve the government or military and serve on the board of trustees or editorial board of a think tank or journal.

The evaluation begins with the *Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (CFDP)*. According to the Council, its legal status is a non-governmental public association and it was founded in 1992 by ‘a group of well-known and influential politicians, heads of business associations, prominent entrepreneurs, public and government figures, representatives of power ministries, the military-industrial complex, science and the media’.² The mission of the Council is ‘to facilitate the development and implementation of strategic concepts for the development of Russia, its foreign and defense policies, and the establishment of the Russian state and civil society in the country’.³

Regarding its relationship with the government, it is explained that the Council

‘carries out its activities in close cooperation with a number of parliamentary and government bodies: the Presidential Administration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, the Committees of the State Duma of the Russian Federation and the Federation Council for International Affairs, and for defense; other power ministries and departments; with academic institutes and leading analytical centers in Russia and abroad’.⁴

Despite its close connection with the government, it emphasizes its independence and objectivity, claiming that the Council’s work is guided by principles including ‘non-partisanship, freedom of opinion and independence of assessments’, and ‘a balanced and objective approach to

¹ McGann, James G. *The Fifth Estate: Think Tanks, Public Policy, and Governance*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press. 2016. Citing Lee Michael Katz. ‘American Think Tanks - Their Influence Is on the Rise’. *Carnegie Reporter* 5, no. 2 (2009): 13; and Richard N. Haass. ‘Think Tanks and U.S. Foreign Policy: A Policy-Maker’s Perspective’. *U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda* 7, no. 3 (2002): 7.

² Council on Foreign and Defense Policy. About the Council. Available at <http://svop.ru/about/>. Accessed 13/05/2020.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

issues of national strategy’.⁵ According to the *CFDP*, it is funded ‘through sponsorship contributions, grants, donations from individuals and non-governmental organizations’.⁶

According to Barbashin and Graef, the *CFDP* only receives ‘symbolic and intellectual state sponsorship’ and ‘does not receive financial support from the state but survives on private and commercial donations’.⁷ However, based on the Council’s description of its sources of funding, it is not clear whether some of the contributions and grants are from the state.

Karaganov and Lukyanov serve as Honorary Chairman of the Presidium and Chairman of the Presidium, respectively. Lukyanov has also served as President of *CFDP* and is also currently a member of the Bureau of the Council. It is explained in the next section that, although Lukyanov has not held a position in the Russian government or military, he may be considered in relatively close proximity to the state. It is noteworthy that Vladimir Ryzhkov, an expert who has engaged in oppositional political activity, has also served as President of *CFDP* and is currently a member of the Bureau of the Council. Members of the Council include several current or former high-ranking government officials with a relatively high level of potential influence such as Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Former Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Russia to China and Former First Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Denisov, Former Army General, Minister of the Interior, and Deputy Chairman of the Government Anatoly Kulikov, Deputy Prime Minister and Head of the Government Office Sergei Prihodko, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko, Chairman of the Board of the Military-Industrial Commission Dmitri Rogozin, Director of the

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Barbashin, Anton, and Alexander Graef. ‘Thinking Foreign Policy in Russia: Think Tanks and Grand Narratives’. Atlantic Council. 12/11/2019. Available at <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/thinking-foreign-policy-in-russia-think-tanks-and-grand-narratives/>. Accessed 13/05/2020.

Department of Foreign Policy Planning Oleg Stepanov, Chairman of the State Duma Committee on Foreign Affairs Leonid Slutsky, and Advisor to the President Sergei Glaziev.

Although the *CFDP* is not legally a governmental institution, it is categorized by this thesis as being led by the state because of the Honorary Chairman of the Presidium Karaganov's history of service and continued proximity to the state and the membership of many high-ranking government officials.

The legal status of the *RIAC* is a non-profit partnership. According to the Council, its aim is to 'strengthen peace, friendship and harmony between peoples, the prevention of international conflicts and crisis management' and to 'contribute to Russia's prosperity through integration into the global world'.⁸ The Council was established on 2 February 2010 by order of President Putin document no. 59-rp 'On the establishment of the non-profit partnership "Russian Council on Foreign Affairs"'.⁹ The founders of the *RIAC* include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science.¹⁰ Its mission statement describes the Council as 'a link between the state, the expert community, business and civil society in solving foreign policy problems'.¹¹

Regarding the funding of the *RIAC*, the charter states that the property of the Council is formed by 'membership fees; voluntary property contributions and donations from members ... targeted budget financing; income from entrepreneurial activities provided for in the Charter; and other

⁸ Russian International Affairs Council. General Information; and Russian International Affairs Council. *RIAC Mission*. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/about/>. Accessed 14/05/2020.

⁹ Russian International Affairs Council. *Charter*. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/about/regulations/>. Accessed 14/05/2020.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Russian International Affairs Council. *RIAC Mission*.

sources of property formation of a non-profit organization not prohibited by law'.¹² Section 4.5 states that the *RIAC* 'is entitled to attract ... additional financial resources of legal entities and individuals', and section 5 states that the founders of the Council, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science, have the right to 'make property contributions'.¹³ Rusprofile reports the *RIAC*'s 'received funds' in categories including entrance fees, membership fees, earmarked contributions, voluntary contributions and donations, profit from the entrepreneurial activity of the organization, and other.¹⁴ Received funds in the 'other' category is consistently above 80% of the total received funds since 2012, and reaches as high as 95% and 92% in 2012 and 2013, respectively.¹⁵ It was reported by DW that the *RIAC* received subsidies in 2014 and 2017 in the amount of 100.42 million rubles and 81.41, respectively.¹⁶ These amounts match the amounts reported for these years under the category 'other' for these years.¹⁷ The *RIAC* reported to the Russian Ministry of Justice that, of the funds it 'received from the federal budget, budgets of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, budgets of municipalities', it spent 98,474,310 rubles in 2014 and 82,740,710 rubles in 2017.¹⁸ According to Barbashin and Graef, the '*RIAC* is primarily financed by the state budget via the Foreign Ministry', and that 'in the first three years of operation from 2012 to 2014, almost all its

¹² Russian International Affairs Council. Charter.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Rusprofile. 'Accounting (Financial) Statements: Non-Profit Partnership "Russian International Affairs Council"'. Available at <https://www.rusprofile.ru/accounting?ogrn=1117799006753>. Accessed 14/05/2020.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Vachedin, Dmitri. 'RBK: Rossiia Snizhaet Finansirovanie Svoikh Agentov Vlianiia za Rubezhom (RBC: Russia Reduces Funding for its Agents of Influence Abroad)'. DW. 24/07/2017. Available at dw.com/ru/рбк-россия-снижает-финансирование-своих-агентов-влияния-за-рубежом/а-39809048. Accessed 14/05/2020.

¹⁷ Rusprofile. 'Accounting (Financial) Statements'.

¹⁸ Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation. 'O Deiatel'nosti Nekommercheskikh Organizatsii (On the Activities of Non-Profit Organizations)'. Available at http://unro.minjust.ru/NKOReports.aspx?request_type=nko. Accessed 14/05/2020; for pdfs of the reports see <http://unro.minjust.ru/Reports/33092701.pdf> and <http://unro.minjust.ru/Reports/64801601.pdf>. Accessed 14/05/2020.

spending—more than 95 percent—came from the state budget, including the federal, regional, and municipal levels’.¹⁹ Open source information corroborates this claim.

Several former or current high-ranking Russian government officials are affiliated with the *RIAC*, all of whom may be considered among those with the most potential influence on Russia’s foreign policy towards China. Former Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov has been President of the Council since 2011. Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration and Press Secretary Dmitri Peskov, Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov, and Fyodor Lukyanov serve in the Bureau of the *RIAC*. The Board of Trustees of the Council includes Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Deputy Prime Minister and Head of the Government Office Sergei Prikhodko, and Assistant to the President of the Russian Federation Andrei Fursenko. Members of the *RIAC* include Former Presidential Advisor Sergei Karaganov, First Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Titov, Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov, Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, Army General and Former Head of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Russia Valentin Korabelnikov, Former Army General, Minister of the Interior, Deputy Chairman of the Government Anatoly Kulikov, Assistant to the President Yuri Ushakov, Chairman of the State Duma Committee on Foreign Affairs Leonid Slutsky, former assistant to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly Sergei Luzyanin, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Russia to China and Former First Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Denisov, and many other ambassadors.

¹⁹ Barbashin and Graef. ‘Thinking Foreign Policy in Russia: Think Tanks and Grand Narratives’. Atlantic Council. 2019.

The *Valdai Discussion Club* is a think tank that holds meetings and conferences for Russian experts and officials and publishes work on international affairs. It was established in 2004 and expanded by the *Valdai Club Foundation* starting in 2011. The Foundation was founded by the *CFDP*, the *RIAC*, the Higher School of Economics (HSE), and Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO). These founders took over full responsibility of the *Valdai Discussion Club* in 2014. President Putin attends a session of a meeting of the Club every year to discuss various topics of international affairs and often to have an informal meeting with *Valdai Discussion Club* members.

Regarding the funding of the *Valdai Discussion Club*, no government funding has been reported to the Russian Ministry of Justice.²⁰ However, two of the four founders of the *Valdai Club Foundation* (which is responsible for the management of the *Valdai Discussion Club*), the *RIAC* and the HSE, receive government funding, and another, MGIMO, is a part of, and directly subordinate to, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²¹ For this reason, the *Valdai Discussion Club* is categorized by this thesis as receiving government funding, although it should be noted that this funding is indirect.

In addition to President Putin's annual participation in sessions and informal meetings at *Valdai Discussion Club* events, such events have been attended by other high-ranking government officials such as Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, Former

²⁰ Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation. 'O Deiatel'nosti Nekommercheskikh Organizatsii (On the Activities of Non-Profit Organizations)'. Available at http://unro.minjust.ru/NKOReports.aspx?request_type=nko. Accessed 14/05/2020; for pdfs of the reports see <http://unro.minjust.ru/Reports/77303301.pdf> and <http://unro.minjust.ru/Reports/90791301.pdf>.

²¹ For an example of an order for the subsidization of the Higher School of Economics see Russian Government. 'O Raspredelenii v 2015 Godu Subsidiy Vedushchim Universitetam Rossii v Tseliakh Povysheniia Ikh Konkurentosposobnosti Sredi Vedushchikh Mirovykh Nauchno-Obrazovatel'nykh Tsentrov (On the Distribution in 2015 of Subsidies to Leading Universities in Russia in Order to Increase Their Competitiveness among the World's Leading Research and Educational Centers)'. 22/05/2015. Available at <http://government.ru/docs/18240/>. Accessed 14/05/2020.

Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, Former Presidential Advisor Sergei Karaganov, Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov, and Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko,

Russia in Global Politics describes itself as ‘a socio-political journal about international relations and foreign policy’.²² Fyodor Lukyanov has been Editor-in-Chief of the journal since it was founded by the *CFDP*, the *RIAC*, and the HSE in 2002. Former Presidential Advisor Sergei Karaganov serves as Chairman of the Editorial Board, and member of the Scientific Council of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Vyacheslav Nikonov and Lev Belousov serve as Deputy Chairmen. Members of the Editorial Board of the journal include Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Former Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, Chairman of the Committee of the Council of the Federation of the Federal Assembly on International Affairs Konstantin Kosachev, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Deputy Chairman of the Committee of the Council of the Federation of the Federal Assembly on International Affairs Vladimir Lukin, Deputy Prime Minister and Head of the Government Office Sergei Prikhodko, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the State Duma Leonid Slutsky, and Assistant to the President Yuri Ushakov.

The Russian Institute of Strategic Studies (RISS) is a think tank established by decree of President Boris Yeltsin in 1992 and its legal status is a Federal State Scientific Budgetary Institution (FSBI). According to Federal Law of 12.01.1996, No. 7-FZ About Non-Profit Organizations Section 92 Articles 1 and 3, an FSBI is ‘a non-profit organization created by the Russian Federation, a constituent entity of the Russian Federation or a municipality to carry out

²² *Russia in Global Politics*. About the Journal *Russia in Global Politics*. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/about/readers-experts/>. Accessed 14/05/2020.

work, provide services in order to ensure the implementation of the powers stipulated by the legislation of the Russian Federation of state authorities (state bodies) or local authorities’, and that ‘state (municipal) tasks for a budgetary institution ... are formed and approved by the relevant body that exercises the functions and powers of the founder’, which is, in this case, the President of Russia.²³ Importantly, Section 92 Article 3 states that ‘a budget institution is not entitled to refuse to perform a state (municipal) task’.²⁴ Regarding funding, Section 92 Article 6 states that ‘financial support for the fulfillment of the state (municipal) tasks by the budget institution is carried out in the form of subsidies from the budgets of the budget system of the Russian Federation’.²⁵ According to the Charter of the Institute, it is financed by the federal government, funds generated by its activities, and donations from individuals and legal entities.²⁶

According to *RISS*, its task is ‘to provide information to the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation, the Council of the Federation and the State Duma, the Security Council, the Government apparatus, ministries and departments’ in the form of ‘expert assessments, recommendations, prepares information and analytical materials’.²⁷ *RISS* employs 11 Doctors of Science and 45 Candidates of Science and, since 2017, has been directed by Former Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service Mikhail Fradkov.²⁸ Fradkov succeeded a Lieutenant General of the Foreign Intelligence Service, Leonid Reshetnikov, who served as Director of the Institute

²³ Federal Law of the Russian Federation. ‘Federal’nyĭ Zakon ot 12.01.1996 g. no. 7-FZ O Nekommercheskikh Organizatsiĭakh (Federal Law of 12.01.1996, No. 7-FZ About Non-Profit Organizations). 12/01/1996. Section 92. Available at <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/8742>. Accessed 18/05/2020.

²⁴ Ibid., Section 92 Article 3.

²⁵ Ibid., Section 92 Article 6.

²⁶ Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. ‘Ustav Federal’nogo Gosudarstvennogo Nauchnogo Biūdzhetnogo Uchrezhdeniĭa «Rossiĭskĭĭ Institut Strategicheskikh Issledovaniĭ» (Charter of the Federal State Scientific Budgetary Institution “Russian Institute of Strategic Studies”)’. Order of the President of the Russian Federation, No. 23. 04/01/2012. Available at https://riss.ru/images/pdf/ustav_docs/ustav.pdf. Accessed 15/05/2020.

²⁷ Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. About the Institute. Available at <https://riss.ru/about/>. Accessed 15/05/2020.

²⁸ Ibid.; and Mikhail Fradkov. Profile at the Website of the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Available at <https://riss.ru/profile/fradkov/>. Accessed 17/05/2020.

from 2009 to 2017. Fradkov is a Candidate of Economic Sciences and Reshetnikov is a Candidate of Historical Sciences. Both were appointed to the Directorship of *RISS* by presidential decree.

The *Bulletin of MGIMO* is a journal published by the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), which is a university that is a part of, and directly subordinate to, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As reported by the Russian Agency of International Information (RIA Novosti) and shared on the website of MGIMO, ‘more than two-thirds of the employees of the Russian diplomatic service graduated from MGIMO’.²⁹ Foreign Minister Lavrov himself is a graduate of MGIMO and he often gives speeches to students at the university.

MGIMO’s legal status is a Federal State Autonomous Educational Institute. According to Federal Law of 03.11.2006 No. 174-FZ About Autonomous Institutions Chapter 1 Section 2 Article 1, ‘an autonomous institution is recognized as a non-profit organization created by the Russian Federation, a constituent entity of the Russian Federation or a municipality for the performance of work, the provision of services for the exercise of the powers of state authorities provided for by the legislation of the Russian Federation, the powers of local authorities’.³⁰ Chapter 1 Section 2 Article 3.23 states that ‘control over the activities of autonomous institutions is carried out ... by federal state bodies, carrying out the functions and powers of the founders of autonomous institutions created on the basis of federal property’.³¹ Chapter 1 Section 4 Article

²⁹ Russian Agency of International Information. ‘Izvestnye vVypuskniki MGIMO. Spravka (Famous MGIMO Graduates)’. 14/10/2009. Available at <https://ria.ru/20091014/188792258.html>. Accessed 15/05/2020.

³⁰ Federal Law of the Russian Federation. ‘Federal’nyi Zakon ot 03.11.2006 g. no. 174-FZ Ob Avtonomnykh Uchrezhdeniiakh (Federal Law of 03.11.2006 No. 174-FZ About Autonomous Institutions)’. 03/11/2006. Chapter 1 Article 2.1. Available at <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/24526/page/1>. Accessed 18/05/2020.

³¹ Ibid., Chapter 1 Section 3 Article 23.

2.1 states that ‘an autonomous institution is not entitled to refuse to perform a state (municipal) task’.³² Regarding funding, Section 4 Article 4 states that ‘the financial support of the activities ... is carried out in the form of subsidies from the budgets of the budget system of the Russian Federation and other sources not prohibited by federal laws’.³³ According to the Charter of MGIMO, the university is financed by the government and by funds generated through its activities.³⁴

The *Bulletin of MGIMO* was established in 2008 and it pursues three main goals: the ‘publication of original studies on international relations’; ‘the development of the Russian school of the study of international relations’; and ‘the development of international scientific dialogue and communication’.³⁵ According to MGIMO, the Russian school of the study of international relations ‘emphasizes the value of pluralism of cultures, civilizations, identities, as well as ways to study, understand and manage international relations’.³⁶

National Defense is a journal founded in 2006 by Former Chairman of the Public Council at the Ministry of Defense and reserve Colonel of the Russian Air Force Igor Korotchenko. The journal is ‘aimed at representatives of the military-political leadership of the Russian Federation, employees of power ministries and departments, special services, the military-diplomatic corps, as well as the senior staff of enterprises and organizations of the military-industrial complex, banking, insurance and financial structures serving the defense industry and military-technical

³² Ibid., Chapter 1 Section 4 Article 2.1.

³³ Ibid., Chapter 1 Section 4 Article 4.

³⁴ Moscow State Institute of International Relations. Charter of the Federal State Educational Budgetary Institution of Higher Professional Education “Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs”. Section 7. pp. 26-29. Moscow. 2011. Available at <https://mgimo.ru/upload/mgimo-charter.pdf>. Accessed 15/05/2020.

³⁵ Moscow State Institute of International Relations. Editorial Policy – Goals and Objectives. Available at <https://vestnik.mgimo.ru/jour/about/editorialPolicies#custom-5>. Accessed 15/05/2020.

³⁶ Ibid.

cooperation’.³⁷ *National Defense* claims to be ‘the general/official information partner of the largest arms and military equipment exhibitions held in Russia and the CIS countries’.³⁸

Korotchenko has been the Editor-in-Chief of the journal since its creation in 2006. In 2003, he left *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in protest of the newspaper’s ‘anti-state information policy’ and became Editor-in-Chief of the *Military-Industrial Courier*, another publication selected for the content analysis, a position he held until 2009.³⁹

The Journal *National Defense* is funded in several ways including subscriptions and providing services including the design, layout, and production of printing products, souvenirs, public relations services, research and analytics, photography, and design and web development.

Rusprofile lists the customers, for which the journal has executed state contracts in the category of ‘government procurement’.⁴⁰ Two of the largest customers in this category are the Public Joint Stock Company ‘Machine-Building Plant Named After M.I. Kalinin, G. Yekaterinburg’ (PJSC Mzik), and the Joint Stock Company ‘Scientific Research Institute of Instrumentation Named After V.V. Tikhomirov’ (JSC NIIP). The journal *National Defense* conducted advertisement campaigns for each of them. The journal has executed state contracts with a total of 17 entities.

PJSP Mzik was founded by the Ministry of State Property Management of Sverdlovsk Region and it is listed as a ‘mixed Russian property with federal ownership’.⁴¹ Its primary occupation is the manufacturing of weapons and ammunition and has been party to 4641 state contracts as a

³⁷ National Defense. About the Journal. Available at <https://oborona.ru/pages/mainpage/about/index.shtml>. Accessed 15/05/2020.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Korotchenko, Igor. Profile at the Website of the Journal “National Defense”. Available at <https://oborona.ru/pages/mainpage/korotchenko/index.shtml>. Accessed 16/05/2020.

⁴⁰ Rusprofile. ‘LLC “Publishing House “National Defense”’. Available at <https://www.rusprofile.ru/id/1872798>. Accessed 16/05/2020.

⁴¹ Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation. ‘Subsidy Recipient Public Joint Stock Company “Machine-Building Plant Named After M.I. Kalinin, G. Yekaterinburg”’. Available at <https://spending.gov.ru/subsidies/receivers/650%D0%938068/>. Accessed 16/05/2020.

customer and supplier.⁴² It has also been a recipient of a subsidy from the Russian Ministry of Science and Higher Education in the amount of 200 million rubles.⁴³

JSC NIIP was founded by the Ministry of Property Relations of the Russian Federation and its shareholders include Almaz-Antey (AA) with 57% and JSC Concern Radioelectronic Technologies (KRET) with 43%.⁴⁴ AA was established by presidential decree in 2002 and its mission is to ‘meet the needs of the state in armament and military equipment of air defense (aerospace) defense in the interests of the country's defense capability and increasing the volume of foreign trade’.⁴⁵ KRET was founded by, and remains part of, the State Corporation Rostec.⁴⁶

Military Thought is a military-theoretical journal published by the Russian Ministry of Defense. It is the oldest of its type in Russia with a history dating back to 1858. In 1975, it was awarded the Order of the Red star ‘for the great contribution to the information support of the development of domestic military science, construction and the use of the Armed Forces’.⁴⁷ The journal’s target audience consists of ‘high-ranking and senior command staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, specialists of research institutions of the Ministry of Defense of Russia, faculty and officer-listeners of military academies, universities and institutes, heads of enterprises of the defense industry’.⁴⁸

⁴² Rusprofile. ‘Public Joint Stock Company “Machine-Building Plant Named After M.I. Kalinin, G. Yekaterinburg”’. Available at <https://www.rusprofile.ru/id/1920676>. Accessed 16/05/2020.

⁴³ Ibid.; and Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation. ‘Subsidy Recipient Public Joint Stock Company “Machine-Building Plant Named After M.I. Kalinin, G. Yekaterinburg”’.

⁴⁴ Joint Stock Company ‘Scientific Research Institute of Instrumentation Named After V.V. Tikhomirov’. About the Institute. Available at <https://www.niip.ru/company/>?. Accessed 16/05/2020.

⁴⁵ Almaz-Antey. About Company. Available at <https://almaz-antey.defence.ru/profile/>. Accessed 16/05/2020.

⁴⁶ Concern Radioelectronic Technologies. About KRET. Available at <https://www.kret.com/about/>. Accessed 16/06/2020; and Rostec. Key Companies – Holdings and Organizations of Rostec. Available at <https://rostec.ru/about/companies/346/>. Accessed 16/05/2020.

⁴⁷ Military Thought. About the Journal. Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation. Available at <https://vm.ric.mil.ru/O-zhurnale>. Accessed 16/05/2020.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Since 2004, Candidate of Technical Sciences Colonel Sergei Rodikov has been the Editor-in-Chief of *Military Thought*. Members of the Editorial Board of the journal include officials at the highest ranks of the Russian military and government, such as Head of the General Staff of the Armed Forces and Hero of the Russian Federation Valery Gerasimov, Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces and Army General Oleg Salyukov, Commander-in-Chief of the Aerospace Forces and Hero of the Russian Federation Sergei Surovkin, Commander of the Airborne Forces and Hero of the Russian Federation Andrei Serdyukov, Chairman of the Defense Committee of the State Duma and Hero of the Russian Federation Vladimir Shamanov, First Deputy Minister of Defense Ruslan Tsalikov, Deputy Minister of Defense and Hero of the Russian Federation Dmitri Bulgakov, and Deputy Minister of Defense Colonel General Andrei Kartapolov.⁴⁹

The *Military-Industrial Courier* is a weekly newspaper that released its first issue in 2003. The founder and publisher of the newspaper is General Director of the Joint Stock Company ‘Sotsium-A’ (JSC SA) Ruslan Ashurbeyli.⁵⁰ The JSC SA owns two companies that design and manufacture parts for aircraft: the Joint Stock Company ‘Design Bureau-1’ (JSC DB1) and Joint Stock Company ‘Arzamass Instrument-Making Plant Named After P.I. Plandin’ (JSC AIMP).⁵¹ Combined, the two companies have executed or are executing 191 government contracts worth 863,190,329 rubles.⁵² Ruslan Ashurbeyli is the son of Igor Ashurbeyli: Founder of the JSC SA, the ‘author of the idea’ of creating the *Military-Industrial Courier*, and the Scientific Director of

⁴⁹ Military Thought. Editorial Board. Russian Minister of Defense. Available at <https://vm.ric.mil.ru/Redkollegiya>. Accessed 16/05/2020.

⁵⁰ Military-Industrial Courier. About the Newspaper. Available at <https://www.vpk-news.ru/about>. Accessed 16/05/2020; and Sotsium Holding. ‘Gazete «Voenno-Promyshlennyĭ Kur’er» 15 Let! (The Newspaper “Military-Industrial Courier” is 15 Years Old!)’ 12/08/2018. Available at <https://www.socium-a.ru/news/article/gazete-voenno-promyshlenny-kurer-15-let-17457>. Accessed 16/05/2020.

⁵¹ Sotsium Holding. Sotsium Holding Company. Available at <https://www.socium-a.ru/company>. Accessed 16/05/2020.

⁵² Rusprofile. Joint Stock Company ‘Arzamass Instrument-Making Plant Named After P.I. Plandin’. Available at <https://www.rusprofile.ru/id/4244915>. Accessed 17/05/2020; and Rusprofile. Joint Stock Company ‘Design Bureau-1’. Available at <https://www.rusprofile.ru/id/2998719>. Accessed 17/05/2020.

the JSC DBI until 2016.⁵³ Igor Ashurbeyli led the modification and development of the anti-aircraft systems S-300 Favorit and S-400 Triumph, respectively.⁵⁴ Igor Ashurbeyli is also responsible for the concept of the unified anti-aircraft system of the fifth generation of Russian anti-aircraft systems and under his leadership the main components of the system, including the S-500, Vityaz, and Morpheus were developed.⁵⁵

Strategy of Russia is a journal that was created in 2004 by the Foundation ‘Unity in the Name of Russia’. Member of the Scientific Council of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and Doctor of Historical Sciences Vyacheslav Nikonov is the Editor-in-Chief of the journal. He has also been the president of the Foundation ‘Unity in the Name of Russia’ since it was established in 2003. The Editorial Council of the journal includes First Deputy Chairman of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly Alexander Zhukov, Chairman of the Federation Council Committee on Foreign Affairs and Candidate of Law Konstantin Kosachev, Member of the Scientific Council at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Doctor of Political Sciences Yuri Pivovarov, Deputy Chairman of the Commission of the Presidium of the General Council of the United Russia Party on International Activities and Candidate of Law Vladimir Pligin, Former Chairman of the State Duma Committee on Foreign Affairs and Candidate of Historical Sciences Alexei Pushkov, and Member of the Board of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia and Doctor of Political Sciences Anatoly Torkunov.

⁵³ Military-Industrial Courier. About the Newspaper; and Igor Ashurbeyli. ‘Kratkaia biografiia Igoria Raufovicha Ashurbeili (A Short Biography of Igor Raufovich Ashurbeyli)’. Available at <https://www.ashurbeyli.ru/media/article/vstuplenie-1762>. Accessed 17/05/2020.

⁵⁴ Ashurbeyli. ‘A Short Biography of Igor Raufovich Ashurbeyli’.

⁵⁵ Slavina, Elena. ‘Chelovek Proryva: Novyi Raketnyi Shchit Strany Opiraetsia na Opyt i Znaniia Ego Sozdatelei (Breakthrough Man: The New Missile Shield of the Country is Based on the Experience and Knowledge of its Creators)’. *Rossiskaya Gazeta*. Federal Issue no. 200(6176). 09/09/2013. Available at <https://rg.ru/2013/09/09/raketi.html>. Accessed 17/05/2020.

The Foundation ‘Unity in the Name of Russia’ was founded and is owned by Moscow State University (MSU), Moscow State Legal University (MSLU), The Institute of Scientific Information on Social Sciences (INION), the Foundation ‘Russian Socio-Political Center’ (ROSS), The Non-Profit Foundation ‘Politics’, and the Foundation ‘Development of Business Cooperation and Entrepreneurship (RDSP). The first three of these six founders and owners are Federal State Budgetary Educational Institutions of the Russian Federation, which means, as explained above, they receive state subsidies, carry out tasks assigned by the state, and are not entitled to refuse a task assigned by the state. ROSS was established by presidential decree in 1991 and in 1995 it was changed into a federal foundation.⁵⁶

International Life is a journal on international affairs, founded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a history dating back to 1922. Foreign Minister Lavrov serves as Chairman of the Editorial Board.⁵⁷ Members of the Editorial Board include several high-ranking government officials, including Former Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sergei Vyazalov, First Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Titov, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, and Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Andrei Denisov, Vladimir Lukin, Alexei Meshkov, Alexei Fedotov, and Alexander Yakovenko.⁵⁸ The legal status of the Editorial Board of the journal *International Life* is an FSBI, and as such it receives subsidies from the Russian government, carries out its tasks, and does not have the right to refuse such tasks.

The *Izborsky Club* was founded in 2012 in the city of Izborsk. According to the Club, it was ‘initiated by well-known politicians, thinkers and public figures of a state-patriotic orientation’,

⁵⁶ Foundation ‘Russian Socio-Political Center’. Home Page. Available at <http://www.rppc.ru/>. Accessed 18/05/2020.

⁵⁷ International Life. Journal Board. Available at <https://interaffairs.ru/page/show/council>. Accessed 04/06/2020.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

and their ‘ideological direction ... can be described as social conservatism, a synthesis into a single ideological platform of the various views of Russian statesmen (from socialists and Soviet patriots to monarchists and Orthodox conservatives)’.⁵⁹ The stated goals of the *Izborsky Club* include the ‘creation and submission to the government and society of Russia of analytical reports aimed at forming an updated patriotically oriented state policy in all spheres of national life’, ‘the formation of a new agenda in Russian media, the conquest of information niches objectively arising in connection with the ideological and moral decline of the liberal community’, and to contribute ‘to the formation of a powerful political and ideological coalition of patriots-statesmen, the imperial front, opposing the manipulations carried out in Russian politics by foreign centers of influence and the “fifth column” from the inside of the country’.⁶⁰

The *Izborsky Club* was founded by Alexander Prokhanov, Alexander Nagorny, and Vitaly Averyanov, none of whom have or had apparent connections with the Russian government or military. Notable permanent members of the Club include Former Presidential Advisor Sergei Glaziev, Mikhail Delyagin, Alexander Dugin, and Colonel-General Leonid Ivashov.

International Processes, founded in 2002 by the Scientific and Educational Forum on International Relations (NOFMO), claims to be the first Russian journal of international relations theory.⁶¹ NOFMO is a Non-Profit Partnership founded by Doctors of Political Sciences Tatyana Shakleina, Andrei Vinogradov, and Alexei Bogaturov. Since 2012, Candidate of Historical Sciences Andrei Baykov has served as Editor-in-Chief of *International Processes*. He has no apparent connections with the Russian government or military. All of the members of the Editorial Board have doctorates, and only three out of 20 have held a position in the Russian

⁵⁹ Izborsky Club. About the Club. Available at <https://izborsk-club.ru/about>. Accessed 18/05/2020.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ International Processes. Home Page. Available at <https://intertrends.elpub.ru/jour>. Accessed 18/05/2020.

government: Valery Tishkov, Nikolai Kosolapov, and Alexei Voskresensky.⁶² The primary focus of the journal is ‘on the theoretical understanding of the world as a whole, international trends and the planetary political environment, the world integrity in which our country is immersed and with which it develops’, and its task is ‘to understand what is happening with the world as a whole, and only from this point of view look at Russia, assess the measure of conformity or inconsistency of its policy with global trends’.⁶³

Red Star is a newspaper run by an editorial publishing center under the Russian Ministry of Defense. Its legal status is an FSBI, which means it receives subsidies from the Russian government, carries out its tasks, and does not have the right to refuse such tasks.⁶⁴ The *Red Star* was established by the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party in 1923. Doctor of Philosophical Sciences and Colonel of the Russian Military Nikolai Efimov has been the Editor-in-Chief of the newspaper since 1998. According to the Charter of the *Red Star*, the objective of the newspaper is ‘to ensure the implementation of the powers of the Ministry of Defense provided by the legislation of the Russian Federation in the editorial-publishing sphere’.⁶⁵ In addition to subsidies, the *Red Star* is funded by income-producing activities, including not only publishing various materials such as books, brochures, atlases etc., but also through advertising and photography.⁶⁶

⁶² International Processes. About the Journal – Editorial Board. Available at <https://intertrends.elpub.ru/index.php/jour/pages/view/EditorialC>. Accessed 19/05/2020.

⁶³ International Processes. About the Journal – Goals and Objectives. Available at <https://intertrends.elpub.ru/jour/about/editorialPolicies#focusAndScope>. Accessed 19/05/2020.

⁶⁴ This is acknowledged in the Charter of the newspaper. See Ministry of Defense. ‘Ustav Federal’nogo Gosudarstvennogo Biudzhethnogo Uchrezhdeniia «Predaktsionno-Izdatel’skii TŠentr «Krasnaia Zvezda» Ministerstva Oborony Rossiiskoi Federatsii (Charter of the Federal State Budgetary Institution “Editorial-Publishing Center “Red Star” of the Ministry of Defense)’’. Red Star. 27/12/2017. Available at https://ric.mil.ru/upload/site173/document_file/MzmvBCvDsJ.pdf. Accessed 19/05/2020.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Article 12.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Article 14.

The *Independent Military Review* is a part of *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, and is devoted to topics relevant to military affairs, security, and defense. The legal status of *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* is a Public Organization but has increasingly become more state controlled. The owner and Editor-in-Chief of *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* is Konstantin Remchukov, former Deputy in the State Duma and presently serving as Chairman of the Public Chamber of the City of Moscow.

Security Issues is a journal that has been published since 2012 by NB-Media (previously Nota Bene). Until 2014, the journal was called National Security, with the ISSN: 2306-0417.⁶⁷

Candidate of Political Sciences Vasily Ivanovich Danilenko is the founder of both NB-Media and the journal *Security Issues*.⁶⁸ Since 2011, his son, Doctor of Law Denis Vasilyevich Danilenko, has been co-founder of NB-Media. The institution's legal status is a Society with Limited Liability. It has offices in Moscow, Bratislava, and Vienna.⁶⁹

Arsenal and *Military Council* are both segments of the radio show *Echo of Moscow*, the focus of which are topics relevant to military affairs, security, and defense. The legal status of the radio show is a closed joint stock company. It was founded by the Moscow City Council of People's Deputies, the Radio Association, Ogonyok magazine, and the journalism faculty of Moscow State University, and its first broadcast was in 1990.⁷⁰ Gazprom-Media owns a majority share of *Echo of Moscow*, and over 50% of the shares of Gazprom are owned by the state.⁷¹ In 2014,

⁶⁷ NB-Media. Security Questions. Available at <https://e-notabene.ru/nb/>. Accessed 20/05/2020.

⁶⁸ NB-Media. Imprint of the Online Publication Security Issues. Available at https://e-notabene.ru/nb/contents_2012_1.html. Accessed 20/05/2020;

⁶⁹ NB-Media. Contacts. Available at https://e-notabene.ru/page_4.html. Accessed 20/05/2020.

⁷⁰ Echo of Moscow. About – History. Available at <https://echo.msk.ru/about/history/misc.html>. Accessed 20/05/2020.

⁷¹ Gazprom. Stocks. Available at <https://www.gazprom.ru/investors/stock/>. Accessed 20/05/2020; and Gazprom-Media. Our Business – Radio – Echo of Moscow. Available at <http://www.gazprom-media.com/ru/company/show?id=22>. Accessed 20/05/2020.

Ekaterina Pavlova succeeded Yuri Fedutinov as General Director of the radio show.⁷² Alexei Venedikov has been Editor-in-Chief of *Echo of Moscow* since 1998. Neither Pavlova nor Fedutinov have apparent connections with the Russian government or military. Despite being owned by Gazprom-Media, *Echo of Moscow* has a reputation for frequently expressing oppositional views.⁷³

Arsenal of the Fatherland is an informational analytical journal published since 2012 and focused on ‘the military-political situation in the world, the activities of the Armed Forces of Russia, the achievements of the military-industrial complex, the state arms program, the state defense order, military-technical cooperation, armament and military equipment, military and military-technical aspects of history’.⁷⁴ It was founded by Viktor Murakhovsky and Anton Chernov. Murakhovsky is the Editor-in-Chief of the journal and also a member of the Expert Council under the Chairman of the Military Industrial Commission of the Russian Federation. Chernov is the Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Arsenal of the Fatherland* and has no apparent connections with the Russian government or military. The legal status of the journal is a society with limited liability and apparently it does not receive funding from the Russian government.

Experts

As explained in the previous chapter, in this study, the potential influence of an expert is generally based on their connections to the Russian government or military, their qualifications,

⁷² Korchenkova, Natalia. ‘U «Ėkha Moskvyy» Poiavilsia Novyi General’nyi Direktor (Echo of Moscow Has a New CEO’. *Kommersant*. 18/02/2014. Available at <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2410985>. Accessed 20/05/2020.

⁷³ For example, see Yandex Zen. ‘Kto Stoit za Samymi Oppozitsionnymi SMI Nashei Strany? (Who Is Behind the Most Oppositional Media in Our Country?)’ 06/09/2019. Available at https://zen.yandex.ru/media/pronedra/kto-stoit-za-samymi-oppozitsionnymi-smi-nashei-strany-5d72720b027a1500ae512ea6?utm_source=serp. Accessed 20/05/2020; and Inosmu. ‘Putin Kritikuët Oppozitsionnoe Radio «Ėkho Moskvyy» (Putin Criticizes Opposition Radio Echo of Moscow)’. 19/01/2012. Available at <https://inosmi.ru/politic/20120119/183438738.html>. Accessed 20/05/2020.

⁷⁴ Arsenal of the Fatherland. About us. Available at <https://arsenal-otechestva.ru/about>. Accessed 21/05/2020.

and the government or military connections of the institutions through which they publish. The previous section provided information on the publishing institutions. This section investigates the experts who authored the texts selected for the qualitative aspect of the content analysis (the results of which are presented in the following four chapters) with the primary aim of determining whether the experts have held a position in the Russian government or military and whether they have a doctorate using open sources. Table 1 provides the information gathered.⁷⁵

| Name | Government or Military Service | Doctorate |
|--|---|--|
| Afontsev, Sergei Alexandrovich | None | Doctor of Economic Sciences |
| Arbatov, Alexei Georgievich | Deputy of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly, Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Defense Committee | Doctor of Historical Sciences |
| Baluevsky, Yuri Nikolaevich | First Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces | None |
| Barabanov, Oleg Nikolaevich | Member of the Expert Council under the Committee on Foreign Affairs | Candidate of Historical Sciences, Doctor of Political Sciences |
| Bordachev, Timofey Vyacheslavovich | None | Candidate of Political Sciences |
| Borishpolets, Ksenia Petrovna | None | Candidate of Political Sciences |
| Chechevishnikov, Alexander Leonidovich | None | Candidate of Historical Sciences |
| Chernyavsky, Stanislav Ivanovich | Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the 2nd class | Doctor of Historical Sciences |
| Denisov, Igor Evgenyevich | None | None |
| Dmitrieva, Alla Borisova | None | Candidate of Economic Sciences |
| Dynkin, Vladimir Alexanderovich | Member of the Scientific Council under the Minister of Foreign | Doctor of Economic Sciences |

⁷⁵ Some of the experts have held several government or military positions. In the interest of efficient use of space, up to two of the highest-ranking positions held are included in the table; the Russian Candidate of Sciences (*Kandidat Nauk*) is recognized as a degree that is equivalent to a doctorate in the US. The Russian Doctor of Sciences (*Doktor Nauk*) is a degree that is more advanced than a US doctorate and does not have a US equivalent. In the interest of simplification, the thesis refers to both degrees as doctorates. Please see David C. Miller et al. 'Comparative Indicators of Education in the United States and Other G-8 Countries: 2011'. US Department of Education. October 2011: 77. Available at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED524888.pdf>. Accessed 14/07/2020.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| | Affairs, Member of the Scientific Council under the Security Council | |
| Efremenko, Dmitri Valerievich | None | Doctor of Political Sciences |
| Epikhina, Raisa Alekseevna | None | None |
| Fedotov, Vladimir Pavlovich | Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary | Candidate of Historical Sciences |
| Filippova, Lyudmila Viktorovna | None | None |
| Frolova, Ivette Yurievna | None | None |
| Gavrilov, Viktor Alexandrovich | Colonel of the Armed Forces | Candidate of Psychological Sciences |
| Glaziev, Sergei Yureevich | Advisor to the President | Doctor of Economic Sciences |
| Glazova, Anna Vladimirovna | None | Candidate of Philological Sciences |
| Greenburg, Ruslan Semenovich | Member of the Expert Council under the Chairman of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly | Doctor of Economic Sciences |
| Gribova, Natalia Владимировна | None | Candidate of Economic Sciences |
| Gubin, Andrei Vladimirovich | None | Candidate of Political Sciences |
| Guzenkova, Tamara Semenovna | None | Doctor of Historical Sciences |
| Ivanov, Andrei Vladimirovich | None | Candidate of Political Sciences |
| Ivanov, Igor Sergeevich | Foreign Minister, Secretary of the Security Council | Doctor of Historical Sciences |
| Kamynin, Mikhail Leonidovich | Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary | None |
| Karaganov, Sergei Alexandrovich | Advisor to the President | Doctor of Historical Sciences |
| Karataev, Sergei Vyacheslavovich | None | Candidate of Economic Sciences |
| Karataeva, Karolina Evgenievna | None | Doctor of Economic Sciences |
| Karneev, Andrei Niyazovich | None | Candidate of Historical Sciences |
| Kashin, Vasily Borisovich | None | Candidate of Political Sciences |
| Kazantsev, Andrei Anatolyevich | None | Doctor of Political Sciences |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Kazenov, Sergei Yuryevich | None | Candidate of Economic Sciences |
| Kholodkov, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich | None | None |
| Khramchikhin, Alexander Anatolyevich | None | None |
| Kokarev, Konstantin Anatolyevich | None | Doctor of Historical Sciences |
| Koldunova, Ekaterina Valerevna | None | Candidate of Political Sciences |
| Kortunov, Andrei Vadimovich | None | Candidate of Historical Sciences |
| Kosachev, Konstantin Iosifovic | Deputy Chairman of the Federation Council | Candidate of Legal Sciences |
| Kovalev, Andrei Andreevich | None | Candidate of Political Sciences |
| Kovalevskaya (Laperdina), Viktoria Viktorovna | None | Candidate of Economic Sciences |
| Kozlov, Stanislav Ivanovich | Lieutenant Colonel of the Armed Forces | Doctor of Physical and Mathematical Sciences |
| Kulintsev, Yuri Viktorovich | None | None |
| Kumachev, Vladimir Nikolaevich | Member of the Expert Council of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly | None |
| Kuroedov, Boris Vitalievich | Colonel of the Armed Forces | Candidate of Military Sciences |
| Kuzmina, Ksenia Alekseevna | None | None |
| Kuznechevsky, Vladimir Dmitrievich | First Secretary of the USSR Embassy in Yugoslavia | Doctor of Historical Sciences |
| Larin, Viktor Lavrentievich | Member of expert councils under the Ministry of Development of the Far East, Chairman of the Public Chamber of the Primorsky Territory | Doctor of Historical Sciences |
| Larionov, Alexander Vitalievich | None | Candidate of Economic Sciences |
| Lebedeva, Marina Mikhailovna | Member of the Scientific and Expert Council under the Federation Council | Doctor of Political Sciences, Candidate of Psychological Sciences |
| Leksin, Vladimir Nikolaevich | Member of Expert Councils of Specialized Committees of the State Duma and the Federation Council | Doctor of Economic Sciences |

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| Leksyutina, Yana Valerievna | None | Doctor of Political Sciences |
| Lisovolik, Yaroslav Dmitrievich | Advisor to the Executive Director of the Russian Federation at the IMF | Doctor of Economic Sciences |
| Lukin, Alexander Vladimirovich | Worked at the USSR Embassy in the PRC | Doctor of Historical Sciences |
| Lukyanov, Fyodor Alexandrovich | None | None |
| Luzyanin, Sergei Gennadyevich | Assistant to the Deputy Chairman of the International Affairs Committee of the State Duma | Doctor of Historical Sciences |
| Makarov, Igor Alekseevich | None | Candidate of Economic Sciences |
| Makhmutov, Timur Anvarovich | Head of the Department for International and Regional Cooperation | Candidate of Political Sciences |
| Mamedov, Ruslan Shakirovich | None | None |
| Mamonov, Mikhail Evgenievich | None | Candidate of Economic Sciences |
| Manilov, Valery Leonidovich | Colonel General of the Armed Forces, First Deputy Chairman and Member of the Federation Council Committee on Defense and Security | Doctor of Political Sciences |
| Matveev, Vladimir Alexandrovich | Advisor to the Office of the Committee on Federation Affairs and Regional Policy of the State Duma | Candidate of Economic Sciences |
| Mazyrin, Vladimir Moiseevich | Worked at the USSR Embassy in Vietnam | Doctor of Economic Sciences |
| Nikolaev, Mikhail Efimovich | President of the Republic of Sakha, State Counselor of the Republic of Sakha | None |
| Nikonov, Vyacheslav Alekseevich | Member of the Scientific Council of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation | Doctor of Historical Sciences |
| Orlov, Alexander Arsenievich | Member of the Expert Council of the Analytical Center for the Government, Member of the Scientific and Expert Council of the CSTO | Candidate of Historical Sciences |
| Ostrovsky, Andrey Vladimirovich | None | Doctor of Economic Sciences |

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|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Panov, Alexander Nikolaevich | Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary | Doctor of Political Sciences |
| Pantin, Vladimir Igorevich | None | Doctor of Philosophical Sciences |
| Petrovsky, Vladimir Evgenyevich | Assistant Member of the Council of the Federation of the Federal Assembly | Doctor of Political Sciences |
| Popov, Dmitri Sergeevich | None | Candidate of Legal Sciences |
| Portyakov, Vladimir Yakovlevich | Member of the Trade Representation of the Soviet Union in the PRC, worked at the USSR Embassy in the PRC | Doctor of Economic Sciences |
| Prikhodko, Sergei Eduardovich | Assistant to the President, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary | None |
| Prokofev, Igor Valentinovich | None | Candidate of Geological and Mineralogical Sciences |
| Reshetnikov, Leonid Petrovich | Lieutenant General of the SVR | Candidate of Historical Sciences |
| Safranchuk, Ivan Alekseevich | Director of the Russian office of the International Center for Defense Information (later renamed the World Security Institute) | Candidate of Political Sciences |
| Savchenko, Evgeny Olegovich | None | Candidate of Political Sciences |
| Sayamov, Yuri Nikolaevich | First Deputy Prime Minister of the Government and Secretary of the Security Council | Doctor of Political Sciences |
| Shvetsov, Alexander Nikolaevich | Major General of the Armed Forces | None |
| Smirnova, Larisa Nikolaevna | None | Candidate of Political Sciences |
| Stapran, Natalia Valerevna | Director of the Department of Project Support in the Asia-Pacific Region of the Ministry of Economic Development, Director of the Department of Multilateral Economic Cooperation and Special Projects | Candidate of Historical Sciences |
| Suponina, Elena Vladimirovna | None | Candidate of Philosophical Sciences |
| Sushentsov, Andrei Andreevich | Performed analytical tasks commissioned by the Administration of the President, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, | Candidate of Political Sciences |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| | the Office of the Security Council, and the Federal Space Agency | |
| Suslov, Dmitri Vyacheslavovich | Advisor to state authorities on US policy and US-Russian relations, EU policy and development, and Russia-EU relations | None |
| Svedentsov, Vladimir Leonidovich | None | None |
| Timofeev, Ivan Nikolaevich | None | Candidate of Political Sciences |
| Titarenko, Mikhail Leontyevich | Member of the Scientific Council under the Security Council, Member of the Scientific Council under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs | Doctor of Philosophical Sciences |
| Tkachenko, Stanislav Leonidovich | None | Doctor of Economic Sciences |
| Toloraya, Georgy Davidovich | Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary | Doctor of Economic Sciences |
| Troshin, Nikolai Nikolaevich | None | None |
| Trush, Sergei Mikhailovich | None | Candidate of Historical Sciences |
| Tsyrendorzhiev, Samba Rabdanovich | Major General of the Armed Forces | Candidate of Military Sciences |
| Vinogradov, Andrei Vladimirovich | None | Doctor of Political Sciences |
| Vishnevsky, Anatoly Grigoryevich | Member of the Scientific Council of the Security Council | Doctor of Economic Sciences |
| Vorobyov, Vitaly Yakovlevich | Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary | None |
| Voronkov, Lev Sergeevich | None | Doctor of Historical Sciences |
| Zaitsev, Yuri Konstantinovich | Consultant of the Russia Office of the World Bank | Candidate of Economic Sciences |
| Zakharov, Pavel Vladimirovich | None | Candidate of Historical Sciences |
| Zhigarkov, Grigory Alexandrovich | Third Secretary of the Russian Embassy in China | |
| Zvyagelskaya, Irina Donovna | None | Doctor of Historical Sciences |

Table 1

Figure 3 shows the distribution of experts based on whether they have served in the Russian government or military and whether they have a doctorate.

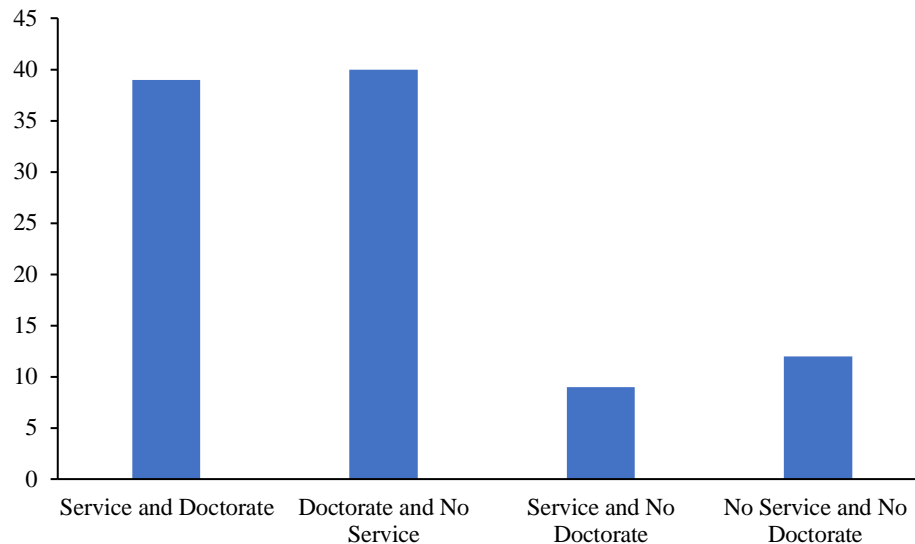


Figure 3

The two largest categories of experts are those who have held a position in the Russian government or military and have a doctorate (39) and those who have a doctorate but have not held a position in the government or military (40). The former category is generally considered the most influential based on the experts' qualifications and relative proximity to the Russian government or military. However, the potential influence of the experts in this group varies. As explained in the previous chapter, in order to address the issue of potential bias due to the categorization based on qualifications and history of government or military service, experts who are outliers in their category were considered on a case-by-case basis regarding their potential influence. For example, Sergei Karaganov, a Doctor of Historical Sciences who has served in many positions in the Russian government, including as foreign policy advisor to the president from 2001 to 2013, can be considered one of the most influential in this group. The expert has

been affiliated with the Russian government in some form since 1991 and currently serves as a member of the Scientific Advisory Council of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a member of the Advisory Committee of the Security Council, a member of the Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights under the President of Russia, and a member of the Council for Investment Cooperation and Integration Interaction with Members of the Commonwealth of Independent States at the Ministry for Economic Development.⁷⁶ Karaganov has received several awards from the Russian government, including the Order of Friendship in 2017, an Honorary Badge of the Russian Federation Government Prize in the field of Mass Media in 2016, a Certificate of Honor of the President of the Russian Federation in 2015, the official gratitude of the President of the Russian Federation in 2012, 2008, 2002, 1997, and 1996, and the official gratitude of the Government of the Russian Federation in 2012.⁷⁷

Other examples of experts in the category with a relatively high level of potential influence are Igor Ivanov, Sergei Luzyanin, and Sergei Glaziev. Ivanov is a Doctor of Historical Sciences and has held several government positions including Foreign Minister of Russia from 1999 to 2004 and Secretary of the Security Council of Russia from 2004 to 2007. As mentioned in the previous section, Ivanov has been the President of the *RIAC* since 2011. He has received a number of awards from the state, including ‘Hero of the Russian Federation’ and the ‘Order of Merit for the Fatherland’ II, III, and IV degrees. Luzyanin is a Doctor of Historical Sciences who currently serves as a permanent member of the Scientific Council of the Security Council of the Russian Federation.⁷⁸ In 2011, he received two medals from the Russian government ‘for merits

⁷⁶ Karaganov, Sergei. Biography. Available at <http://karaganov.ru/pages/biography>. Accessed 11/06/2020.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Luzyanin, Sergei. Profile at the website of the Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of the Far East. Available at <http://www.ifes-ras.ru/online-library/author/25>. Accessed 06/05/2020.

in ensuring national security’ and ‘for the development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO]’.⁷⁹ In 2014 he received another medal and a badge ‘for the development of international energy topics, active participation and preparation of the XII International Forum of the Fuel and Energy Complex of Russia’ and ‘for research and support of compatriots’.⁸⁰ Glaziev is a Doctor of Economic Sciences and since 1991 has held several positions in the Russian government as well as a position in the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC). From 2004 to 2007, Glaziev was a member of the State Duma of the Fourth Convocation. Since 2008, he has served as Deputy Secretary General of EurAsEC, and since 2009 as Executive Secretary of the Commission of the Customs Union of the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. From 2012 to 2019, Glaziev served as a presidential advisor.

The largest category of experts, exceeding the category of experts who have served in the Russian government or military and have a doctorate by one, are those who have doctorates but have not served in government or military. It should be noted that included in this group are experts who work at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), which is officially part of the Russian Foreign Ministry. In this category, levels of potential influence also vary depending on how closely the experts are associated with those who hold or have held government or military positions and the extent of the connections of the institutions for which they work. For example, Timofey Bordachev is a Candidate of Political Sciences who works at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) as an Associate Professor, Director of the Program ‘International Relations: European and Asian Studies’, and an academic supervisor. Bordachev is also a Program Director of the *Valdai Discussion Club*, the conferences

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

and meetings of which are attended by high-ranking government officials including President Vladimir Putin, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, Former President Dmitri Medvedev, Chairman of the Federation Council Valentina Matvienko, Chairman of the State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin, Former Head of the Presidential Administration Sergei Ivanov, First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov, and Mayor of Moscow Sergei Sobyenin. Bordachev regularly attends meetings and conferences of the *Valdai Discussion Club* and writes articles and reports that are published by the institution. He also works with experts that have held government positions. For example, Bordachev works with Karaganov on a series of reports on Russia's 'turn to the east' and the Eurasian vector of Russian foreign policy.⁸¹

There are others in the category who may be considered to have more potential influence through their connections with people who have held high-ranking government positions. For example, former Foreign Minister Ivanov edits a series of reports published by the *RIAC*, in which Andrei Karneev, Candidate of Historical Sciences, is regularly listed as a part of the collective of authors.⁸² Another noteworthy expert in this category is Sergei Afontsev. The expert is a Doctor

⁸¹ Karaganov et al. 'Vpered k Velikomu Okeanu – 6: Liudi, Istoriia, Ideologiya, Obrazovanie. Put' k Sebe (Forward to the Great Ocean – 6: People, History, Ideology, Education. The Path the Self)'. Valdai Discussion Club. September 2018. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/files/21545/>. Accessed 08/05/2020; Sergei Karaganov et al. 'K Velikomu Okeanu – 5: Ot Povorota na Vostok k Bol'shoi Evrazii (To the Great Ocean – 5: From the Turn to the East to Greater Eurasia)'. Valdai Discussion Club. September 2017. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/files/17048/>. Accessed 10/03/2020; and Sergei Karaganov et al. 'K Velikomu Okeanu 4: Povorot na Vostok Predvaritel'nye Itogi i Novye Zadachi (To the Great Ocean – 4: Turn to the East. Preliminary Results and New Tasks)'. Valdai Discussion Club. Moscow. May 2016. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/files/12395/>. Accessed 19/03/2020.

⁸² Ivanov, Igor (ed.), et al. 'Rossiisko-Kitaiskii Dialog: Model' 2019 (Russian-Chinese Dialogue: Model 2019)'. Russian International Affairs Council. 28/05/2019. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/publications/rossiysko-kitayskiy-dialog-model-2019/>. Accessed 10/05/2020; Igor Ivanov (ed.), et al. 'Rossiisko-Kitaiskii Dialog: Model' 2018 (Russian-Chinese Dialogue: Model 2018)'. Russian International Affairs Council. 30/05/2018. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/publications/rossiysko-kitayskiy-dialog-model-2018/>. Accessed 10/05/2020; Igor Ivanov (ed.), et al. 'Rossiisko-Kitaiskii Dialog: Model' 2017 (Russian-Chinese Dialogue: Model 2017)'. Russian International Affairs Council. 28/05/2017. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/publications/rossiysko-kitayskiy-dialog-model-2017/>. Accessed 10/05/2020; and Igor Ivanov (ed.) et al. 'Rossiisko-Kitaiskii Dialog:

of Economic Sciences and a professor in the Department of World Political Processes at MGIMO, Head of the Department of Economic Theory in the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IMEMO RAS), and an advisor to Round Table of Industrialists of Russia and the EU. Afontsev is a laureate of two prizes, one ‘for the best work on the world economy’ and another titled ‘The Best Economists of the Russian Academy of Sciences’.⁸³ Afontsev has also worked with Bordachev and Fyodor Lukyanov.⁸⁴

Unlike those discussed above, Lukyanov has neither held a position in the Russian government or military, nor does he have a doctorate. It should be noted that Lukyanov has been placed in this category despite his military service for two years just after finishing high school. As explained in the previous chapter, the expert is among those who have a relatively high level of potential influence on Russia’s foreign policy towards China in this category because of his sheer proximity to high-ranking government officials, including President Putin, Foreign Minister Lavrov, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Morgulov, Former Presidential Advisor Karaganov, Chairman of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly, Permanent Member of the Security Council, and Former First Deputy Head of the Administration of the President Volodin, Former Deputy Head of the Main Directorate of International Military Cooperation of the Ministry of Defense Evgeny Buzhinsky, and others.⁸⁵

Model’ 2016 (Russian-Chinese Dialogue: Model 2016)’. Russian International Affairs Council. 30/05/2016. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/publications/rossiysko-kitayskiy-dialog-model-2016/>. Accessed 10/05/2020.

⁸³ Afontsev, Sergei. Profile at the Website of the Russian International Affairs Council. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/sergey-afontsev/>. Accessed 08/05/2020.

⁸⁴ Bordachev, Timofey, et al. ‘Zaglyanut’ v Buduschee: Stsenarii Dlia Azii i Rossii v Azii do 2037 Goda (A Look into the Future: Scenarios for Asia and Russia in Asia until 2037)’. Valdai Discussion Club. 27/11/2017. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/files/18485/>. Accessed 10/03/2020.

⁸⁵ For images of Lukyanov with the officials listed see <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/multimedia/photos/plenarnaya-sessiya/>; https://cdni.rt.com/russian/images/5/4/c/54ce485a756ecca1abb6216ace710463419f3e8a_article.jpg; <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/multimedia/photos/ekspertnaya-diskussiia-s-uchastiem-sergeya-ryabkova/>; <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/multimedia/photos/fotogalereya-diskussiia-morgulov/>;

Lukyanov is a journalist with a bachelor's degree in philology from Moscow State University. Despite his lack of formal education in political science, the expert is commonly labelled a political scientist and is considered by many to be well versed in international affairs. Lukyanov holds the position of 'Research Professor' at the HSE in the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs. He received the 'Public Thought Award' in 2014 and was a finalist of the 'Politprosvet Prize' that same year.⁸⁶ In 2018, Lukyanov received formal gratitude from the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs of the HSE.⁸⁷ Since 2002, he has been the chief editor of the journal *Russia in Global Politics* and since 2012, he has served as Chairman of the Presidium of the *Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (CFDP)*. Lukyanov is also a Director of the Research, Development and Support Fund at the *Valdai Discussion Club*.

Among those in the category of experts who do not have a history of government service or a doctorate, Igor Denisov and Yuri Kulintsev are considered to have a relatively high level potential influence because of their work under the leadership of Luzyanin in the writing of a series on Russia-China relations published by the *RIAC*.⁸⁸ Anastasia Pyatachkova, Ilya Stepanov, and Anna Sokolova are also considered to have a relatively high level of potential influence in this category. They are all listed by the HSE as experts with 'high professional potential' and all except Sokolova have received official acknowledgement from the Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies in the Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs.⁸⁹

<https://ru.valdaiclub.com/multimedia/photos/valday-vyacheslav-volodin/>; and <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/multimedia/photos/nato-rossiya-photos/>. Accessed 10/05/2020.

⁸⁶ Lukyanov, Sergei. Profile at the Website of the Higher School of Economics in Moscow. Available at <https://www.hse.ru/org/persons/14646486>. Accessed 09/05/2020.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ivanov (ed.) et al. 'Russian-Chinese Dialogue: model 2019'. 2019; Ivanov (ed.) et al. 'Russian-Chinese Dialogue: model 2018'. 2018; and Ivanov (ed.) et al. 'Russian-Chinese Dialogue: model 2017'. 2017.

⁸⁹ For information on the HSE group of high professional potential see <https://academics.hse.ru/kr/main>; for HSE profiles of the experts see <https://www.hse.ru/staff/137308706>; <https://www.hse.ru/org/persons/14289746>; <https://www.hse.ru/org/persons/25925737>; and <https://www.hse.ru/staff/aksokolova>. Accessed 10/05/2020.

Sokolova and Pyatachkova have also worked under the leadership of Karaganov on a report in the Valdai series on Russia's turn to the east and the Eurasian vector of Russian foreign policy.⁹⁰

Quantitative Results

The content analysis targeted texts published from 2000 to 2018, however, the publishing institutions were established at different times, several after 2000. Also, some institutions publish more material more frequently than others. Therefore, data availability and volume vary. Figure 4 shows the period covered by each of the publications analyzed, the total amount of paragraphs of each publication analyzed, and the percentage of the texts of each publication analyzed relative to the whole. As explained in chapter 2, ten of the institutions selected for the content analysis are oriented towards analysis of international affairs and foreign policy, and nine focus more on issues relevant to military affairs, security, and defense.

⁹⁰ Karaganov et al. 'To the Great Ocean – 4: Turn to the East'. 2016.

| Publication | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | Number and Percentage of Paragraphs (Total: 42,445) |
|---------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---|
| Council on Foreign and Defense Policy | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 310 (0.7%) |
| Russian International Affairs Council | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1404 (3.3%) |
| Valdai Discussion Club | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 908 (2.1%) |
| Russia in Global Politics | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 6497 (15.3%) |
| RISI - Problems of National Strategy | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3408 (8%) |
| Bulliten of MGIMO | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2374 (5.6%) |
| National Defense | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1893 (4.5%) |
| Military Thought | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 647 (1.5%) |
| Military-Industrial Courier | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3836 (9%) |
| Strategy of Russia | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2435 (5.7%) |
| International Life | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 4769 (11.2%) |
| Izborsky Club | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1482 (3.5%) |
| International Processes | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2315 (5.5%) |
| Red Star | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 4033 (9.5%) |
| Independent Military Review | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 5395 (12.7%) |
| Issues of Security | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 185 (0.4%) |
| Echo of Moscow - Military Council | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 202 (0.5%) |
| Echo of Moscow - Arsenal | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 199 (0.5%) |
| Arsenal of the Fatherland | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 153 (0.4%) |

Figure 4

Figure 5 shows that the most frequently appearing topic of discussion regarding China among Russian experts who publish through these institutions is ‘economy/trade’.

Topic of Paragraphs in All Publications - Jan. 2000 - Dec. 2017 (Aggregate
Codes with 0.7+ Confidence Score)

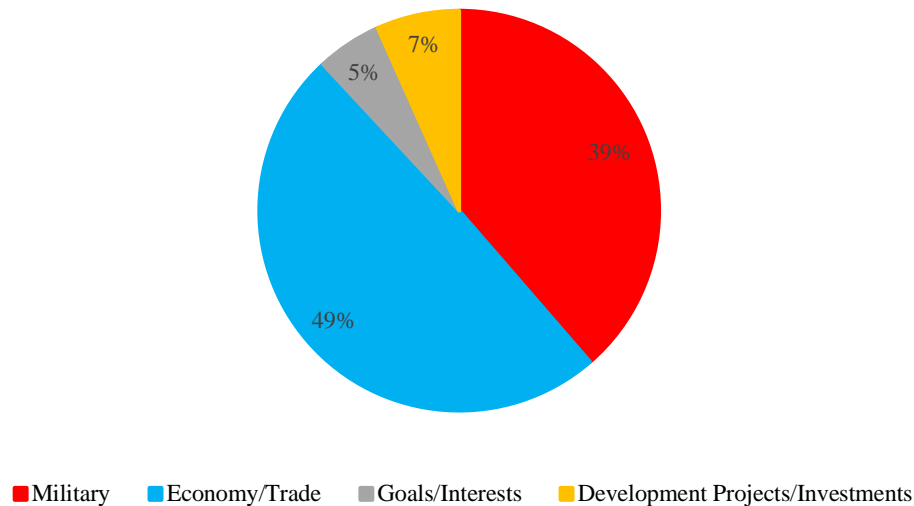


Figure 5

Figure 6 shows that, in the 10 publications that focus on international affairs and foreign policy, ‘economy/trade’ is by far the most frequently discussed topic regarding China, as it is the focus of 69% of the paragraphs analyzed. Focus on economics and trade among Russian experts is understandable considering China’s outstanding economic growth throughout the period and Russia’s interest in taking lessons from China’s economic experience and in finding ways for Russia to benefit economically from such growth.

Topic of Paragraphs in International Affairs and Foreign Policy Publications -
Jan. 2000 - Dec. 2017 (Aggregate Codes with 0.7+ Confidence Score)

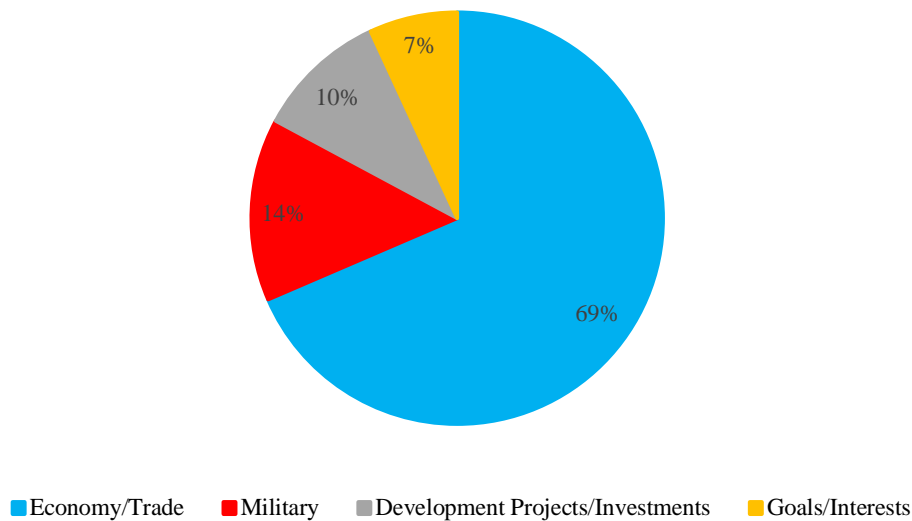


Figure 6

The results of the content analysis show that explicit and definitive claims by Russian experts that China does or does not pose a threat to Russia are rare. Out of 211,905 trusted codes, 2,179 indicate the presence of a perception of a threat from China to Russia, and 2,326 indicate the presence of a perception of the absence of threat from China. The data also show that ‘economic/trade’ is the most frequently appearing type of perception of threat or absence of threat in the texts analyzed, just exceeding the frequency of that of the ‘military’ type. The qualitative aspect of the content analysis, the results of which are presented in the following four chapters, reveals that some experts acknowledge a potential or hypothetical military threat from China. Paragraphs that contain such acknowledgements received codes indicating the presence of a perception of threat from some of the coders. A deeper examination of the work of the experts that acknowledge a hypothetical threat from China reveals that most of them argue that there is currently no reason to believe that China poses an actual military threat to Russia.

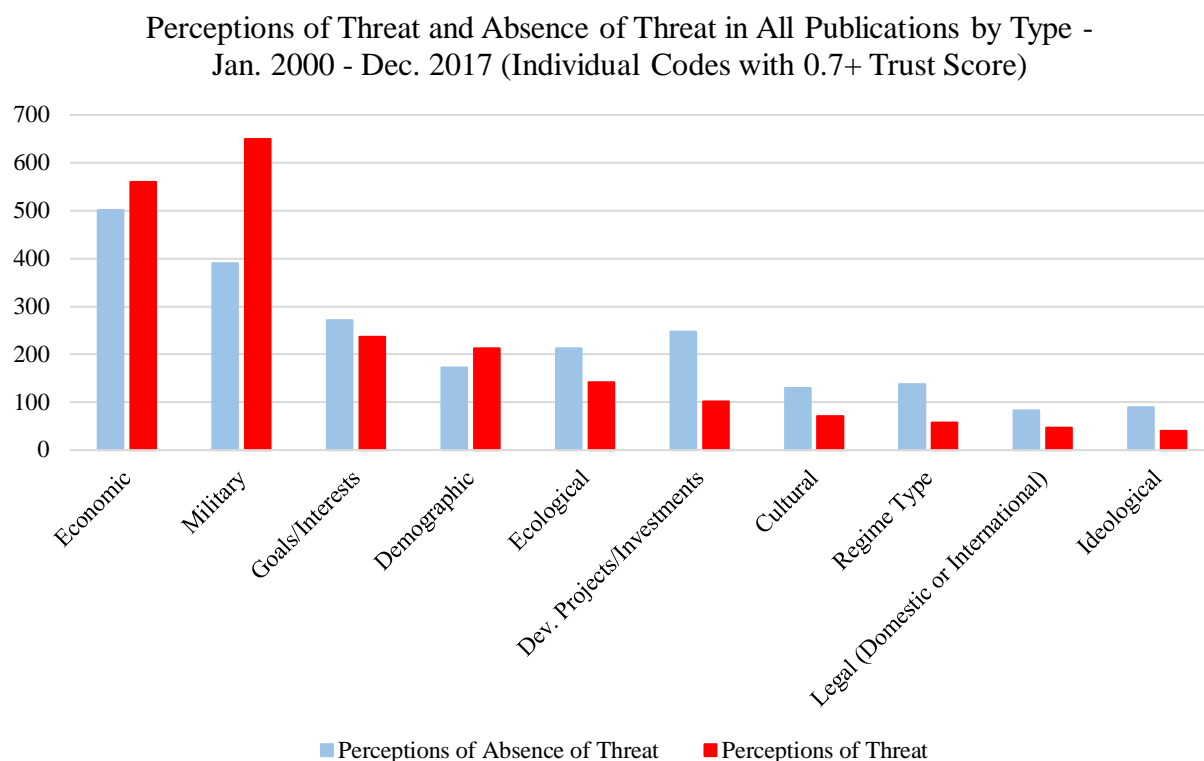


Figure 7

When coders identified perceptions of an absence of threat or perceptions of threat from China to Russia in the texts analyzed, they were asked to select from a list of options a sentence that best describes why, according to the text, China either threatens or does not threaten Russia. Figure 8 shows the number of times each sentence was chosen to describe the reasons for perceptions of an absence of threat as inferred from the text. The sentences have been condensed to their main points in the graph.⁹¹

⁹¹ For the full sentences see chapter 2 p. 91.

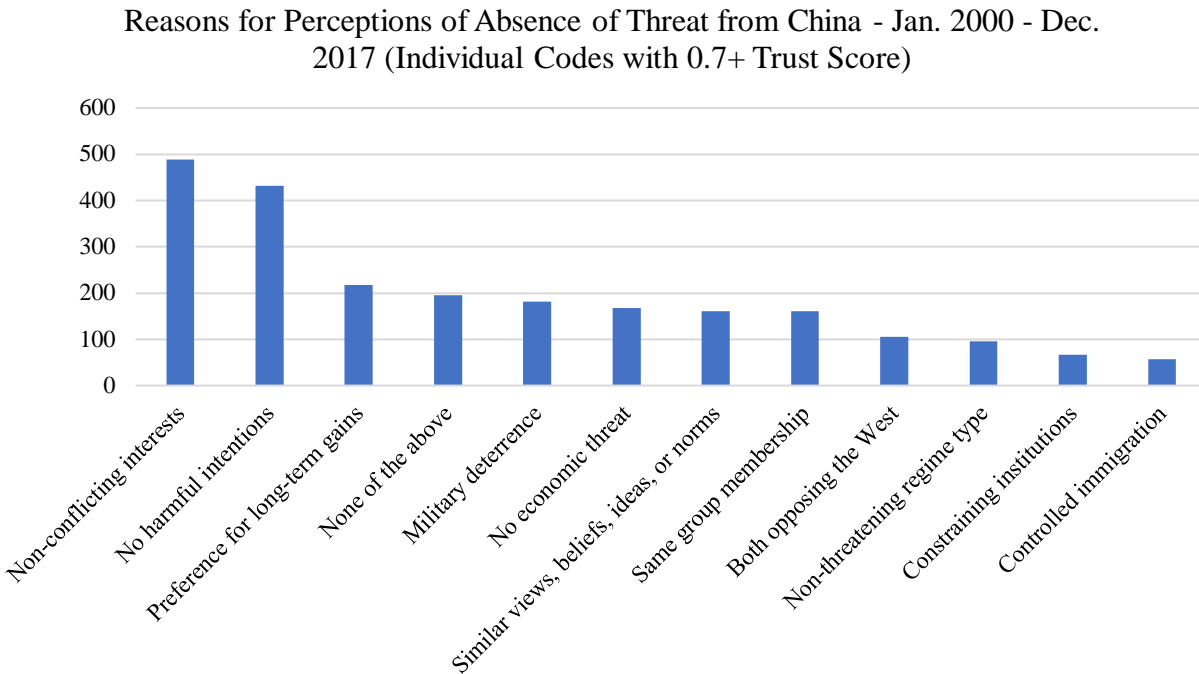


Figure 8

By far the most frequently selected sentences describing why, according to the text, there is a perception of an absence of threat from China indicate non-conflicting interests and a lack of harmful intentions as reasons. It is noteworthy that ‘authoritarian solidarity’ as a cause of absence of threat is not supported by the results. Joint opposition to West and a non-threatening regime type were among the least frequently selected reasons for why China does not threaten Russia according to the texts.

Figure 9 shows the number of times each sentence was chosen to describe the reasons for perceptions of threat as inferred from the text. The sentences have been condensed to their main points in the graph.⁹²

⁹² For the full sentences see chapter 2 pp. 90-91.

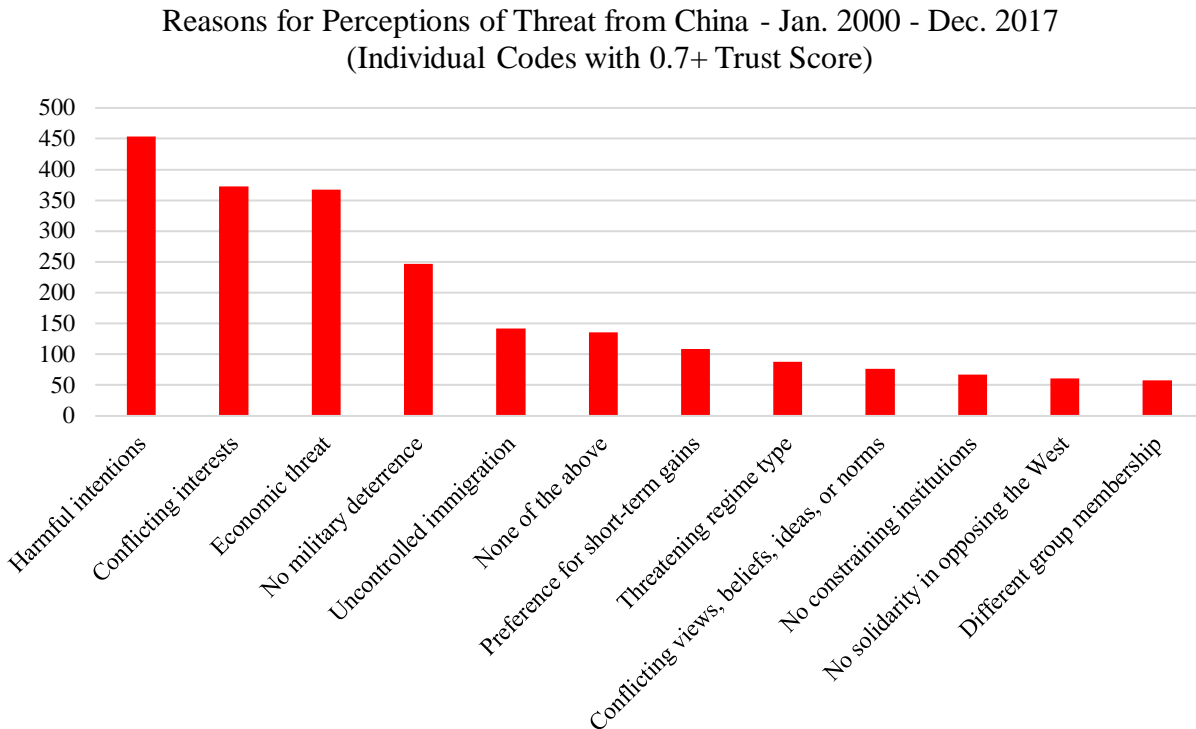


Figure 9

The most frequently selected reasons why, according to the texts, China threatens Russia are harmful intentions, conflicting interests, and economic threat. The insignificant difference between the assignment of perceptions of an absence of threat as attributed to the absence of harmful intentions and conflicts of interests and the assignment of perceptions of threat as attributed to the presence of harmful intentions and conflicts of interests are one of a number of reasons that warrant the qualitative aspect of the content analysis carried out in the following four chapters. The qualitative analysis shows that perceptions of harmful intentions from China and severe and unmanageable conflicts of interests between Russia and China are marginal.

The third most frequently selected reason for perceptions of threat identified in the texts is that China threatens Russia with its economic power or trade practices. What the qualitative aspect of the content analysis shows is that this threat is largely indirect in that it is not attributed to

Beijing's using such power or practices to impose its will on Russia, but rather to Moscow's failure to stimulate innovative sectors of the economy to the extent necessary to develop away from dependence on the export of raw materials.

The fourth most frequently selected reason for the perception of threat identified in a given text is that Russia's military power does not deter China. The qualitative aspect of the content analysis finds that such texts mainly refer to China's conventional superiority over the Russian Far East (RFE). The view that China will eventually use this advantage and that there is little Russia can do in response is held by Alexander Khramchikhin. The qualitative analysis focused on the RFE and carried out in the following two chapters finds that this view is marginal in the Russian expert community.

The data also show the change of perceptions over time. The rest of this section calculates the correlation coefficients between perceptions of threat and absence of threat and perceptions of similarity and dissimilarity in general and between specific types of such variables. The analysis uses Pearson's r to calculate the correlation coefficients. r ranges from -1 to 1; -1 being a perfect negative correlation and 1 being a perfect positive correlation. In accordance with Evans' interpretation of r , absolute values are understood in the following way.⁹³ 0.00-0.19: very weak, 0.2-0.39: weak, 0.4-0.59: moderate, 0.6-0.79: strong, 0.8-1: very strong. Relationships that show an absolute correlation coefficient of 0.6 and are positively or negatively correlated as theoretically expected are considered by this thesis to support hypothesis 5.

The data were used to test the social constructivist and psychological understanding of the relationship between shared identity and threat perception with regard to Russian expert

⁹³ Evans, James D. *Straightforward Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences*. Thomson Brooks/Cole Publishing Co. 1996.

perceptions of China throughout the period. As explained in chapter 2, a social constructivist and psychological understanding of the relationship between the two variables suggests that threat perception and shared identity are negatively correlated, i.e. as perceptions of shared identity increase perceptions of threat decrease and vice versa. It also suggests that perceptions of shared identity and perceptions of an absence of threat are positively correlated. Theoretically, one would find at least moderate correlations between the variables with absolute values of 0.4 or greater.

Figure 10 shows the change of Russian expert perceptions of similarity of Russia and China and perceptions that China poses a threat to Russia from 2000 to 2018. Social constructivists and psychologists who adhere to the understanding of the correlation between variables of shared identity and threat perception described above would expect a negative correlation. However, the data in figure 10 show a very weak positive correlation with an r value of 0.158.

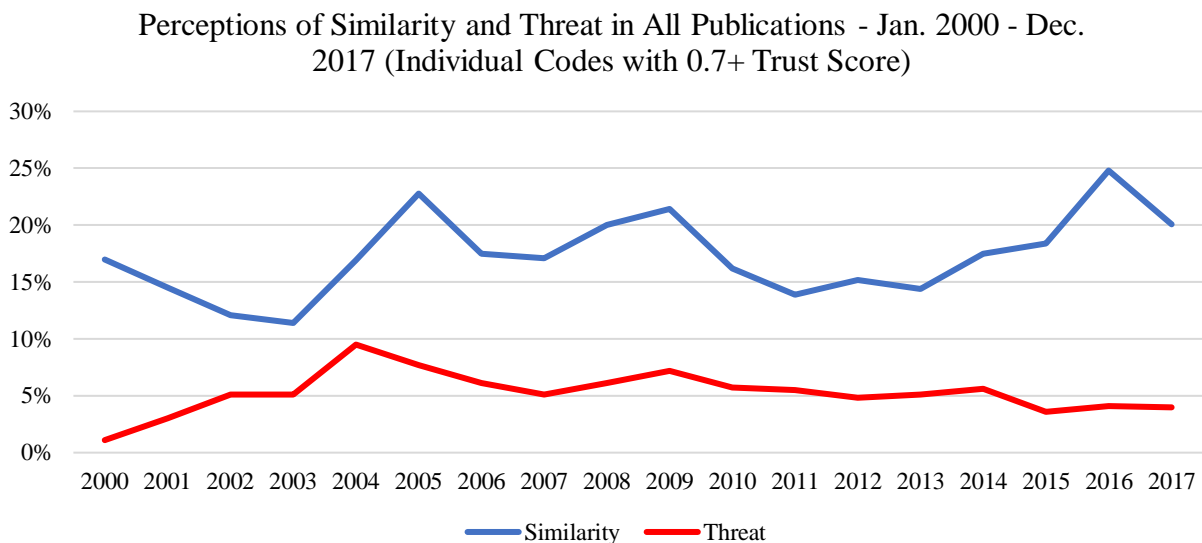


Figure 10

Figure 11 shows the change of perceptions of similarity and absence of threat over time. A positive correlation between the variables would be expected. The data show a positive correlation, but it is weak with an r value of 0.3609.

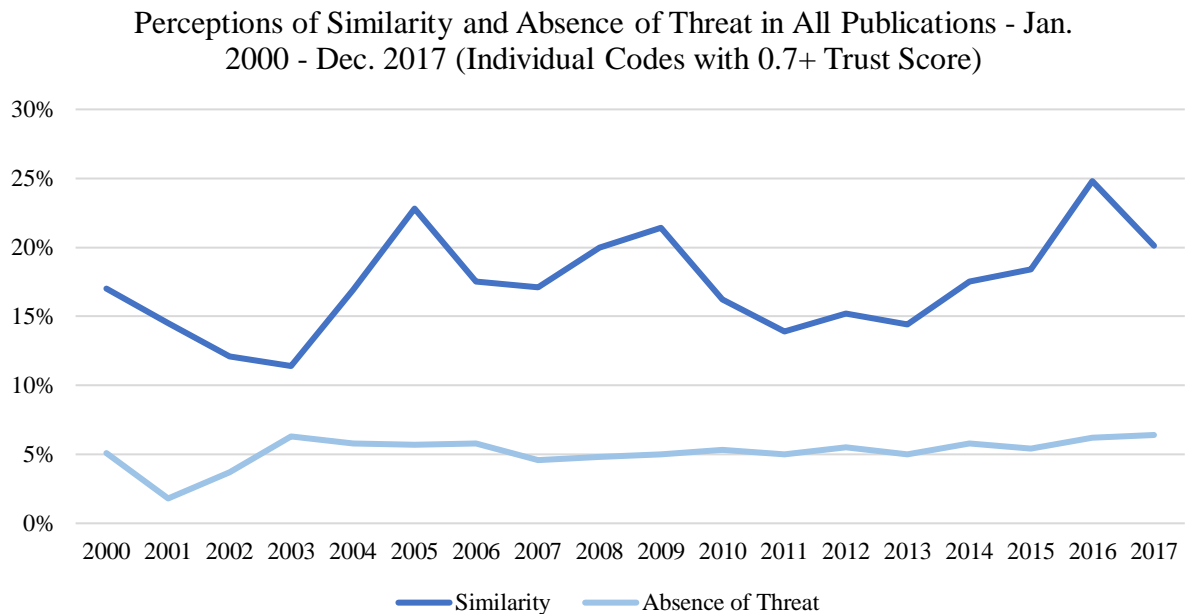


Figure 11

Figure 12 shows the change of perceptions of dissimilarity and threat over time. A positive correlation would be expected. The data show that the variables are only weakly positively correlated with an r value of 0.2462.

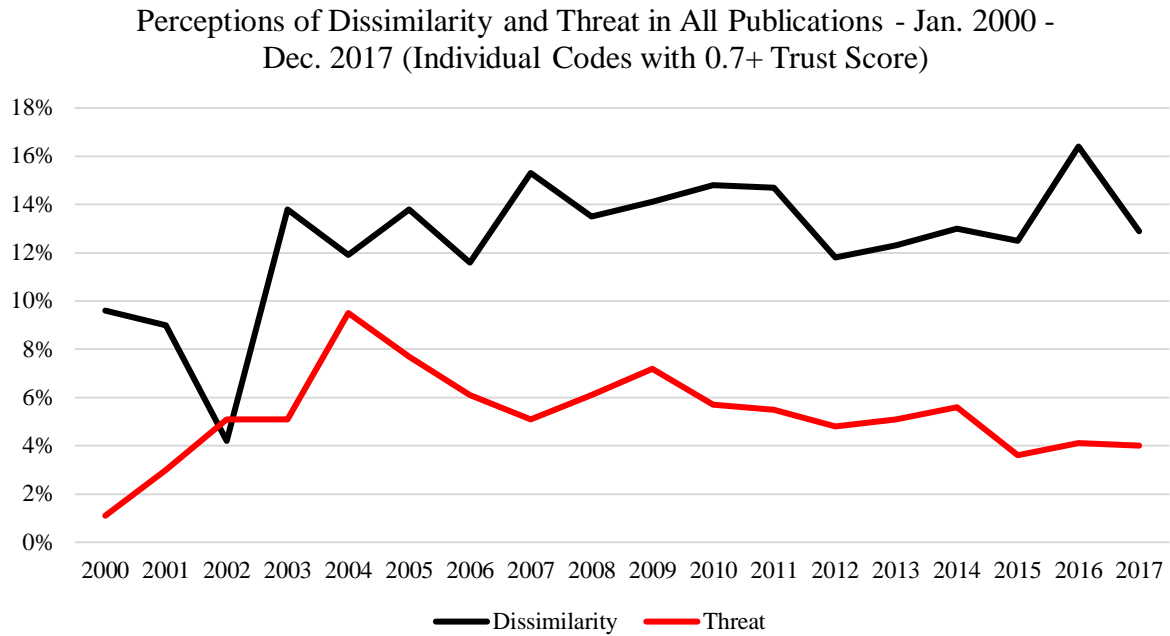


Figure 12

Figure 13 shows the change of perceptions of dissimilarity and absence of threat over time. A negative correlation would be expected. However, the data show a moderate positive correlation with an r value of 0.5459.

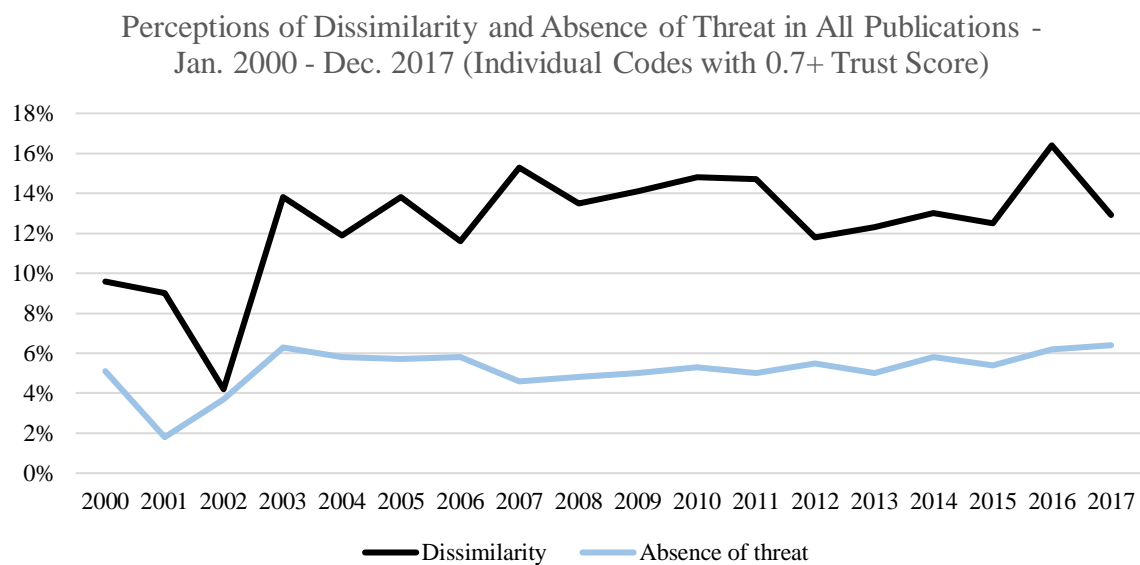


Figure 13

The data also allow for the testing of the social constructivist and psychological understanding of the relationship between specific types of perceptions of shared identity and threat. As a reminder to the reader, this understanding consists of the notion that as the sense of shared identity and perception of threat are negatively correlated, and the sense of shared identity and perception of an absence of threat are positively correlated, i.e. the more one perceives an Other as similar to the Self, the less it perceives the Other as a threat, and the more one perceives an Other as dissimilar to the Self, the more it perceives the Other as a threat.

Figure 5 shows that the most salient topics among Russian experts regarding China are ‘economy/trade’ and ‘military’. The data created by the content analysis allow for the calculation of the strength of correlation between the variables of economic similarity/dissimilarity, economic threat/absence of threat, military similarity/dissimilarity, and military threat/absence of threat.

A negative correlation between perceptions of economic similarity and threat would be expected. However, the data show a strong positive correlation between the variables with an r value of 0.607. A positive correlation between perceptions of economic similarity and absence of threat would be expected. The data show a moderate positive correlation between the variables with an r value of 0.5116. A positive correlation between perceptions of economic dissimilarity and threat over time would be expected. The data show a moderate positive correlation with an r value of 0.5314. A negative correlation between perceptions of economic dissimilarity and absence of threat would be expected. However, the data show a moderate positive correlation between the variables with an r value of 0.4794.

A negative correlation between perceptions of military similarity and threat would be expected. The data show a very weak correlation with an r value of -0.0169. A positive correlation between perceptions of military similarity and absence of threat would be expected. The data show a weak positive correlation with an r value of 0.2921. A positive correlation between perceptions of military dissimilarity and threat would be expected. The data show a weak negative correlation with an r value of -0.2265. A negative correlation between perceptions of military dissimilarity and absence of threat would be expected. However, the data show a weak positive correlation with an r value of 0.2062.

There are data created by the content analysis on types of perceptions of similarity/dissimilarity and threat/absence of threat that are relevant to topics that are not as salient as economy/trade or military affairs but may be worth exploring for positive or negative correlations between variables of shared identity and threat perception, such as regime type and goals/interests.

A negative correlation between perceptions of regime type similarity and threat would be expected. However, the data show a very weak negative correlation with an r value of -0.0232. A positive correlation between perceptions of regime type similarity and absence of threat would be expected. The data show a very weak positive correlation with an r value of 0.1212. A positive correlation between perceptions of regime type dissimilarity and threat would be expected. The data show a weak positive correlation with an r value of 0.3655. A negative correlation between perceptions of regime type dissimilarity and absence of threat would be expected. However, the data show a strong positive correlation with an r value of 0.7585.

A negative correlation between perceptions of similarity of goals/interests and threat would be expected. However, the data show a very weak negative correlation with an r value of -0.0666. A

positive correlation between perceptions of similarity of goals/interests and absence of threat would be expected. The data show a very weak correlation with an r value of 0.1759. A positive correlation between perceptions of dissimilarity of goals/interests and threat would be expected. The data show a weak positive correlation with an r score of 0.3235. A negative correlation between perceptions of dissimilarity of goals/interests and absence of threat would be expected. However, the data show a moderate positive correlation with an r value of 0.4214.

Table 2 provides a summary of the results of the calculation of correlation coefficients for the pairs of variables. The data show that none of the pairs of variables are correlated as expected in accordance with a social constructivist and psychological understanding of the relationship between shared identity and threat perception with an r value of 0.6 or higher. ‘No+’ indicates that, between the pair of variables, not only were theoretically based expectations not met, but also a correlation contrary to expectations with an absolute r value greater than 0.6 was calculated. Two such correlations were found and are bolded in the table. Therefore, the data offer no support for hypothesis 5.

| Variable pairs | r | Was expectation met? |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Similarity - Threat | 0.158 | No |
| Similarity - Absence of threat | 0.3609 | No |
| Dissimilarity - Threat | 0.2462 | No |
| Dissimilarity - Absence of threat | 0.5459 | No+ |
| Economic similarity - Threat | 0.607 | No+ |
| Economic similarity - Absence of Threat | 0.5116 | No |
| Economic dissimilarity - Threat | 0.5314 | No |
| Economic dissimilarity - Absence of threat | 0.4794 | No |
| Military similarity - Threat | -0.0169 | No |
| Military similarity - Absence of threat | 0.2921 | No |
| Military dissimilarity - Threat | -0.2265 | No |
| Military dissimilarity - Absence of threat | 0.2062 | No |
| Regime type similarity - Threat | -0.0232 | No |

| | | |
|---|---------------|------------|
| Regime type similarity - Absence of threat | 0.1212 | No |
| Regime type dissimilarity - Threat | 0.3655 | No |
| Regime type dissimilarity - Absence of threat | 0.7585 | No+ |
| Goals and interests similarity - Threat | -0.0666 | No |
| Goals and interests similarity - Absence of threat | 0.1759 | No |
| Goals and interests dissimilarity - Threat | 0.3235 | No |
| Goals and interests dissimilarity - Absence of threat | 0.4214 | No+ |

Table 2

Conclusion

This chapter provides information on the institutions, the publications of which were selected for the content analysis of this thesis, and the experts whose work was selected for the qualitative aspect of the content analysis. The chapter includes estimates of the institutions' and experts' potential influence on Russia's foreign policy based on certain factors. For the institutions, these factors include whether they were founded, are funded, or are led directly, indirectly, in full, or in part by the Russian government or military. For the experts, these factors include whether they have held or hold a position in the Russian government or military and whether they have a doctorate. The chapter also presents the quantitative results of the content analysis.

The chapter finds that, in general, the institutions and experts engaged in knowledge production in Russia on international affairs, foreign policy, and security are significantly connected to the state. 74% of the institutions investigated are directly or indirectly connected to the government or military in at least one way. 48% of the experts investigated hold or have held a position in the Russian government or military.

The quantitative results of the content analysis show that Russian experts rarely directly address the question of whether China poses a threat to Russia. They also show that the most popular

topics among the experts by far are ‘economy/trade’ and ‘military’ and that these are also the most frequently identified types of perceptions of threat or absence of threat. The correlation coefficients calculated for 20 pairs of variables of shared identity and threat perception (overall and specific types) do not offer support for hypothesis 5, which is based on a social constructivist and psychological understanding of the interaction between shared identity and threat perception. Out of the 20 correlation coefficients calculated, none met theoretically based expectations. Moreover, two coefficients indicate a strong positive correlation when a negative correlation was expected.

While the data presented above reveal trends in expert thought on China and ultimately make an important contribution to the explanation offered by this thesis, they alone do not provide a full picture of dominant expert views among Russian experts regarding Russia’s relationship with China. Each of the 42,445 coded paragraphs has a unit ID that allows it to be quickly recovered along with information on its source. In the following four chapters, texts that contain paragraphs that received codes that indicate a perception of threat or absence of threat from China to Russia are targeted for analysis.

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Yandex Zen. 'Kto Stoit za Samymi Oppozitsionnymi SMI Nashei Strany? (Who Is Behind the Most Oppositional Media in Our Country?)' 06/09/2019. Available at https://zen.yandex.ru/media/pronedra/kto-stoit-za-samymi-oppozicionnymi-smi-nashei-strany-5d72720b027a1500ae512ea6?utm_source=serp. Accessed 20/05/2020.

Chapter 4: Economic Relations between the RFE and China

The development of the Russian Far East (RFE) occupies an important place in Russia's foreign policy. Developing economies in East Asia, primarily that of the People's Republic of China (PRC), are contributing to a shift in the center of global wealth and power from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Observing this, Russia pursues development of the RFE so that it may seize the opportunities that come with being a major participant in the activities of the Asia-Pacific region (APR). China inevitably becomes a major factor in this undertaking. This chapter contributes to the explanation of Russia's foreign policy towards China offered by this thesis by analyzing the policy through the prism of Russia's efforts to develop its easternmost territories so that it may be acknowledged as a great power in the APR and reap the benefits of maintaining such a status. It begins with a section on the idea of great power identity as understood in Western IR scholarship and by Russian officials and experts. The section aims to clarify Russia's efforts to develop the RFE as not only a pursuit of material benefits, but also as a matter of maintaining the identity of a great power, which is one of the main features of its foreign policy.

The second section reports the results of the qualitative aspect of the content analysis, specifically those relevant to economic relations between the RFE and China. The results provide details on the rationale behind the dominant views of Russian experts regarding the existence or absence of threat from China regarding such relations. The report of the results in this chapter focuses on perceptions of economic threat from China to the RFE and perceptions of an absence of such a threat. While there is a lack of consensus on the question of whether China poses an economic threat to the RFE, the analysis nevertheless finds that the dominant view among

experts includes an acknowledgement of problems, risks, and vulnerability in the region's trade and economic cooperation with China as well as the opinion that economic activity between the two should not only continue but should be consciously developed along with a focus on finding solutions to the problems. When it is acknowledged that a threat exists for the economy of the RFE to remain primarily an exporter of raw materials with low prospects for development, the threat is largely attributed to domestic problems hindering the region's economic development, not to China or other states. Prevailing knowledge produced by Russian experts on the topic indicates that China's trade practices towards Russia do not pose a direct threat, and that if there is a threat of the RFE becoming a 'raw materials appendage' of China, then it is posed by ongoing detrimental economic and demographic trends and legal processes in the RFE and the failure of Moscow to stimulate and guide the economy of the RFE towards development and diversification of exports.

The final section discusses Russia's policies regarding economic relations between the RFE and China in an effort to determine the extent to which such policies are consistent with the dominant views identified in the second section of the chapter. It finds that Russia's policy of continuing economic cooperation with China in the form of authorizing Chinese investments in projects in the RFE in which the PRC controls large if not majority stakes, and the policy of selling or leasing land totaling about 16% of cultivated land in the RFE to China for agricultural purposes are more consistent with the view that the rise of China does not have threatening economic implications for the RFE than the view that it does. Since the former view is identified as dominant among Russian experts with a high level of potential influence, the chapter concludes that that scenarios 1 or 2 in the framework explained in the 'Dispositional factors' section in chapter 2 are most likely.

The ‘Pacific Century’ and Russia’s Great Power Status

One of the main developments affecting Russia’s foreign policy towards China is the shift of global wealth and power from the Atlantic to the Pacific, which prompts some to refer to the 21st century as the ‘Pacific Century’. Since China’s ‘reform and opening’ in the late 1970s and early 1980s it has experienced a strikingly high rate of economic growth, leading it to overtake the US to become the largest economy in terms of GDP PPP. Other powerful and/or rapidly growing economies in the region include Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines. The economies of North America and Western Europe, in general, have experienced less impressive economic growth rates. Due to geographical proximity to Russia’s Asian territories, the economies of the APR present opportunities for Russia to substantiate and maintain its great power role in the international arena. Unfortunately, due to the RFE’s stagnant economy, poor infrastructure, and relatively low level of human capital, Russia remains in many ways on the periphery of important developments in the region.

While the shift in the global center of wealth and power from the Atlantic to the Pacific may be considered one of the overarching developments shaping Russia-China relations, two events made the further development of economic relations with China more important for Russia: the 2008-2009 global financial crisis and the 2014 Ukraine crisis. A rise in global oil prices from 2001 to 2008 largely drove Russia’s economic resurgence, and during that time Russia-China energy relations lacked an impetus for substantial development. In 2008, such an impetus came in the form of a fall in global oil prices, a decrease in energy demand in Europe, and Russia’s economic woes due to the global financial crisis.¹

¹ Kaczmarek, Marcin. *Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order*. Routledge. 2015. pp. 53-56, 62; for annual crude oil prices provided by Statista with an average of OPEC prices, please see

In 2009 and 2012 Russia announced a ‘pivot’ to Asia, which was accelerated in 2014 due to the sanctions and isolation policy implemented against Russia by the West in response to Russia’s annexation of Crimea and involvement in the conflict in the Donbass. The 2008-2009 global financial crisis and the 2014 Ukraine crisis, which are widely perceived as events that have brought Russia and China closer together, should be considered in the context of the US ‘rebalance’ to Asia under Obama in late 2011 and another fall in global oil prices in 2014.² As the US rebalanced to Asia, US-Russia relations were deteriorating after a peak in the ‘reset’ for various reasons, including the continuing development of NATO missile defense systems in Europe, disagreements over how to respond to the conflict in Syria, and the Magnitsky Act. The fall in oil prices in 2014 only compounded the economic ramifications of the sanctions and isolation policy that was implemented by the West and renewed the importance of developing energy relations with China. This resulted in more agreements with China in the energy sphere, including the May 2014 agreement to construct the Power of Siberia pipeline to China. In this context, the section focuses on the idea in Russia that the development of the RFE and Russia’s participation in the activities of the APR are important for its national security, its status as a great power, and its overall well-being. As explained above, the following section addresses the issue of perceptions of threat regarding the economic relationship between the RFE and China that may have been prompted by such an expansion in energy and other raw materials trade with the PRC in response to these key events and seeks to determine whether a perception of threat or absence of threat is dominant among potentially influential Russian experts.

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/262858/change-in-opec-crude-oil-prices-since-1960/>; and for annual crude oil prices provided by Macrotrends with the West Texas Intermediate (WTI), please see <https://www.macrotrends.net/1369/crude-oil-price-history-chart>.

² Kuhrt, Natasha. ‘Asia-Pacific and China’. In Andrei Tsygankov (ed.). *Routledge Handbook of Russian Foreign Policy*. Routledge. Paperback Edition. 2020. pp. 255-256.

One of the main aims of Russia's foreign policy under Putin has been the restoration or maintenance of Russia's great power status. Moscow has become increasingly assertive in its pursuit of this aim and has shown willingness to use military force in its 'near abroad' (i.e. post-Soviet states) and neighborhood, intervening in Georgia in 2008, Ukraine in 2014, and Syria in 2015. The sanctions and isolation policy from the West served to make the effort to strengthen ties in the APR more important for the maintenance of its great power status.

At this point it is important to clarify what is generally meant by 'great power' in the field of IR and in the perspectives of Russian officials and experts. There is no consensus in the field of IR on what criteria must be met for a state to be a great power. In general, definitions lie on a spectrum ranging from those that claim that material capabilities such as military power and latent power (e.g. economic power and population) matter most, to those who argue that material capabilities matter little, as it only matters what meanings are assigned to those capabilities. According to the latter, intersubjective and ideational factors are most important, i.e. great powers are only great powers when others agree they are. Realists (especially neorealists) tend to be on the material side of the spectrum. For example, Mearsheimer defines 'great power' simply as a state that can 'put up a serious fight in an all-out conventional war against the most powerful state in the world' and has 'a nuclear deterrent that can survive a nuclear strike against it'.³ Schweller's definition is also based solely on material factors. The scholar divides great powers into two tiers which he calls poles and lesser great powers. According to Schweller, 'to qualify as a pole a state must have greater than half the military capability of the most powerful state in the system'.⁴ Lesser great powers 'possess a considerable amount of military strength' and 'exert

³ Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York, London: W.W. Norton. 2001. p. 3.

⁴ Schweller, Randall L. *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1998. p. 17.

significant influence on the global and regional balances of power', however, 'they cannot sustain themselves against threatening polar powers exclusively by their own resources of military personnel and material'.⁵

Levy may be considered somewhere near the center of the above-mentioned spectrum of definitions. With his definition he aims to 'minimize rather than eliminate subjectivity'.⁶

According to Levy:

'A Great Power is . . . a state that plays a major role in international politics with respect to security-related issues. The Great Powers can be differentiated from other states by their military power, their interests, their behavior in general and interactions with other Powers, other Powers' perception of them, and some formal criteria'.⁷

Levy emphasizes that several intangible factors in the state and its military including, but not limited to, prestige, morale, and the perceptions of other states matter in determining which states are great powers.⁸

On the side of the spectrum opposite of those who define great power in purely objective and material terms are those who define the status mostly, if not completely, within intersubjective and ideational parameters. Volgy et al. may be considered near this side of the spectrum with their focus on states being attributed great power status. The scholars acknowledge that a state may *be* a great power in accordance with some objective measurements of material capabilities, but they separate this practice of distinction from being perceived by other states as a great power and thus being *attributed* the status.⁹ Warranting this distinction is the observation that 'it

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Levy, Jack S. *War in the Modern Great Power System: 1495-1975*. University Press of Kentucky. 2015. p. 18.

⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 14-15, 17.

⁹ Volgy, Thomas et al (eds.) *Major Powers and the Quest for Status in International Politics: Global and Regional Perspectives*. Springer. 2011.

is ... plausible that some states will be attributed major power status when no longer warranted (a halo effect); may be denied status while manifesting capacity and willingness to act as one (the lag effect); or may be overattributed status on the potential to become a major power (latency effect)'.¹⁰

In Russia, there is also a lack of consensus on the meaning of great power. In analyzing the literature of Russian scholars and experts of international relations, one finds that most of them consider Russia a great power that may have lost the status in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union and for the duration of the 1990s but has regained great power status under Putin. In general, great power status is defined by both objective and subjective factors, including military and economic power, skillful diplomacy, recognition by other states as being a great power, and possessing determining influence over international affairs. Shackleina, offers the following definition:

‘The modern “great power” is a state that maintains a very high (or absolute) degree of independence in conducting domestic and foreign policies, not only ensuring national interests, but also exerting a significant (to a varying degree, even decisive) influence on world and regional policies and the policies of individual countries (world-regulating activities), and having all or a significant part of the traditional parameters of a “great power” (territory, population, natural resources, military potential, economic potential, intellectual and cultural potential, scientific and technical, sometimes the information potential stands out separately). [It also maintains] [i]ndependence in the conduct of a foreign policy of a world-regulating nature [and] implies the presence of the will and historical experience, tradition and culture of participation in world politics as a decisive and/or active player’.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 25, 6-7; in the book, the terms ‘major power status’ and ‘great power status’ are used interchangeably.

¹¹ Shackleina, Tatyana. ‘Rossiia i SSHA v Politsentrichnom Mire (Russia and the USA in a Polycentric World)’. Perspektivy. 22/1/2011. Available at http://www.perspektivy.info/book/rossija_i_ssha_v_politsentrichnom_mire_2011-01-22.htm. Accessed 07/07/2020.

Shakleina acknowledges that even this long definition, ‘like any other definition, cannot claim to be exhaustive’.¹²

Sergei Karaganov, a Doctor of Historical Sciences who has held several positions in universities, research centers, and the Russian government (including foreign policy advisor to the president from 2001 to 2013), has not put forward a formal definition of great power, but in his writings, he shares his view on the question of whether Russia is a great power and what great power-ness means for Russia’s elites and people. According to Karaganov, the criteria for having great power status include material and non-material factors, such as military power and culture, both of which Russia developed with its move to Europe under Peter the Great in the early 18th century.¹³ The expert posits that ‘the move to Europe has allowed [Russia] to modernize the country and create one of the greatest cultures in the world, which is largely a European culture. Thanks to this movement, we have become a great power, including militarily’.¹⁴ Another criterion for Karaganov seems to be the conquest and mastering of a large amount of territory. According to him, without Siberia, Russia would certainly not have become a great power.¹⁵ On what great power-ness means for the Russian people, Karaganov claims that being a great power has been a part of Russia’s national identity for the last 300 years,¹⁶ that great power-ness is a

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Karaganov, Sergei. ‘Gonku Vooruzheniï My Poka Vyigrali (We Have Won the Arms Race So Far)’. Interview with Vitaly Tseplyaev, ‘Argumenti i Fakty’. 21/12/2018. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/gonku-vooruzheniy-my-poka-vyigrali/>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Karaganov, Sergei. ‘Sergeï Karaganov Rasskazal o Roli Rossii v Obrazovanii Evrazii (Sergei Karaganov Spoke about the Role of Russia in the Formation of Eurasia)’. Interview with Rossiyskaya Gazeta. 10/01/2019. Available at <https://rg.ru/2019/10/01/sergej-karaganov-rasskazal-o-rol-i-rossii-v-obrazovanii-evrazii.html>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

¹⁶ Karaganov, Sergei. ‘Odnobokaïa Derzhava (One-Sided Power)’. Russia in Global Politics. 04/12/2013. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/pubcol/Odnobokaya-derzhava-16227>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

‘traditional value’ of Russia,¹⁷ that being a great power is in the genes of the Russian people,¹⁸ and that ‘[Russia’s] elite cannot be otherwise, and most of the people, too’.¹⁹

Other Russian officials have also offered some definitions of great power and shared thoughts on Russia’s status. For example, Former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov said that ‘a sign of a great power is when your country is needed, they want to deal with it. Russia is a great power precisely because many problems in the international arena cannot be resolved without it’.²⁰

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov quotes Russian Philosopher Ivan Ilyin regarding Russia’s great power status: ‘great power is determined not by the size of the territory and not by the number of inhabitants, but by the ability of the people and their government to take on the burden of great international tasks and creatively cope with these tasks. A great power is one that, asserting its being, its interest, ... brings a creative, organizing, legal idea to the whole host of peoples, to the entire “concert” of nations and powers’.²¹

President Vladimir Putin gives mixed signals about Russia’s great power status. There are instances when he refers to Russia as a great power, for example when he claimed that Russia is

¹⁷ Karaganov, Sergei. ‘Karaganov: Rossiia Budet Srazhat’sia za Svoi Interesy (Russia Will Fight for Its Interests)’. Russian Council on Foreign and Defense Policy. 02/08/2015. Available at <http://svop.ru/main/14184/>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

¹⁸ Karaganov, Sergei. ‘Anatomiia Velichiia (Anatomy of Greatness)’. Argumenty i Fakty. 07/07/2016. Available at https://aif.ru/politics/opinion/anatomiya_velichiya; and Sergei Karaganov. ‘We Are Smarter, Stronger and More Determined’. Interview with Spiegel. 13/07/2016. Available at <https://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-putin-foreign-policy-advisor-sergey-karaganov-a-1102629.html>. Accessed 10/07/2020.

¹⁹ Karaganov, Sergei. ‘Sergei Karaganov: «CHtoby Vyzhivat’, Rossiia Dolzhna Pobezhdat’» (In Order to Survive, Russia Must Win)’. Interview with Eduard Steiner, Die Press. 12/11/2017. Available at <https://nic-pnb.ru/analytics/sergej-karaganov-htoby-vyzhivat-rossiya-dolzhna-pobezhdat/>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

²⁰ Primakov, Evgeny. Interview with Argumenty i Fakty. ‘Who is Russia to be Friends With?’ Argumenty i Fakty Weekly, No. 51. 12/21/2005. Available at <https://aif.ru/archive/1646961>. Accessed 29/11/2019.

²¹ Lavrov, Sergei. ‘Istoricheskaiia Perspektiva Vneshni Politiki Rossii (The Historical Perspective of Russian Foreign Policy)’. Russia in Global Politics. 03/03/2016. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/global-processes/Istoricheskaya-perspektiva-vneshnei-politiki-Rossii-18017>. Accessed 29/11/2019.

the only great power that reduces its military spending,²² however, later that same day he said that Russia '[does] not aspire to the status of a great power, since elements of influence on other countries are laid down in this concept, as the USSR did. You cannot force other nations to live according to your own patterns'.²³ Another instance when Putin referred to Russia as a great power was when he explained that Russia can maintain its great power status on the condition that it makes the innovative component of Russia's economy the main driver for its development.²⁴ There are also mixed messages in official documents. One of the differences between Russia's Foreign Policy Concept released in 2008 and the previous one released in 2000 is that Russia is no longer referred to as a great power. What can explain this variation?

Regarding Putin's use of the term, it could be that he believes Russia is a great power in certain ways, and in others it is not, and he has not explicitly clarified what he means when he refers to Russia as a great power. In answering a question related to arms expenditure he referred to Russia as a great power. This may mean he regards Russia as a great military power. While speaking about development, Putin referred to Russia as a great power. This might mean that to his mind Russia is currently a great economic power, but, as he emphasized, Russia must innovate to maintain this status. On the criterion of influencing other countries, Putin denies that Russia is a great power or strives for such a status. Not only do some of Putin's statements contradict themselves, but other high-ranking government officials have different ideas about

²² Putin, Vladimir. 'Putin: Rossiia — Edinstvennaia Strana, Kotoraiia Sokrashchaet Raskhody na Vooruzheniia (Putin: Russia is the Only Country that Reduces Arms Spending)'. Direct Line Q&A. 20/06/2019. Available at <https://www.mvestnik.ru/news/putin-rossiya-edinstvennaya-strana-kotoraya-sokrawaet-rashody-na-vooruzheniya/>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

²³ Putin, Vladimir. 'Putin: My ne Stremimsia k Statusu Velikoï Derzhavy (Putin: We Do Not Strive for the Status of a Great Power)'. Direct Line Q&A. Vesti. 20/06/2019. Available at <https://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=3160066>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

²⁴ Putin, Vladimir. 'Putin Nazval Uslovie Sokhraneniia Rossiï Statusa Velikoï Derzhavy (Putin Names the Condition of Russia's Maintenance of Great Power Status)'. Interview with Rossiya-1 Television Channel Host Vladimir Solovyov. 07/03/2018. Available at https://tvzvezda.ru/news/vstrane_i_mire/content/201803071524-yyma.htm. Accessed 07/07/2020.

Russia's great power status and whether Russia strives for or maintains it, and whether it should do so.

Another explanation could be that Putin knows his audience and speaks accordingly.

Reshetnikov explains that, on the one hand, when Putin speaks about foreign policy, he almost never calls Russia a great power, and when he does, it is when he refers to Russia in a list along with other great powers.²⁵ Also, when Putin is speaking to an audience that likely includes a considerable amount of foreigners, he frequently rejects the title of great power for Russia, as he did in the example above when he emphasized that Russia does not strive to impose its ways on others.²⁶ On the other hand, when Putin is clearly speaking to a mainly domestic audience, he readily labels Russia a great power. Reshetnikov describes this use of 'great power' as officials' use of the vernacular, and he claims that Russian officials 'perfectly realize that it makes no sense to call Russia a Great Power in a foreign policy context, for it would be meaningless without recognition and would attract scrutiny Russia is unprepared to withstand'.²⁷

Despite Putin's mixed signals, under his administration Russia has continually sought to maintain or improve its economic and military power, its ability to project power and influence, and its recognition as an indispensable provider of international security that effectively addresses global challenges. All of this provides evidence that substantiates claims by Western and Russian experts and officials, including Putin's former foreign policy advisor Sergei Karaganov, that Russia strives to be a great power.

²⁵ Reshetnikov, Anatoly. 'What Does Russia Mean When It Talks Greatness?'. E-International Relations. 20/05/2018. Available at <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/05/20/what-does-russia-mean-when-it-talks-greatness/>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

As mentioned above, for Russia, its great power status in the APR largely depends on whether it will be able to develop the RFE into a power base from which it will be able to project its influence in the region. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has acknowledged that in order for Russia to join integrative processes in the APR it will need to develop the economies of the RFE.²⁸ In order to continually reproduce its great power identity, Russia maintains material prerequisites for great power status and behaves as a great power by undertaking efforts to have a certain amount of projectable power. Moscow's projectable power remains deficient in the APR. Russia's interests as a great power drive it to strengthen its role in the region, but this cannot be done without substantial development of the RFE. This view is common among those in the Russian government as well as among Russian experts. For example, a collective of six experts in an article published by the *Russian Institute of Strategic Studies (RISS)* in 2013 agreed with Alexander Panov, quoting him in an article he wrote earlier that year: 'the effectiveness of Russian policy in the east will mainly depend on how decisive and rational the actions for the economic, social, cultural and scientific development of Siberia and the Far East will be. Only the rise of the Far Eastern regions of the Russian Federation in combination with consistent, focused diplomatic activity in the APR can create the conditions for approval of Russia as a recognized great Pacific power'.²⁹

²⁸ Lavrov, Sergei. 'Pod'em Azii i Vostochnyi Vektor Vneshnei Politiki Rossii (The Rise of Asia and the Eastern Vector of the Foreign Policy of Russia)'. *Russia in Global Politics*. 05/06/2006. Available at: http://www.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_6566. Accessed 07/07/2020.

²⁹ Suponina, Elena, et al. 'Aziatsko-Tikhookeanski Region: Novye Tendentsii i Interesy Rossii (The Asia-Pacific Region: New Trends and Interests of Russia)'. *Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Problems of National Strategy* 4, no. 19 (2013): 30. Available at <https://riss.ru/bookstore/journal/2013-2/j19/>. Accessed 29/11/2019. Citing Alexander Panov. 'Integration of Russia in the Asia-Pacific Region. Outlook 2020'. *Russian International Affairs Council*. 02/04/2013. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/integratsiya-rossii-v-aziatko-tikhookeanskiy-region-perspek/>. Accessed 29/11/2019.

Moscow needs foreign investment and labor to develop the economies of the RFE, and China has presented itself as the only investor capable of providing the large sums needed.³⁰ Despite concerns about overdependence and the threat of becoming a ‘raw materials appendage’ of China, Russia continues efforts to strengthen economic ties with China. This is where Moscow runs into trouble with its potential overdependence on Beijing for the development of the RFE. Russia’s far eastern territories need China’s investment for development in order to become a base from which Russia can achieve and maintain great power status in the APR. However, overdependence on China could undermine its sovereignty, thereby denying it great power status. Therefore, paradoxically, the most promising way to develop the RFE and maintain great power status could potentially lead to the loss of the status.

Trade and Economic Cooperation between the RFE and China

In 2018, the Deloitte Commonwealth of Independent States Research Center based in Moscow released a report of economic indicators for the region.³¹ There are several statistics in the report that are noteworthy for the purpose of this section to provide a clear picture of the economic climate of the RFE in order to contextualize Russia’s interaction with China in the region. The RFE’s Gross Regional Product (GRP) makes up about 5.5% of the Gross Domestic Product of Russia and for 2017 this figure was just under 4 billion rubles. This, at the time, was about £52 million.

³⁰ Kuhrt, Natasha. ‘The Russian Far East in Russia’s Asia policy: Dual Integration or Double Periphery?’. *Europe-Asia Studies* 64, no. 3 (2012): 485.

³¹ Lavsky, Sergei, et al. ‘Business and Financial Climate in the Far Eastern Region’. Deloitte CIS Research Center. Moscow. 2018. Available at <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ru/Documents/research-center/far-eastern-federal-district.pdf>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

The RFE consists of 11 federal subjects in the easternmost territories of the Russian Federation. It is important to keep in mind that the relative contributions of the federal subjects to the GRP of the RFE and the structure of the economy of each federal subject vary. According to the Deloitte report, mining and transport and communications made up 41% of the region's GRP (28% and 13% respectively) in 2016. However, if you look at the subjects of the region individually, most of the mining is done in northern subjects of the RFE that do not border China: Sakhalin, Chukotka, Magadan, and Yakutia (Republic of Sakha), each of whose individual GRPs consist of anywhere from 39% to 54% mining.³² The main contributing sector of the local economies of the subjects of the RFE bordering China (those four which are the main focus of this chapter) is transport and communications (from 16% to 24% of the local GRP).³³

The level of dependence on China of the subjects of the RFE also varies, with bordering subjects having a higher level of dependence and general economic interconnectedness with China than the others. This chapter focuses on four of the southeastern-most subjects that border China: Primorsky Krai, Khabarovsk Krai, Jewish Autonomous Oblast, and Amur Oblast. In the interest of simplifying the text, hereafter, the chapter will refer to these subjects as 'the RFE' or 'the region'.

This section examines the RFE's trade relationship and economic cooperation with China, paying particular attention to the analyses of Russian experts, which often focus on economic complementarity, the region's high level of economic dependence on China, and concern in Russia over the structural imbalance of trade between the RFE and China.

³² Lavsky et al. 'Business and Financial Climate in the Far Eastern Region'. pp. 8-9.

³³ Ibid., p. 9.

Before moving on to a discussion of expert views in Russia on economic relations between the RFE and China, it might be helpful for the formation of a clear picture of such relations to understand just how dependent on China the region is. The RFE is much more closely tied to the Chinese economy than it is with the European part of Russia west of the Ural Mountains. This has been the result of the region's adaptation for survival after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. In Soviet times, transport costs for goods being exchanged across the vast expanses between the European core of Russia and the peripheral eastern territories were covered by the state. Alexandrova explains that, with the dissolution of the USSR, the state no longer covered such transport costs, and generally had no economic policy for the RFE, leaving it to adjust to market conditions with practically no regulations.³⁴ With the liberalization of foreign trade, the RFE quickly turned to neighboring countries for markets for the export of their goods as well as a source of imports of consumer products, machinery, and food.³⁵ China remains by far the most important import market for the RFE. From January 2013 to November 2018, just under 45% of the region's imports were from China.³⁶ The second largest import market in this period was Japan accounting for 12.2% of imports.³⁷ This level of dependence is a cause for concern in Russia not only locally but also at the federal level. The RFE's trade relations with China are unbalanced, not only structurally (RFE exports mostly raw material while China exports mostly finished products), but also quantitatively (China is now Russia's most important trading partner, while Russia is only 12th on the list of China's top trading partners).

³⁴ Alexandrova, Maria Viktorovna. '20 Let Rossijsko-Kitaiskogo Mezhhregional'nogo i Prigranichnogo Sotrudnichestva (20 years of Russian-Chinese Interregional and Cross-Border Cooperation)'. *Perspektivy*. 03/06/2009. Available at <http://www.perspektivy.info/print.php?ID=36118>. Accessed 08/06/2020.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ru-Stat. 'Import v Dal'nevostochnyĭ Federal'nyĭ Okrug iz Kitaia «Vse Tovary» (Import to the Far Eastern Federal District from China, "All Goods", January 2013 - November 2018)'. Available at <https://ru-stat.com/date-M201301-201908/RU07/import/CN>. Accessed 26/10/2019.

³⁷ Ibid.

A nonoptimal yet essential relationship

In Russia, there are competing views on trade between the RFE and China, ranging from the view that the region's trade with China is almost completely mutually beneficial and in the national interest of Russia, to the view that the RFE is moving towards, or already is in, a colonial-like relationship with China, in which the RFE exports mainly raw materials to China, and China then exports to the RFE finished or processed goods. The former view includes the optimistic belief that the region's economy has the potential to eventually develop into one that is far less dependent on the export of raw materials and is based on innovative technology and services. The latter view includes doubt that the RFE will be able to break out of such a trade relationship and that the region will become, or remain, a 'raw materials appendage' of China.

The content analysis performed for this thesis reveals that most Russian expert views on the topic are concentrated in the middle of the spectrum. Cautious optimism is expressed along with acknowledgements of certain problems in Russia's trade relationship with China. There is not a tendency for alarmism, but rather there are warnings that if such problems are not addressed, Russia will remain in an unfavorable position in its relations with China and in the APR. That said, some expert views are noticeably more optimistic or more pessimistic.

The section now moves on to present the results of the qualitative aspect of the content analysis. Please refer to information provided on the institutions and experts in chapter 3 regarding potential influence through government or military connections and qualifications.

Views likely to have influence

Lukin argues that economic cooperation with China is necessary for the development of the RFE, explicitly so in an article published by *International Life*.³⁸ The expert also claims that China wants a stable and economically developed Russia so that it may be an independent center of power that serves as a counterbalance to the West, and that stability on the border with Russia is important for its development, which is a national priority.³⁹ Lukin carefully points out that relations are not without competition or conflicts of interest. The expert acknowledges competition between the countries for foreign investment and that China is primarily interested in the supply of raw materials from Russia and its export market for products while Russia is interested in diversifying its exports to China to include engineering products and technologies.⁴⁰

In an opinion piece published by *Strategy of Russia*, Lukin again acknowledges a difference of interests between Russia and China in the form of the PRC's interest in Russia's raw materials and Russia's interest in 'common projects related to technology and investment'.⁴¹ In another article, the expert does not explicitly state that China does not pose an economic threat to Russia, but he argues that integration of the economies of Russia and China would 'create mutual, not one-sided dependence', which would discourage an aggravation of their relations.⁴²

³⁸ Lukin, Alexander. 'Rossiisko-Kitaïskie Otnosheniia: ne Oslabiāt' Usiliū (Russian-Chinese Relations: Do Not Weaken Efforts)'. *International Life*. 2009. Available at <https://interaffairs.ru/jauthor/material/8>. Accessed 21/11/2019.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Lukin, Alexander. 'Biurokraty Novogo ne Pridumaūt (The Bureaucrats Do Not Come Up with Anything New)'. *Strategy of Russia* 8 (2010). Available at http://sr.fondedin.ru/new/fullnews_arch_to.php?subaction=showfull&id=1283252813&archive=1283252977&start_from=&ucat=14&. Accessed 21/11/2019.

⁴² Lukin, Alexander. 'Konsolidatsiia Nezapadnogo Mira na Fone Ukrainskogo Krizisa: Rossiia i Kitaï, SHOS i BRIKS (Consolidation of the Non-Western World Against the Backdrop of the Ukraine Crisis: Russia and China, the SCO and BRICS)'. *International Life*. 2015. p. 85. Available at https://interaffairs.ru/virtualread/ia_rus/22015/files/assets/downloads/publication.pdf. Accessed 25/11/2019.

Bordachev and Barabanov argue in an article published by *Russia in Global Politics* that if the border with China were closed, the Transbaikalia and the Amur region would ‘quickly fall into decay’.⁴³ The experts describe the interaction of Russian far easterners and their businesses with the Chinese as ‘the most important growth point and significant engine of social development, a kind of gateway to the global world’.⁴⁴ Bordachev and Barabanov argue that cutting ties between the far eastern cities and those across the border would lead to lower federal authority over the region, adding that this ‘is what will be the first step towards separatism’.⁴⁵ In the article, the experts reiterate the main argument of a piece they wrote for the *Valdai Discussion Club*, the editor-in-chief of which was Sergei Karaganov, that ‘the development of Siberia and the Far East is impossible without ties with China’.⁴⁶

Larin provides a local perspective of relations between the borderlands of the RFE and northern Chinese provinces in an article published by *International Processes*. The expert paints a picture of how vital the Chinese are for those on the border in the RFE by pointing out that China is a source of labor not only for jobs that Russians do not want, but also for jobs that Russians lack the knowledge to perform.⁴⁷ Larin’s findings also include the Chinese neighbors’ providing ‘livelihoods’ for Russians that involve ‘tourism, service, wholesale and retail (including shuttle) trade’.⁴⁸ The expert describes China for residents of the RFE as ‘a window to the world, a place of rest and entertainment’, and claims that it does not take an expert to understand that

⁴³ Bordachev, Timofei and Oleg Barabanov. ‘A Sober Look Instead of Utopias’. *Russia in Global Politics*. 23/12/2012. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/number/Trezvyi-vzglyad-vmesto-utopii-15790>. Accessed 09/06/2020.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., citing Sergei Karaganov (ed.) et al. ‘To the Great Ocean, or the New Globalization of Russia’. *Valdai Discussion Club*. July 2012, Moscow. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/files/28988/>. Accessed 24/11/2019.

⁴⁷ Larin, Viktor. ‘KNR Glazami Dal’nevostocknika (The PRC Through the Eyes of the Far East)’. *International Processes* 8, no. 1 (2010): 126. Available at <http://intertrends.ru/system/Doc/ArticlePdf/849/Larin-22.pdf>. Accessed 10/07/2020.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 125.

‘proximity to China is an important factor in maintaining the economic and social stability of this vast region’.⁴⁹

Kosachev and Nikonov argue in an article published by *Strategy of Russia* that large-scale consumption of Russia’s raw materials by East Asian countries is beneficial to Russia and they encourage the exploration of oil fields that may be connected to the planned oil pipeline (phase one completed in 2009, phase two completed in 2012) that now delivers to China and other countries in the region.⁵⁰

In a paper published by a collective of experts at the *Russian International Affairs Council* (*RIAC*), the editor-in-chief of which is Former Foreign Minister of Russia and current President of the *RIAC* Igor Ivanov, after acknowledging that ‘there are widespread fears of becoming a raw materials appendage of China’, it is argued that, despite some problems in Russia’s trade relations with China, Russia ‘should not be afraid of expanding the export of resources’ to the PRC.⁵¹ The reasons the experts give are that the process is ‘largely regulated’ or can be regulated; that Russia’s monetary policy may include the use of ‘raw material rents’ to stimulate the economy and maintain economic stability, which will be ‘useful for the socio-economic development’ of Russia; that China is not only interested in raw materials, but is also interested in importing equipment; and that China has the capital to, and interest in, making large-scale

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 126-127.

⁵⁰ Kosachev, Konstantin and Vyacheslav Nikonov. ‘Vneshniaia Politika Rossii: Tezisy k Strategii (Russian Foreign Policy: Abstracts to the Strategy)’. *Strategy of Russia* 4 (2004). Available at http://sr.fondedin.ru/new/fullnews_arch_to.php?subaction=showfull&id=1081851207&archive=1084443606&start_from=&ucat=14&. Accessed 21/11/2019.

⁵¹ Ivanov, Igor (ed.), et al. ‘Problemy Razvitiia Rossiisko-Kitaiskikh Torgovo-Èkonomicheskikh, Finansovykh i Prigranichnykh Otnoshenii (Problems of the Development of Russian-Chinese Trade-Economic, Financial, and Border Relations)’. *Russian International Affairs Council*. 30/04/2015. p. 24. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/workingpapers/problemy-razvitiya-rossiysko-kitayskikh-torgovo-ekonomichesk/>. Accessed 08/06/2020.

investments in Russia.⁵² Ivanov (ed.) et al. point out that the abundance of natural resources in the RFE and the lack of them in China is not the only thing that makes their economies compatible. There are a range of economic complementarities that experts claim make China ‘the best partner for the Russian Far East and Siberia’.⁵³ These complementarities include:

‘heavy industry, high-tech industries and mining in Russia; agriculture, light industry and the presence of excess labor in China; a significant amount of foreign exchange reserves in China, Hong Kong, the Chinese diaspora, Taiwan and Singapore and the needs of the Far East and Siberia in investment capital; the proximity of northeast China in terms of technological development to the production base of the Russian Far East; China’s geographical proximity and necessary infrastructure for the rapid development of trade and economic relations with the Russian Far East’.⁵⁴

Ivanov (ed.) et al. acknowledge that there are problems with Russia’s trade relations with China, including ‘the unsatisfactory structure of bilateral trade for Russia, low investment and production-cooperative activity, disagreements over the use of Chinese labor ... [and] the gradual transfer of our countries to different weight categories’.⁵⁵ The experts also express concern about the ‘extremely small’ level of economic interdependence, and that ‘Russian-Chinese trade and economic relations are still noticeably lagging behind the Russian-Chinese political and strategic dialogue in terms of pace and level and scale of their development’.⁵⁶ After acknowledging such problems, the experts emphasize that ‘the total share of unresolved issues should be assessed against the background of significant positive achievements’.⁵⁷ The scale of recent agreements was indeed significant, as Moscow had spurred its efforts to strengthen

⁵² Ibid., pp. 24-25.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 7.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

cooperation with China after sanctions were implemented on Russia by the West because of the Ukraine crisis. No detailed proposals were given by the experts as to how Russia should solve the problems. However, Ivanov (ed.) et al. did express their opinion on the use of Chinese labor in Russia, writing that the ‘efficient organization of attracting Chinese labor to work in Russia will bring considerable benefits to both Russia and China’.⁵⁸

In 2016, the *RIAC* released another paper written by a collective of experts. Ivanov was again the editor. In the texts on Russia’s trade relations with China, there is a tendency to focus on the identification and description of problems and proposed measures to be taken in order to improve economic cooperation. However, there is no language suggesting in any way that China poses a threat by intending to ensure that the RFE becomes or remains its ‘raw materials appendage’. In the paper, once again it is acknowledged that the growing asymmetry in the size of the economies of the two countries is a problem.⁵⁹ It is also pointed out that there is a ‘continuing gap between the level of political interaction (the “top floor” of cooperation) and the scale of economic cooperation and the intensity of contacts at the level of ordinary citizens (“Lower floor” of cooperation)’.⁶⁰ There was a sharp decline in trade between Russia and China from almost \$100 billion in 2014 to about \$68 billion in 2015. According to the experts, problems hindering the growth of bilateral trade between Russia and China include: the increase in China’s domestic steel production, which reduced its demand for ferrous and non-ferrous metals from

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 25.

⁵⁹ Ivanov, Igor (ed.), et al. ‘Rossiisko-Kitaiskii Dialog: Model’ 2016 (Russian-Chinese Dialogue: Model 2016)’. Russian International Affairs Council. 30/05/2016. p. 4. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/publications/rossiysko-kitayskiy-dialog-model-2016/>. Accessed 10/05/2020.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Russia; and the fact that Russian exports to China are ‘largely dependent on the volume of oil supplies and its prices’ combined with a fall in global oil prices in 2014.⁶¹

Ivanov (ed.) et al. address the problem of Russia’s dependence on the export of mineral fuel, oil, and oil products to China, which, according to them, hinders the development of their economic cooperation. The experts explain that ‘it is necessary to move from strategic areas to comprehensive cooperation, from cooperation in the field of energy and minerals to export-import of agricultural products, processing industries, high-tech industries, services, etc.’.⁶² The experts propose to revise the ‘model’ of Russian-Chinese cooperation, which for a long time had been ‘based on the interaction of state trade and economic structures, large-scale projects and enterprises’.⁶³ It is claimed in the paper that ‘local cooperation is inefficient due to the replacement of market mechanisms by administrative management’.⁶⁴ Part of the way the model of Russian-Chinese economic cooperation should be revised, according to the experts, is to add ‘market mechanisms’ and strengthen their importance among small- and medium-sized businesses at the local level in order to stimulate cooperation.⁶⁵ Other measures Ivanov (ed.) et al. argue should be taken in order to facilitate the development of economic cooperation between the two countries include: lowering Russia’s import and export duties; unify standards in manufacturing and high technology; relax and simplify Russia’s licensing procedures (examples are made of the strict and complex licensing procedures for the construction and fishing

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 13.

⁶² Ibid., p. 16.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 15.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

industries); and to create a joint-information platform to make it easier for each side to learn about one another.⁶⁶

In 2017, 2018, and 2019 the *RIAC* published similar papers on Russia-China relations edited by Ivanov. Regarding economic cooperation and trade relations, most of the problems identified in the 2015 and 2016 papers remain. There is still imbalance between the high level of political and strategic cooperation and the low level of economic cooperation.⁶⁷ Small- and medium-sized businesses in Russia and China still lack quality information about operating in each other's countries, and strong administrative barriers remain.⁶⁸ Investment cooperation still has not reached a satisfactory level, and high tariffs continue to hinder economic cooperation.⁶⁹ Regarding China's investment in Russia, 68% goes into raw materials projects.⁷⁰ This, however, is not considered by the experts as an effort by China to ensure that the RFE becomes or remains a 'raw materials appendage', but rather they acknowledge Russia's weak business and investment climate,⁷¹ and write that Russia must *attract* investment to other sectors of the economy,⁷² thereby attributing the lack of diversity in investment to internal factors. Russian

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 18-19.

⁶⁷ Ivanov, Igor (ed.), et al. 'Rossiisko-Kitaiskii Dialog: Model' 2017 (Russian-Chinese Dialogue: Model 2017)'. Russian International Affairs Council. 28/05/2017. p. 30. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/publications/rossiysko-kitayskiy-dialog-model-2017/>. Accessed 10/05/2020.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 31; Ivanov, Igor (ed.), et al. 'Rossiisko-Kitaiskii Dialog: Model' 2018 (Russian-Chinese Dialogue: Model 2018)'. Russian International Affairs Council. 30/05/2018. pp. 77, 87. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/publications/rossiysko-kitayskiy-dialog-model-2018/>. Accessed 10/05/2020; and Ivanov, Igor (ed.), et al. 'Rossiisko-Kitaiskii Dialog: Model' 2019 (Russian-Chinese Dialogue: Model 2019)'. Russian International Affairs Council. 28/05/2019. pp. 68-69. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/publications/rossiysko-kitayskiy-dialog-model-2019/>. Accessed 08/06/2020.

⁶⁹ Ivanov. 'Russian-Chinese Dialogue: model 2017' p. 42; Ivanov. 'Russian-Chinese Dialogue: model 2018'. pp. 77, 80-81; Ivanov. 'Russian-Chinese Dialogue: model 2019'. pp. 57, 61-62.

⁷⁰ Ivanov. 'Russian-Chinese Dialogue: model 2018'. p. 84.

⁷¹ Ivanov (ed.) et al. 'Russian-Chinese Dialogue: model 2017' pp. 42-43; Ivanov (ed.) et al. 'Russian-Chinese Dialogue: model 2018' pp. 87-88; and Ivanov (ed.) et al. 'Russian-Chinese Dialogue: model 2017' pp. 61-61.

⁷² Ivanov (ed.) et al. 'Russian-Chinese Dialogue: model 2018' p. 88.

experts also call out high tariffs, particularly on the Russian side,⁷³ as a hinderance to the development of economic cooperation with China, and therefore, the development of the RFE.

In a similar vein, Panov stated at a roundtable discussion, the transcript of which was published by *International Life*, that the ‘danger’ for the RFE is not imposed by external forces, but rather by Russia itself, in that it is ‘not able to create decent living conditions for our citizens in the Far East’, which has caused the trend of depopulation of the RFE.⁷⁴ The expert stresses the importance of a development program implemented by the government that creates conditions of life, healthcare, education, and culture that attract Russians and ‘compatriots’ from former Soviet republics.⁷⁵

There are experts who focus more on problems associated with the RFE’s trade and economic cooperation with China than those above, offer warnings, and sometimes recommend bolstering soft balancing measures against China such as the diversification of export markets for raw materials.

Dynkin and Pantin do not explicitly call China’s trade with, and economic activity in, the RFE a threat, however they do warn against excessive economic dependence on China. They argue in an article published by *Russia in Global Politics* that such dependence ‘is fraught with the degradation of many enterprises and industries, as well as the loss of the ability to make strategic decisions in the sphere of economics and politics’.⁷⁶

⁷³ Ivanov. ‘Russian-Chinese Dialogue: model 2019’. p. 61.

⁷⁴ Panov, Alexander. ‘Vneshnopoliticheskie Itogi 2007-go i Perspektivy 2008 Goda (Foreign Policy Results of 2007 and Prospects of 2008)’. *International Life*. 2008. Available at <https://interaffairs.ru/jauthor/material/1274>. Accessed 21/11/2019.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Dynkin, Alexander and Vladimir Pantin. ‘Mirnoe Stolknovenie (A Peaceful Clash)’. *Russia in Global Politics*. 03/05/2012. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/number/Mirnoe-stolknovenie-15534>. Accessed 24/11/2019.

Greenberg does not explicitly write that China poses an economic threat but recognizes unfavorable conditions in Russia's economic relationship with China. The expert writes in an article published by *International Life* that 'Siberia and the Far East are gradually turning into a raw materials appendage of the Chinese economy' and claims that 'Russia will feel the political and geopolitical consequences of these processes in the near future'.⁷⁷ Greenberg also points out the imbalance in the countries' relationship, calling Russia China's 'youngest partner', a position that has been imposed to due to China's 'far superior' economic power.⁷⁸ The expert also acknowledges significant achievements in the development of Sino-Russian relations, making the partnership 'seem to be a model of stability, predictability, and mutual respect'.⁷⁹ Greenberg acknowledges the paradoxical relationship between the RFE and China, writing that 'China's strong economic growth stimulates demand for Russian energy and minerals, which will contribute to the development of the productive forces of Siberia and the Far East. But at the same time there is a danger that the whole region will turn into a raw materials appendage of China'.⁸⁰ The solution the expert offers is for the state to bolster development in the RFE, specifically in the form of a 'stimulation of high-tech production and nanotechnology'.⁸¹

Given that Lukin, Bordachev, Barabanov, Larin, Kosachev, Nikonov, Ivanov, Panov, Dynkin, Pantin, and Greenberg all have doctorates, that all but two have held positions in the Russian government, and that all but one of the institutions that published their work above are either FSBIs or have connections with the government, it is reasonable to argue that it is likely that the

⁷⁷ Greenberg, Ruslan. 'O Novoi Kontseptsii Vneshnei Politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (On the New Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation)'. *International Life*. 2012. Available at <https://interaffairs.ru/jauthor/material/767>. Accessed 24/11/2019.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

views the experts convey in the articles referenced above have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors (perceptions and values) of decisionmakers regarding Russia's foreign policy towards China.

It is important to point out once again that the relatively dissenting views published by experts with influential positions and/or strong qualifications, such as Dynkin, Pantin, and Greenburg indicate that experts in Russia are free to express views that are not compatible with the official line.

In sum, the dominant view among experts in this section is that while the RFE's economic relations with China have problems causing an unbalanced trade structure in favor of China, the status quo should be maintained while problems are addressed by Moscow. This conclusion is drawn mainly because of the indispensability China's import and export markets for the RFE. Included in this dominant view is that the actual or potential status of the RFE as a 'raw materials appendage' of China is not attributed to external actors, including the PRC, but rather to domestic factors.

The main way that this dominant view is reflected in the quantitative results presented in the previous chapter is that, when coders indicated the presence of an absence of threat in the text and were then asked to select the sentence that best explains why, according to the text, China does not threaten Russia, the second most frequently chosen sentence indicated that it was because of a lack of harmful intentions from China.

In the context of managing decline, regarding the unfavorable trade structure between the RFE and China, the dominant view identified in this section is related to the retrenchment literature discussed in chapter 2 in that, while relative decline may be undesirable, the tendency of

declining states is to behave in the interest of solvency when interacting with a rising power, i.e. it refrains from pursuing ambitions that exceed means to the point of overstretch, unsustainable action, and increased vulnerability. In the scenario that Moscow forcibly cuts or drastically reduces economic ties between the RFE and China out of fear of the region becoming China's 'raw materials appendage', the amount of resources required to meet the needs of the raw materials industry in the RFE and the demand of the population for affordable finished goods in the interest of maintaining socio-economic stability would be prohibitively large. In this view, the advocacy for maintaining the status quo while addressing problems is understandable.

Views not unlikely to have influence

There are other experts that also claim that trade, even in its current structure, is not only beneficial for the RFE, but necessary for its development. For example, Glazova et al. wrote an article published by the *Russian Institute of Strategic Studies (RISS)*, in which they express their view that the development of the RFE since the fall of the Soviet Union has depended to a large extent on trade and economic cooperation with China and will continue to do so.⁸² But this dependence on the PRC for the economic development of the RFE is not framed in the context of an exploitative relationship. The experts write that 'cooperation in the oil and gas sphere is mutually beneficial and long-term, since it allows both countries to solve a number of pressing problems: the Chinese side is to ensure the safety of hydrocarbon supply channels, the Russian side to diversify the export of its resources'.⁸³

⁸² Glazova, Anna, et al. 'Sostoianie i Perspektivy Sotrudnichestva Rossii so Stranami Vostochnoi Azii (State and Prospects of Cooperation between Russia and East Asian Countries)'. *Problems of National Strategy* 2 (2011): 8. Available at <https://riss.ru/bookstore/journal/2011-2/j7/>. Accessed 23/11/2019.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Glazova et al. identify specific problems in trade relations between Russia and China that hinder the growth of economic cooperation, such as the ‘underdevelopment of cross-border infrastructure, low investment activity, poor information support for Russian exporters and importers, and difficulties encountered by Russian entrepreneurs seeking to enter the Chinese market’.⁸⁴ The solutions the experts propose do not indicate a perception of threat posed by Chinese trade practices, but rather they suggest the facilitation of trade in the interest of growth. For example, they stress that infrastructure and communications need to be improved. Specifically, Glazova et al. see it necessary ‘to solve the question of building a bridge across the Amur [completed in 2019], improve rail and air links between the two countries, modernize transport infrastructure, create additional checkpoints and increase their efficiency, promote tourism, and improve the legislative framework for bilateral cooperation’.⁸⁵ In this context, issues in the economic relationship between the RFE and China are not framed as ‘threats’, but rather as ‘problems’ that hinder the expansion and development of trade and economic cooperation between the two countries.

Finally, Glazova et al. seem to be aligned with the concept of ‘catching the Chinese wind in the sails’ of the Russian economy with their claim that ‘active trade and economic cooperation with [China] and increasing the investment attractiveness of the Russian economy for Chinese business can serve as an additional opportunity to expand our country's presence in the Asia-Pacific region’.⁸⁶

Another in favor of facilitating the growth of economic interaction between Russia and China despite current problems is Andrei Ivanov. In an article published by the *Bulletin of MGIMO*, the

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

expert argues for the removal of administrative and legal obstacles hindering foreign entrepreneurial and investment activity in Russia and posits that claims by ‘the media and some politicians’ of the existence of a Chinese threat to Russian sovereignty encumber mutually beneficial Chinese business in Russia.⁸⁷

Writing about the problem of China’s enormous demand for resources, Kuznechevsky argues that the PRC will not attempt to solve the problem at Russia’s expense.⁸⁸ According to the expert, China will seek to secure access to the resources of Russia’s eastern territories, but only through cooperation. Kuznechevsky frames this argument in the context of the US’ pressure on China and the possibility of confrontation or conflict between the two, explaining that ‘Russia is a deep rear for China, and it only needs one thing: so that it does not take the side of the main enemy’.⁸⁹

Despite their lack service in the Russian government or military, given the qualifications of Glazova et al., Gubin, Kuznechevsky, and Ivanov and that the views they conveyed in the articles referenced above were all published by FSBIs, it is reasonable to argue that it is not unlikely that their views have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors of decisionmakers regarding Russia’s foreign policy towards China.

Gubin, in an article published by *RISS*, differentiates economic and political sovereignty and argues that, while political sovereignty in the RFE is stable, the Russian leadership perceives a threat from China in the form of the undermining of economic sovereignty in the region ‘due primarily to the raw materials orientation of exports and increasing dependence on China while

⁸⁷ Ivanov, Andrei. ‘Chinese Diasporas: A Course for Consolidation’. Bulletin of MGIMO 3, no. 17 (2011): 73.

⁸⁸ Kuznechevsky, Vladimir. ‘Rossiia Mezhdru Kitaem i SSHA (Russia Between China and the USA)’. International Life. 2012. Available at <https://interaffairs.ru/jauthor/material/694>. Accessed 24/11/2019.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

reducing its interest in projects that meet the objectives of the development of our territory’.⁹⁰

The expert also posits that the lack of effective and equal cooperation with China in the RFE is due to the desire of the Russian government to avoid excessive economic dependence on China and the PRC’s disinterest in investing in projects in the RFE that would compete with its own development initiatives in its northeastern territories.⁹¹

The results of the analysis show that while a perception of threat emanating from the economic relations of the RFE and China exists among Russian experts, it is marginal relative to expert views that consist of perceptions of an absence of threat. The dominant view among experts identified is that while the RFE’s economic relations with China have problems causing an unbalanced trade structure in favor of China, the status quo should be maintained while problems are addressed because of the indispensability of China’s import and export markets for the RFE and the benefits they offer for the development of the region.

Policy

It is important now to consider the extent to which Russia’s policy actions regarding the economic relationship between the RFE and China are consistent with the dominant view identified in the previous sections. Since the view held by potentially influential experts consists of the notion that, despite the existence of some problems, trade and economic cooperation between the RFE and China are mutually beneficial and should continue while the problems are addressed, and that the unfavorable trade balance between the two is attributed to domestic

⁹⁰ Gubin, Andrei. ‘Rol’ Mezhdunarodnogo Sotrudnichestva v Razvitii Rossiiskikh Territorii (na Primere Primorskogo Kraia) (The Role of International Cooperation in the Development of Russian Territories [For Example Primorsky Krai]). Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Problems of National Strategy 1 (2014): 83. Available at <https://riss.ru/bookstore/journal/2014-2/j22/>. Accessed 25/11/2019.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 92.

factors rather than to China, we could expect policy to reflect this by consisting of continued cooperation.

Cooperation has continued in ways that would be unlikely if a serious threat to the RFE from China was perceived among Russian decisionmakers. Several cooperative agreements have been reached over the period of interest. It is worth referring to some of the more recent forms of cooperation in which large Chinese investments in the RFE were authorized. In August 2018, President Putin ratified an agreement allowing for the joint development of the Klyuchevskoye gold deposit in the Trans-Baikal territory in which China will acquire at least 60% and not more than 70% of Zapadnaya-Klyuchi Mine JSC.⁹² In December 2018, a deal was reached for China's funding of the construction of an enrichment plant for a coal mining company in southern Yakutia at a cost of 3.5 billion rubles.⁹³ In May 2019, an agreement was made for the gasification of the city of Bratsk using \$1 billion of Chinese money.⁹⁴ It is said that the development will improve the ecological situation of the city, and it is acknowledged that China also stands to benefit by using the new infrastructure for gas delivery to China. In December 2019, China opened a line of credit to Gazprom for 3.4 billion euros over 15 years for the production of the Amur Gas Processing Plant.⁹⁵ In February 2020, an agreement was reached for the joint development of a methanol plant near Nakhodka for which China will provide \$1.7

⁹² Kommersant. 'Putin Ratifikiroval Soglasenie o Razrabotke Klyuchevskogo Mestorozhdeniya Vmeste s KNR (Putin Ratified an Agreement on the Development of the Klyuchevskoye Field with China)'. 03/08/2018. Available at <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3706049>. Accessed 22/12/2020.

⁹³ DV. 'Kitayskaya Korporatsiya Postroit Obogatitel'nyy Fabrik «Inaglinskaya-2» v Iuzhnoi Yakutii (The Chinese Corporation Will Build an Enrichment Plant "Inaglinskaya-2" in South Yakutia)'. 14/01/2018. Available at <https://dv.land/news/16532>. Accessed 22/12/2020.

⁹⁴ Neftegaz. 'Neal'truistichno. Investor iz Kitaya Gotov Vlozhit' 1 Mlrd Doll. SSHA v Gazifikatsiyu G. Bratska (Non-Altruistic. An Investor from China is Ready to Invest \$1 Billion in Gasification of Bratsk)'. 24/05/2019. Available at <https://neftegaz.ru/news/finance/451290-investor-iz-kitaya-gotov-vlozhit-1-mlrd-doll-ssha-v-gazifikatsiyu-bratska/>. Accessed 22/12/2020.

⁹⁵ RIA Novosti. "'Gazprom' Zaklyuchil Sdelki po Finansirovaniyu Amurskogo GPZ ("Gazprom" Signed Deals to Finance the Amur GPP)'. 25/12/2019. Available at <https://ria.ru/20191225/1562820613.html>. Accessed 22/12/2020.

billion.⁹⁶ The policy of allowing such investments in the RFE is more consistent with the dominant view identified in this chapter than it is with the view that China poses an economic threat to the RFE by intentionally subordinating it to the role of a ‘raw materials appendage’ of China.

Another example of a policy that is consistent with the dominant view identified in this chapter is that of selling or leasing land in the RFE to China for agricultural purposes. According to the BBC’s Russia service, in 2019, firms with Chinese capital owned or were leasing at least 350,000 hectares of land in the RFE.⁹⁷

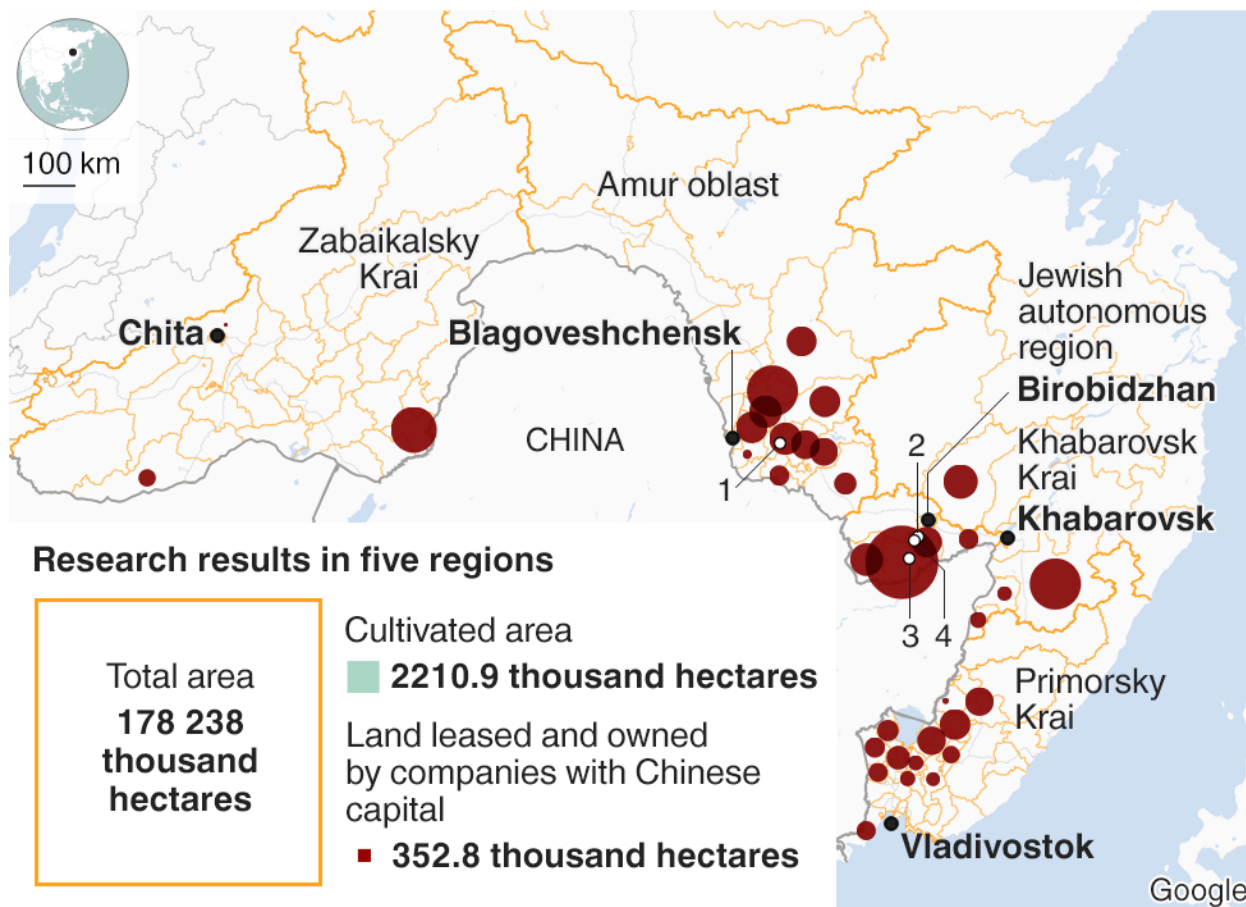
⁹⁶ ZR Press. ‘V Primor’e Zapakhlo Udobreniiami i Iuaniami (In Primorye, the Smell of Fertilizers and Yuan)’. 26/02/2020. Available at https://zrpress.ru/business/primorje_26.02.2020_97523_v-primorje-zapakhlo-udobrenijami-i-juanjami.html. Accessed 22/12/2020.

⁹⁷ Zakharov, Andrei and Anastasia Napalkova. ‘Why Chinese Farmers Have Crossed Border into Russia's Far East’. 01/11/2019. Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-50185006>. Accessed 23/12/2020.

Chinese presence in Russian Far East

● Area of agricultural land owned or leased by firms with Chinese capital in five border regions (not to scale)

Villages: 1 Maksimovka 2 Opitnoye Polye 3 Babstovo 4 Dimitrovo

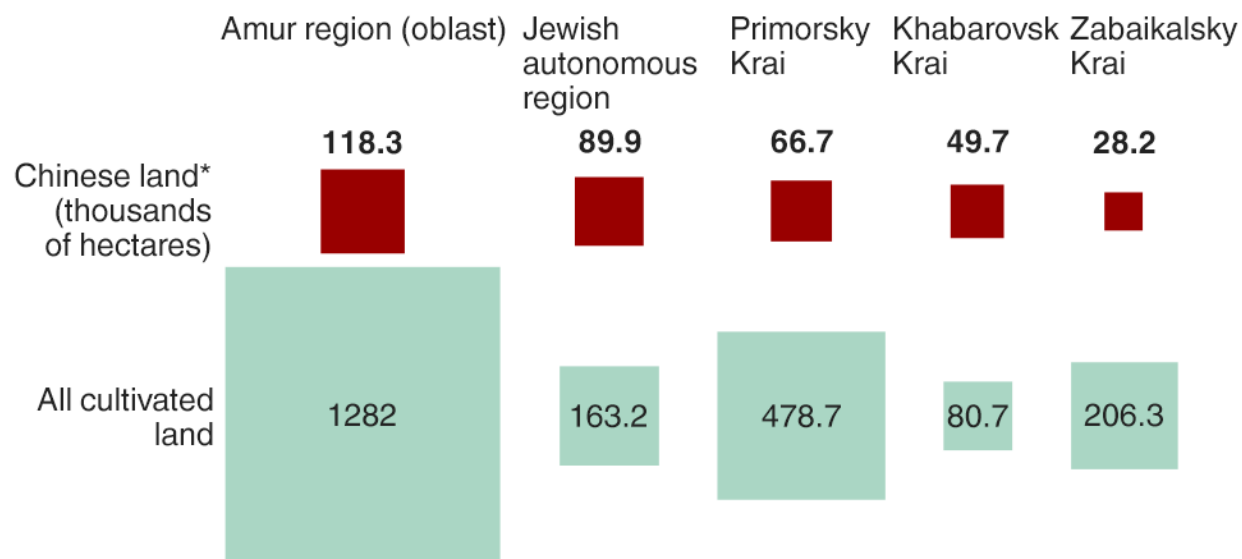


Sources: BBC, SPARK-Interfax, Rosstat, Rosreestr

BBC

Of all the cultivated land in the Far Eastern regions bordering China, at least 16% is owned or leased by firms with Chinese capital. The shares of the total cultivated land are greatest in Khabarovsk Krai and the Jewish Autonomous Oblast, where 62% and 55% is owned or leased by China, respectively.

Land farmed by Chinese in border regions



*Land leased or owned by companies with Chinese capital

Sources: BBC, Rosstat, Rosreestr. Data was collected in May-September 2019

BBC

It is unlikely that such ownership and leasing of Russian land by China would be authorized if there were serious concerns about the implications of China's rise and demand for resources for the vast, resource-rich, and sparsely populated RFE. Andrei Vinogradov, Head of the Center for Political Research and Forecasts at the Institute for the Far East considers the seemingly marginal view that by selling or leasing land in the RFE to China Russia ultimately risks sovereignty over the region to be 'far-fetched'.⁹⁸ In the expert's view, the practice consists of 'purely economic ties, in which [he] see[s] nothing terrible'.⁹⁹ According to Evgeny Nardorshin, Chief Economist at PF Capital and former Advisor to the Minister of Economic Development of the Russian Federation stresses that as long as local people and businesses receive benefits then

⁹⁸ Vinogradova, Margerita. Quoted in 'Vo Chto Nam Oboïdetsia Kitaïskaia Arenda? (What Will the Chinese Rent Cost Us?) Our Krasnoyarskiy Krai. 16/06/2015. Available at <https://www.mk.ru/economics/2015/06/16/kitay-beret-sibir-v-arendu-tolko-nachalo.html>. Accessed 24/12/2020.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

the economic benefits will outweigh any geopolitical disadvantages.¹⁰⁰ In response to a question about the possibility of China's annexation of Russian territory after leases end, Konstantin Ilkovsky, then Governor of Zabaikalsky Krai, claimed there was no basis for such a conversation.¹⁰¹ Vitaly Mankevich, President of the Russian-Asian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, argues that 'the problem is not that the Chinese come to Russia en masse to work and cultivate the land', but that 'about a quarter of all arable land is not cultivated in the Russian Federation'.¹⁰² In his view 'the fact that entrepreneurs from China are engaged in crops is only a plus'.¹⁰³

It is also important to consider the dominant expert view identified in the chapter in the context of relevant convictions communicated through fundamental official documents of the Russian Federation. It has been made clear in such documents that Russia considers its economic development to be a matter of national security.¹⁰⁴ According to Russia's 2015 National Security Strategy, 'developing international business contacts, attracting foreign investments and technologies, implementing joint projects is a means to countering threats in the economic

¹⁰⁰ Beroeva, Nigina, and Anatoly Yakimov. Quoted in 'Kitaĭ Voz'met v Arendu Kusok Rossii Razmerom s Gonkong (China Will Lease a Piece of Russia the Size of Hong Kong)'. *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. 16/06/2015. Available at <https://www.kp.ru/daily/26393/3271225/>. Accessed 24/12/2020.

¹⁰¹ Subbotina, Svetlana. Interview with Konstantin Ilkovsky '«My Vsekh Zovem i Zvali, no Prishli Kitaĭtsy»' ("We Called and Called Everyone, but the Chinese Came"). *Izvestia*. 26/06/2015. Available at <https://iz.ru/news/588143>. Accessed 24/12/2020.

¹⁰² Komrakov, Anatoly. Quoted in 'Kitaizatsĭiu Dal'nego Vostoka Stimuliruiut Rossiĭskie Chinovniki (Chineseization of the Far East is Stimulated by Russian officials)'. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. 22/10/2019. Available at https://yandex.ru/turbo/ng.ru/s/economics/2019-10-22/4_7708_earth.html. Accessed 24/12/2020.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Government of the Russian Federation. 'O Strategii Natsional'noi Bezopasnosti Rossiĭskoĭ Federatsii (On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation)'. Article 5. 31/12/2015. Available at <https://www.mchs.gov.ru/dokumenty/ukazy-prezidenta-rf/2933>. Accessed 17/04/2021; and Government of the Russian Federation. 'O Strategii Natsional'noi Bezopasnosti Rossiĭskoĭ Federatsii do 2020 Goda (On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020)'. 12/05/2009. Article 25. Available at <https://76.mchs.gov.ru/deyatelnost/napravleniya-deyatelnosti/grazhdanskaya-zashchita/organizaciya-meropriyatiy-grazhdanskoy-oborony/normativno-pravovye-akty/federalnye-zakony/ukaz-prezidenta-rf-ot-12-maya-2009-g-n-537-o-strategii-nacionalnoy-bezopasnosti-rossiyskoy-federacii-do-2020-goda>. Accessed 17/04/2021.

sphere'.¹⁰⁵ Naturally, regarding potential partners in the development of international business contacts, investments, and joint projects, Russia would be less likely to engage in such interactions with states and other entities if they were perceived to be willing and capable of exploiting such engagements for gain at the significant expense of Russian interests. Russia's 2009 National Security Strategy states that 'the sustainable development of the Russian Federation is facilitated by an active foreign policy, whose efforts are focused on finding agreement and coinciding interests with other states on the basis of a system of bilateral and multilateral mutually beneficial partnerships'.¹⁰⁶ The principle of finding 'coinciding interests' with such partners is meant to ensure the mitigation of the risk of such exploitation occurring. State-private partnership is also considered a means to solve problems of economic development in Russia.¹⁰⁷ The state's side of such partnership has included active engagement with the Chinese to rectify the problem of stagnant development of the RFE as evidenced by the planning and implementation of many joint projects in the RFE.¹⁰⁸ In sum, it is reasonable to argue that the stated intentions and perceptions conveyed in official documents are consistent with the

¹⁰⁵ Government of the Russian Federation. 'On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation'. Section 4 Article 62.

¹⁰⁶ Government of the Russian Federation. 'On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020'. Section 9 Article 89.

¹⁰⁷ Government of the Russian Federation. 'On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation'. Section 4 Article 62; and Government of the Russian Federation. 'On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020'. Section 4 Article 62.

¹⁰⁸ Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation. 'Rossiia i Kitai Utverdili Perechen' Znachimykh Proektov Investitsionnogo Sotrudnichestva na 107 Mlrd Dollarov (Russia and China approve a list of significant investment cooperation projects worth \$ 107 billion)'. 10/12/2020. Available at https://www.economy.gov.ru/material/news/rossiya_i_kitay_utverdili_perechen_znachimyh_proektov_investicionno_go_sotrudnichestva_na_107_mlrd_dollarov.html. Accessed 18/04/2021; Ivan Chernousov. 'Nad Kakimi Dal'nevostochnymi Proektami Rabotaiut Rossiia i Kitai? (What Far Eastern Projects are Russia and China Working on?)'. Rossiiskaia Gazeta. 29/09/2020. Available at <https://rg.ru/2020/09/29/reg-dfo/nad-kakimi-dalnevostochnymi-proektami-rabotaiut-rossiia-i-kitaj.html>. Accessed 18/04/2021; and TASS. 'Bolee 30 Rossiisko-Kitaiskikh Proektov na \$17,8 Mlrd Planiruetsia Realizovat' v DFO (More than 30 Russian-Chinese Projects Worth \$ 17.8 Billion are Planned to be Implemented in the Far Eastern Federal District)'. 15/06/2019. Available at <https://tass.ru/ekonomika/6554264>. Accessed 18/04/2021.

dominant view of experts identified in this chapter and with Russia's relevant foreign policy actions.

The 'Dispositional factors' section in chapter 2 outlines a framework for analysis that has been followed in this chapter.¹⁰⁹ Based on the finding that the dominant expert view regarding economic relations between the RFE and China is held by experts with a high level of potential influence on average, the chapter concludes that it is likely that the view has been successfully communicated directly or indirectly to foreign policy decisionmakers. This is case 1 in the framework. Given case 1, scenarios 1 or 2 are more likely than scenarios 3 and 4.¹¹⁰ This means that it is likely that once the dominant view was successfully communicated to the officials, the dispositional factors (perceptions and values) of the officials either changed to become more aligned with, or less contradictory to, the dominant view (scenario 1), or the officials' preexisting dispositional factors were reinforced by the dominant view (scenario 2). In both scenarios, the dispositional factors that inform the dominant view are likely shared to the point that policy is consistent with the view (in scenario 1, they are shared after the communication, and in scenario 2, they are shared before and after the communication). Therefore, the dispositional factors inherent in the view would explain the policies. Such factors include the perception that the RFE's economic relationship with China is mutually beneficial; the perception that the unfavorable trade structure is due mostly to internal problems; the value of the economic development of the RFE; the perception that economic cooperation with China presents opportunities for the development of the RFE; and the perception that the problems associated

¹⁰⁹ pp. 80-86.

¹¹⁰ Scenario 3 would be considered most likely if the dominant expert views were held by those with a high level of potential influence on average and Russia's policies were not consistent with the views. Scenario 4 would be considered most likely if the dominant expert views were held by those with a low level of potential influence on average.

with the economic relations of the RFE and China are not so severe as to justify discontinuing economic cooperation with China.

Conclusion

The first section of the chapter provides regional and ideational context to Russia's interaction with China in the RFE. One of the main features of Russia's foreign policy is the pursuit or maintenance of great power status. An analysis of the idea of great power-ness in Russia among experts and officials reveals that its meaning consists of more than economic and military power: a country must also be attributed the status by others. The center of global wealth and power has been shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific. In order to maintain recognition as a great power globally, Russia must develop the RFE so that it may serve as a base from which it can project power and influence and be acknowledged by other states as occupying an important role in regional processes of the APR, including economic integration and security dynamics. China inevitably becomes a major factor in this undertaking.

The second section reports the results of the qualitative aspect of the content analysis that was performed for this thesis, specifically those relevant to the economic relations of the RFE and China. The section concludes that the dominant view among Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military is that, while there are problems with the structure of the RFE's trade relations with China that make the region's exports dependent on raw materials, economic relations between the RFE and China are mutually beneficial, and there are ways that Russia and China can address the problems so that the development of economic cooperation with China and the development of the RFE can be facilitated. Included in this dominant view is that the actual or potential status of the RFE as a 'raw materials appendage' of China is not attributed to external actors, including the PRC, but rather to domestic factors. This finding supports

hypothesis 1 in that, in this view, Beijing does not intend to harm Russia or its interests by ensuring that the economy of the RFE becomes or remains a ‘raw materials appendage’ of China.¹¹¹

The final section discusses Russia’s policy regarding economic relations between the RFE and China in an effort to determine the extent to which such policy is consistent with the dominant expert view identified in the second section of the chapter. There are two main policies that demonstrate a lack of a perception of a serious threat from the rise of China to the RFE: the policy of authorizing Chinese investments in projects in the RFE in which the PRC controls large if not majority stakes; and the policy of selling or leasing land in the RFE to China for agricultural purposes. If the dominant perception among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers included the view that by allowing China to make large investments with controlling stakes and by leasing or selling land to China Russia risks losing effective sovereignty over parts of the RFE, then it is unlikely that such policies would be adopted. Therefore, the section argues that Russia’s policies have a high degree of consistency with the dominant view held by potentially influential experts identified in the second section. Based on this argument, the chapter concludes that scenarios 1 or 2 in the framework explained in the ‘Dispositional factors’ section in chapter 2 are most likely.

The findings of the chapter are at odds with those contributors to Western literature on Russia-China relations who identify Russian decisionmakers’ fear of the rise of China as a significant variable affecting the pace (often considered slow) at which economic relations between the RFE and China are being developed and Chinese investments and projects are being accepted and

¹¹¹ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers do not perceive the rise of China as a threat because they believe China has harmless or benign intentions towards Russia.

implemented in the RFE.¹¹² As the chapter shows, concerns are not entirely absent, however they are marginal relative to the view that economic relations between the RFE and China are essential, mutually beneficial, and should be continued in their current state while solutions to problems are pursued. Included in the dominant view are concerns about several domestic factors hindering the development of cooperation, such as complicated licensing procedures in Russia; high tariffs on Russia's side; a weak business and investment climate that fails to attract investment to sectors of the economy outside of raw materials; the inability to create standard living conditions in the RFE; the poor state of cross-border infrastructure; a lack of accessible information for Russian exporters and importers; an inadequate number of border checkpoints and the inefficiency of those that exist; an inadequate promotion of tourism; and a stifling legislative framework for bilateral cooperation which has consisted of administrative and legal barriers impeding foreign entrepreneurial and investment activity in Russia.¹¹³ Rather than apprehension on the Russian side, hinderance caused by domestic factors is argued to be the main variable affecting the pace of the development of economic relations.

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¹¹² See for example Bobo Lo. *Russia and the New World Disorder*. Brookings Institution Press, Chatham House. 2015. p. 139; Niklas Swanström. 'Sino-Russian Relations at the Start of the New Millennium in Central Asia and Beyond'. *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 87 (2014): 483-484; Gilbert Rozman. 'The Russian Pivot to Asia'. *The Asian Forum. Special Forum* 2, no. 6 (2014); James Bellacqua ed. *The Future of China-Russia Relations*. University Press of Kentucky. 2010. pp. 7-8; and Gilbert Rozman. 'The Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership: How Close? Where To?' In Bellacqua, ed. *The Future of China-Russia Relations*. 2010. p. 22. Some have argued that both the economic unattractiveness of the RFE and apprehension are significant factors. See for example Stephen Blank. 'Russian Writers on the Decline of Russia in the Far East and the Rise of China'. In Enders S. Wimbush and Elizabeth M. Portale, eds. *Russia in Decline*. Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation. 2017. pp. 259, 266.

¹¹³ pp. 182-188.

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Chapter 5: Security in the RFE: China's 'Demographic Pressure' and Military Potential

The previous chapter addressed the economic security of the Russian Far East (RFE), specifically regarding its economic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) as perceived by Russian experts. This chapter focuses on two other types of security in the region frequently discussed in the Russian expert community: demographic and military. The two main sections of this chapter report the results of the qualitative aspect of the content analysis relevant to perceptions of demographic and military threat, respectively. The analysis of both demographic and military security in the RFE in the same chapter is justified given the potential for these two issues to be connected. If immigration from China to the RFE led to the outnumbering of Russians in the region and the Chinese population continues to grow, this could lead to social unrest and racial conflict. In the conflict scenario, China may feel obliged to intervene to protect the ethnic Chinese in the region, which could prompt concerns over Russia's effective sovereignty over the region and spiral into military confrontation or conflict. It should be noted that, as shown below, the view that such a scenario is likely or inevitable is marginal in Russia.

The first section finds that the prevailing view on the question of a Chinese demographic threat to the RFE is that it does not exist, and that claims that it does consist mainly of exaggerations by the media and nationalist forces and serve as an instrument of officials in the RFE in attempts to justify requests for larger portions of the federal budget. Aside from simple assertions of an absence of threat and claims of exaggeration or bias among those who say the threat exists, Russian experts rarely offer concrete reasons why a demographic threat from China does not

exist. It is unclear whether this is because those who claim that there is no such threat have no reasons to substantiate their claim or because, for them, the absence of a threat of mass immigration from China is self-evident. Larin, a prominent Russian historian in the RFE, offers concrete reasoning for his assertion of an absence of a Chinese demographic threat, which includes lack of economic incentive and uncomfortable realities of Chinese people living in the RFE consisting of harassment and beatings.¹ Kamynin offers similar reasoning.²

The second section finds that the dominant view among experts in Russia is that China does not pose a direct military threat to Russia. On this question, it is more common but still rare for Russian experts to give reasons behind their claim of an absence of a military threat. Four mutually non-exclusive themes on which such reasons hinge are identified: (1) the socio-economic fragility or vulnerability of the PRC, (2) China's interests, (3) the cost of aggression against Russia (which is strongly related to the first two themes), and (4) the idea that a military threat may exist from China, but it is only hypothetical or potential, not direct.

The final section examines Russia's policies relevant to the security of the RFE *vis-à-vis* China with the aim of determining the extent to which they are consistent with the dominant views of experts identified by the content analysis. The section concludes that Russia's policies are consistent with the dominant view that the rise of China does not threaten the security of the RFE in two main ways. First, Russia continues to abide by the 1996-1997 agreements on the demilitarization of the border with China, which allows for only a limited number of defensive

¹ Larin, Viktor. 'KNR Glazami Dal'nevostocknika (The PRC Through the Eyes of the Far East)'. *International Processes* 8, no. 1 (2010): 127. Available at <http://intertrends.ru/system/Doc/ArticlePdf/849/Larin-22.pdf>. Accessed 10/07/2020.

² Kamynin, Mikhail. 'Vneshnepoliticheskie Itogi 2007-go i Perspektivy 2008 Goda (Foreign Policy Results of 2007 and Prospects of 2008)'. *International Life*. 2008. Available at <https://interaffairs.ru/jauthor/material/1274>. Accessed 15/11/2019.

deployments. Second, Russia continues to develop cross-border transit infrastructure that would facilitate a land invasion from China, including bridges across the Amur River and solutions to the break of gauge problem at the overland railway border crossings Grodekovo-Suifenhe, Makhhalino-Hunchun, and Zabaikalsk-Manzhouli. The Grodekovo-Suifenhe and Makhhalino-Hunchun railway crossings are being adapted to accommodate the railway gauge used in China (1435mm) as a part of Russia's plan to develop the Primorye-1 and Primorye-2 International Transport Corridors, which will allow for China's seamless access to the Russian ports of Zarubino, Posyet, Vladivostok, and Nakhodka. The Zabaikalsk station is currently undergoing large-scale reconstruction that includes the installation of a new narrow-gauge sorting system, which will allow for much faster transitions from China's gauge to Russia's gauge (1520mm). These policies are more consistent with the view that China does not pose a military threat to the RFE than the view that it does. Since the policies are consistent with the dominant view of potentially influential Russian experts, the chapter concludes that scenarios 1 or 2 in the framework explained in the 'Dispositional factors' section in chapter 2 are most likely.

Demographics of the RFE and China's Bordering Provinces

This section examines perspectives among experts in Russia on the demographic security of the RFE in relation to China. It focuses on views on the vulnerability of the region and the potential to lose effective sovereignty over the territory by means of mass immigration from China. Views of Russian experts and officials on the topic vary, but again, as is the case of such views on the topic of China's effect on the development of the economy of the RFE, most views on 'hard security' questions regarding Russia's easternmost territories are moderate and avoid alarmism. Despite striking disparity in the size of the populations of the RFE and neighboring Chinese

provinces, the dominant view among experts in Russia is that there is no threat of mass immigration.

In Soviet times, the RFE experienced the largest rate of population growth in the country due to both natural growth and migration flows.³ From 1926 to 1991 the population of the RFE grew by a factor of 5.1.⁴ During that period, the region also experienced processes of industrialization and urbanization. The population peaked in 1991 at just over 8 million, which was about 5.4% of the total population.⁵ By 2018, because of increased mortality rates, decreased fertility rates, lower standard of living and economic opportunity, and migration outflows, the population of the RFE fell to about 6.17 million, which is about 5.5% of the total population.⁶ Figures for 2019 show a population of about 8.19 million in the RFE, but this growth is mainly due to the moving of Zabaikalski Krai and the Republic of Buryatia from the Siberian Federal District to the Far Eastern Federal District.⁷ Without Zabaikalski Krai and the Republic of Buryatia, the population of the RFE in 2019 was about 6.14 million, showing that population decline in the RFE continues.⁸

To put the demographic situation of the region further into perspective, we must consider how sparse the population is. The Federal District of the Far East of the Russian Federation accounts

³ Motrich, Ekaterina. 'Far East in Russian Demography: Trends during Reform'. *Spatial Economics* 3 (2017): 134. Available at <https://ideas.repec.org/a/far/spaeco/y2017i3p133-153.html>. Accessed 10/06/2020.

⁴ Ibid., Table 1.

⁵ Ibid., citing Goskomstat of Russia. 'The Size, Composition, and Movement of the Population in the Russian Federation. 1992. p. 480.

⁶ Federal Service of State Statistics of the Russian Federation. 'CHislennost' Naseleniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii po Munitsipal'nym Obrazovaniiam na 1 Ianvaria 2018 Goda (The Population of the Russian Federation by Municipalities as of 1 January 2018)'. Available at <https://gks.ru/compendium/document/13282?print=1>. Accessed 10/06/2020.

⁷ Federal Service of State Statistics of the Russian Federation. 'CHislennost' Naseleniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii po Munitsipal'nym Obrazovaniiam na 1 Ianvaria 2019 Goda (The Population of the Russian Federation by Municipalities as of 1 January 2019)'. Available at <https://gks.ru/compendium/document/13282?print=1>. Accessed 10/06/2020.

⁸ Ibid.

for about 36% of the country's territory. At a population of 6.14 million in a landmass measuring at about 6.17 million km/sq., the population density of the region is about one person per km/sq.⁹ As most of the population is concentrated in cities in the south of the region, the combined population of the four territories of the RFE bordering China and focused on in this section have a higher concentration of about 5.1. per km/sq.¹⁰ Over the last few decades the portion of the population of the RFE that live in cities has remained stable at around 75%.¹¹ Many of the largest cities in the region, such as Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, and Blagoveshensk are located near the border with China.

Sharing a border in the south are the Chinese provinces Heilongjiang and Jilin, which combined make up a territory that is about 9.5 times smaller than the RFE. However, these two provinces have a combined population of 65.77 million, which is more than 10 times greater than the population of the RFE and about 15 times greater than the population of the four federal subjects of the RFE focused on in this chapter that border China. The average population density of the combined territory of Heilongjiang and Jilin provinces is about 226 per km/sq. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there have been fears in Russia that mass immigration from China into the RFE and Siberia was either taking place or that there was great potential for it. This alarmism peaked in the mid-1990s, mostly consisting of sensationalist stories in the media, but also included local politicians in the RFE pandering to xenophobic sections of the

⁹ Federal Service of State Statistics of the Russian Federation. 'CHislennost' Naseleniia. Ploshchad' Territorii i Plotnost' Naseleniia po Sub'ektam Rossiiskoi Federatsii na 1 Ianvaria 2014 Goda (Population Size, Territory Area and Population Density in the Constituent Entities of the Russian Federation as of 1 January 2014)'. Available at https://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b14_107/Main.htm. Accessed 10/06/2020.

¹⁰ Federal Service of State Statistics of the Russian Federation. 'Plotnost' Naseleniia Rossiiskoi Federatsii na 1 Ianvarii 2019 Goda (Population Density of the Russian Federation as of 1, January 2019)'. Available at <http://www.gis.gks.ru/StatGis2015/Viewer/?05285969-ec60-e911-8f04-c52edb349072>. Accessed 10/06/2020.

¹¹ Federal Service of State Statistics of the Russian Federation. 'Dolia Gorodskogo Naseleniia v Obsheĭ CHislennosti Naseleniia na 1 Ianvaria (The Share of Urban Population in the Total Population as of 1 January)'. Available at <https://showdata.gks.ru/report/278932/>. Accessed 10/06/2020.

populations of the federal subjects, and defense analysts trying to get a larger portion of the defense budget for the Far Eastern Military District.

The section now moves on to present the results of the qualitative aspect of the content analysis. Please refer to information provided on the institutions and experts in chapter 3 regarding potential influence through government or military connections and qualifications.

On the possibility of mass immigration from China

There is a marginal view that, for various reasons, including China's lack of resources and large population and the fact that Russia is resource rich and its far eastern territories are sparsely populated, mass immigration from China to the RFE and Siberia, state-sponsored or otherwise, is not only possible, but inevitable. Before moving on to the analysis of expert views that are more likely to have influence on Russia's foreign policy, it is useful to address this view for two reasons. First, it demonstrates that some in Russia publish views that contradict the government line regularly. Second, some potentially influential experts respond directly to the main proponent of these views, Alexander Khranchikhin. The content analysis did not find a credible analyst that shared Khranchikhin's level of alarmism and concern.

On the question of a demographic threat facing the RFE from China, Khranchikhin focuses mostly on material factors such as population density and lack of resources to argue that Chinese demographic expansion is inevitable. One of the main points the expert makes to support his arguments is that China is 'overloaded'. For example, in 2008, Khranchikhin claimed that 'the country's population is now at least 1.5 times higher than the optimal one in terms of the load on nature and infrastructure'.¹² It is unclear what standard the expert uses for 'optimal' population

¹² Khranchikhin, Alexander. 'The Threat, Which in Itself "Will Not Be Resolved"'. Independent Military Observer. 22/02/2008. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2008-02-22/2_ugroza.html. Accessed 03/11/2019.

size for the ‘load’ on nature and infrastructure. Khranchikhin does not elaborate or refer to any environmental or development studies to substantiate his claim. In the same article, the expert writes that China’s expansion into Russia, ‘presumably, will be primarily economic and demographic in nature’, however, ‘direct military aggression cannot be ruled out’.¹³

Another claim Khranchikhin often makes is that there are not enough resources in the world, let alone in China, to meet the demands of the Chinese population.¹⁴ The expert argues that, because China’s economy is production-based rather than service-based, as it is in the West, China needs more resources. Khranchikhin explains that ‘if the PRC reaches the level of per capita consumption of food, electricity, oil, etc., at least comparable to the Western one, it alone will not have enough resources of the whole planet’.¹⁵ The expert claims that the PRC must maintain high growth rates of its production-based economy in order to prevent social upheaval, and that it will go to extreme lengths, including expansion (peaceful or forceful) in order to do so.¹⁶

Khranchikhin has not held a position in the Russian government or military, and he does not have a doctorate. The expert has a bachelor’s degree in physics and no formal training in the study of international relations, political science, or any other social science. Khranchikhin is the Deputy Director of the Institute for Military and Political Analysis, which is a closed joint-stock company. Given the expert’s lack of qualifications and Russia’s continued policy of

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Khranchikhin, Alexander. ‘Moskve Predlagaetsia Ochen’ Neveselyi Vybor (Moscow Offers a Very Sad Choice)’. Independent Military Review. 10/09/2010. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2010-09-10/1_choice.html?insidedoc. Accessed 03/11/2019; Alexander Khranchikhin. ‘Evropa Gotova Vooruzhat’ Kitaï (Europe is Ready to Arm China)’. Independent Military Review. 21/01/2011. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/forces/2011-01-21/1_china.html. Accessed 07/11/2019; and Alexander Khranchikhin. ‘Bespoleznaia PRO – Iskusstvenno Skonstruirovannaia Real’nost’ (Useless Missile Defense – Artificially Constructed Reality)’. Independent Military Review. 22/07/2011. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2011-07-22/13_pro.html. Accessed 04/11/2019.

¹⁵ Khranchikhin. ‘Useless Missile Defense’. 2011.

¹⁶ Ibid.

development of cooperation with China and the lack of military buildup in the RFE, which suggests that his views were either not considered or considered and rejected, it is reasonable to argue that Khranchikhin likely has a low level of potential influence over Russia's foreign policy towards China.

Views likely to have influence

Several Russian experts on international relations and security and on the specific topic of Russia-China relations disagree with Khranchikhin. Most who write on the likelihood of Chinese expansion (peaceful or forceful) into Russia do not address Khranchikhin directly, but some do. For example, Kozlov responds to Khranchikhin's flurry of alarmist articles in the *Independent Military Review* in the following way:

'Khranchikhin's views on China's incredible global expansion ... cause rejection not only among us, but also among some other experts ... These views are excessively cardinal, unambiguous, and radical ... China has opportunities for various types of expansion. However, intentions, not to mention practical actions, cannot be said at the moment ... It is simply not correct and untrue to say that China threatens all of humanity and that this threat is the greatest in its entire existence'.¹⁷

From early in the period examined in this thesis (2000 to 2020), the content analysis reveals views on the demographic disparity between the RFE and neighboring Chinese provinces and Chinese immigration to Russia that are much more moderate than Khranchikhin's.

Occasionally, some arguments encouraging regulated Chinese immigration are put forward. For example, in a paper published by the *Council on Foreign and Defense Policy (CFDP)*, Leksin et al. argue that the only way to stem the decline of the population of the RFE and correct its age

¹⁷ Kozlov, Stanislav. 'EvroPRO – Pro i Kontra (Euro ABM – Pros and Cons)'. *Independent Military Review*. 01/07/2011. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2011-07-01/11_europro.html. Accessed 09/11/2019.

and gender structure is through immigration, particularly from China.¹⁸ In the experts' view, immigration should be 'publicly welcomed' but requires 'special regulation ... taking into account the interests of specific regions' so that the RFE does not become 'a zone of ethnic, and in the future, social and political confrontation'.¹⁹ Regarding Chinese immigration into the RFE, Leksin et al. claim that the danger perceived is locally 'used for populist purposes and to blackmail the federal government', and that the number of Chinese immigrants in the RFE was 'greatly exaggerated' by regional and central media.²⁰ The experts point out that while the media reported that there were about 2 million Chinese immigrants in the region, according to 'estimates by both Moscow and local experts' the figure amounted to 200-300 thousand.²¹

Several experts in Russia corroborate the abovementioned claim of fearmongering with regard to Chinese immigration by the media and nationalist forces. For example, Karaganov wrote in an article published by *Russia in Global Politics* that claims that 'quiet Chinese expansion' is taking place in Russia are 'deliberately biased', and that 'there are not millions of Chinese in Russia, but 200-300 thousand, and they make a tangible contribution to the Russian economy'.²² The expert acknowledges that there is a potential for danger in the region in future, but argues that it can be avoided with 'a sensible policy with respect to Siberia and the Far East, and by foreign policy', adding that 'China and the Chinese need to be purposefully made long-term allies interested in the development and prosperity of Russia'.²³ According to Karaganov, in another

¹⁸ Leksin, Vladimir, et al. 'Novoe Osvoenie Sibiri i Dal'nego Vostoka (New Development of Siberia and the Far East)'. Russian International Affairs Council. 2001. p. 12. Available at http://www.svip.ru/public/docs_2001_9_17_1351070795.pdf. Accessed 04/11/2019.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 12, 40.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 53.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Karaganov, Sergei. 'Novye Vyzovy Bezopastnosti i Rossiia (New Security Challenges and Russia)'. *Russia in Global Politics*. 10/11/2002. Available at https://globalaffairs.ru/number/n_3. Accessed 04/11/2019.

²³ Ibid.

article published by *Russia in Global Politics*, China is not pursuing demographic expansion in Russia at all, and points out that there are more Chinese in Germany and there were more in the former Russian empire.²⁴

In an article published by *Strategy of Russia*, Kosachev and Nikonov, while acknowledging that the problem of depopulation of the RFE is ‘one of the most acute for the Russian state’, claim that ‘the scale of the problem of Chinese migration to Russia is exaggerated by a number of nationalist forces for political purposes’, and point out that in the RFE ‘from China there are fewer people than Koreans or immigrants from the Caucasus region’.²⁵ Career diplomat and, at the time, Assistant to the President of the Russian Federation, Sergei Prikhodko, wrote that, although Russia is not entirely free of Chinese immigration problems, ‘one should not exaggerate their scale, as the domestic media often do’.²⁶

Larin, in an article published by *International Processes*, argues that there was a complete absence of a demographic threat from China. The scholar explains that there are ‘many objective reasons’ for why this is so:

‘First, the niche for applying Chinese labor is very limited here. Today there is trade (how many traders do you need to serve 6.5 million residents of the Far East?), the service sector (the same question), construction (where there is great competition from Russians and North Koreans), vegetable growing (where they have to compete with products grown by local Koreans and in

²⁴ Karaganov, Sergei. ‘Zechem Oruzhie? (Weapons for What?)’ *Russia in Global Politics*. 28/10/2012. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/number/Zachem-oruzhie-15719>. Accessed 05/11/2019.

²⁵ Kosachev, Konstantin and Vyacheslav Nikonov. ‘Russia’s Foreign Policy: Theses for Strategy’. *Strategy of Russia* 4 (2004). Available at http://sr.fondedin.ru/new/fullnews_arch_to.php?subaction=showfull&id=1081851207&archive=1084443606&start_from=&ucat=14&. Accessed 04/11/2019.

²⁶ Prikhodko, Sergei. ‘Moscow – Beijing: We Need Each Other’. *Russia in Global Politics*. 07/04/2004. Available at https://globalaffairs.ru/number/n_2861. Accessed 04/11/2019.

China itself). Consequently, millions and even hundreds of thousands of Chinese simply have nothing to do here. At the same time, the niche is shrinking'.²⁷

Larin explains further that since it is more expensive in Russia, it is preferable to the Chinese, if they do come to Russia, to earn their money then move back to China.²⁸ Also, the Chinese are 'uncomfortable' in Russia for reasons including frequent document checks, extortion, insults, and beatings.²⁹ According to the expert, the idea of there being millions of Chinese immigrants in Russia is 'a myth for some and a boogeyman to squeeze out budget funds for others'.³⁰

In line with Larin's argument regarding incentives for immigration, Kamynin argues in an article published by *International Life* that Chinese immigrants come to Russia to earn money doing work that Russian locals are 'not ready to do', then return to China 'preferring to invest it in business at home, where they are much more comfortable...'.³¹

Claims of an absence of a threat from China in the form of mass immigration can be found throughout the period of interest by relatively credible sources. In an interview with *Red Star*, Manilov said at the time there was no threat of mass Chinese immigration into the RFE, however, the expert added that Russia should not dismiss the challenge posed by the 'physical development' of the region by Chinese immigrants.³² Efremenko, in an article published by *Russia in Global Politics*, argues that the threat of Chinese settlement in the RFE a 'paper tiger' and sees a much larger threat in the continuing dependence of the structure of Russia's trade on

²⁷ Larin. 'The PRC Through the Eyes of the Far East'. 2010. p. 127.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Kamynin. 'Foreign Policy Results of 2007 and Prospects of 2008'. 2008.

³² Manilov, Valery Leonidovich. Interview with Red Star Correspondant. 'Blizkiĭ Dal'niĭ Vostok (The Close Far East)'. Red Star. 15/10/2003. Available at http://old.redstar.ru/2003/10/15_10/3_02.html. Accessed 11/06/2020.

commodities.³³ In agreement with the dominant view among Russian experts on the potential demographic threat from China, Chechevishnikov wrote in an article published by *International Processes* that ‘nearly a quarter-century of experience living without an iron curtain on the border with China showed the phobias of the 1990s to be illusory’, and that ‘in recent years the local Russian population has begun to see the Chinese people primarily as a useful complement to their daily routine’.³⁴

Given Manilov’s strong connections with the Russian government and military, the attention he has received from the government and military as evidenced by his awards, and the strong connections of the newspaper, *Red Star*, that published the transcript of the interview with Manilov referenced above, it is reasonable to argue that it is likely that his views have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors (perceptions and values) of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers. Despite Efremenko’s lack of service to the Russian government or military, given his qualifications, the attention he has received from the Russian government as evidenced by his award, his service to the FSBI Institute of Scientific Information on Social Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences (INION), and that *Russia in Global Politics*, the institution that published his article referenced above, has connections with the government, it is reasonable to argue that it is likely that his views have directly or indirectly contributed to the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

³³ Efremenko, Dmitri. ‘Obraz Zhelaemoi Sovremennosti (The Image of the Desired Modernity)’. *Russia in Global Politics*. 23/10/2010. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/number/Obraz-zhelaemoi-sovremennosti-15011>. Accessed 05/11/2019.

³⁴ Chechevishnikov, Alexander. ‘Vostochnyi Vektor Rossiiskoi Politiki i Perspektivy Razvitiia Dal’nego Vostoka Sibiri (The Eastern Vector of Russian Politics and Development Prospects of the Far East of Siberia)’. *International Processes* 12 (2014): 52-53. Available at <http://intertrends.ru/old/thirty-seventh/Chechevichnikov.pdf>. Accessed 04/11/2019.

Given the qualifications and service to the Russian government or military of Kozlov, Leksin et al., Karaganov, Kosachev, Nikonov, Prihodko, Larin, Kamynin, Manilov, Efremenko, and Chechevishnikov, the attention several of them received from the government or military as evidenced by their awards, and that the views they convey in the articles referenced above were published by FSBIs or institutions with connections to the Russian government (except *Independent Military Review* and *International Processes*), it is reasonable to argue that it is likely that the experts' views have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers. This finding contradicts an argument often found in Western literature on Russian foreign policy towards China that fear in Russia of mass immigration from China to the RFE negatively affects the development of the countries' relations.³⁵

Demographic pressure and gravity

A marginal view on the potential for a demographic threat from China to the RFE includes concepts of 'demographic pressure' and 'demographic gravity'. For example, Vishnevsky, in the context of recognition of the region's sparse population and rich natural resources, recognizes 'demographic pressure from the overpopulated south'.³⁶ In this view, the demographic disparity between the RFE and neighboring Chinese provinces is producing a sort of natural migration force. Given Vishnevsky's highly regarded status as a reputable scholar, it is interesting that he holds such a marginal view. The expert does not estimate the likelihood of mass immigration from China into the RFE. As a Doctor of Economic Sciences, Vishnevsky likely realizes the lack

³⁵ See for example Gilbert Rozman. 'The Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership: How Close? Where To?' In James Bellacqua, ed. *The Future of China-Russia Relations*. University Press of Kentucky. 2010. p. 22.

³⁶ Vishnevsky, Anatoly. 'Velikaia Malonaseleñnaia Derzhava (The Great Sparsely Populated Power)'. *Russia in Global Politics*. 02/09/2003. Available at https://globalaffairs.ru/number/n_1575. Accessed 04/11/2019.

of economic incentives for mass immigration from a stable China. The scholar published the article in 2003, and frequently writes in terms of centuries, referring to demographic and migration trends in the 19th and 20th centuries providing estimations and positing likely trends for the 21st century. Perhaps the ‘demographic pressure’ to which the Vishnevsky refers has mostly long-term rather than short- or even medium-term implications.

In the same vein, differentiating military threat and demographic threat from China, Fedotov writes that ‘if we talk about such far-fetchedness as the threat to us from China, then this is not the threat of its aircraft and tanks, but the threat of the laws of demographic and geo-economic gravity’.³⁷

In sum, the results of the content analysis show a relatively stable and low level of perceptions of a demographic security threat from China to the RFE throughout the period of interest.

Perceptions of an actual or potential demographic threat from China exist but are marginal. A reading of the texts guided by the results of the content analysis has revealed that the perception that there is an absence of a demographic security threat is dominant among Russian experts.

This dominant perception of an absence of a demographic security threat from China contributes to an explanation given by this thesis as to why Russia under the Putin administration has not pursued a hard-balancing policy against China in the borderlands and has continued efforts to strengthen cooperation with China for the development of the RFE.

Despite these marginal and likely long-term oriented concerns about the demographic ‘pressure’ or ‘gravity’ experienced due to the population imbalance between the RFE and bordering

³⁷ Fedotov, Vladimir. ‘Simvolý Èkonomicheskogo Partnerstva (Symbols of Economic Partnership)’. Strategy of Russia 10 (2005). Available at http://sr.fondedin.ru/new/fullnews_arch_to.php?subaction=showfull&id=1130136841&archive=1130138106&start_from=&ucat=14&. Accessed 06/07/2020.

Chinese provinces, the dominant view among Russian experts identified by analysis is that there is no demographic threat from China. The main reason given is a simple lack of (mainly economic) incentive for large-scale immigration from a stable China to the RFE. The was no view among Russian experts identified that China threatened the RFE with mass immigration prompted by incentives created by Beijing.

Chinese Military Potential and the Vulnerability of the RFE

Along with China's spectacular economic growth over the last few decades came the strengthening and modernization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Included in China's military capabilities is a considerable potential for land operations launched from provinces in Northeast China. Despite a widespread doubt that Russia would be able to repel a Chinese invasion of the RFE without the use of nuclear weapons, the Russian military has not undertaken a significant buildup of forces along its border with China. This section first provides an overview of the balance of conventional military power between the forces of the RFE and China and discusses the implications of the balance for Russia's national security. The section then examines expert perceptions of Russia's and China's relative military capabilities, whether it is necessary for Russia to balance against Chinese military capabilities in northeast Asia, and the potential for a military threat from China to the RFE.

From the dissolution of the Soviet Union to the late 1990s, the balance of military power between Russia and China in northeast Asia shifted drastically in favor of China, so much so that Russia was no longer able to repel a large-scale conventional attack on the RFE by the PLA

without reinforcements from western regions of Russia.³⁸ Both Western and Russian analysts have pointed out that, in practice, effective use of such reinforcements from the west is unlikely because of the vast distance and vulnerability of the main ground line of communication, the trans-Siberian railway, which runs along Russia's southern border.³⁹ Throughout the 2000s and 2010s, Russian conventional forces continued to lag behind Chinese forces even as reforms and modernization took place, and by the end of the 2010s, Russian forces remained conventionally inferior to those of the PLA in the region.⁴⁰

The qualitative aspect of the content analysis reveals that the dominant perception among Russian experts is that, while China's military capabilities are strengthening at an impressive rate, and that it is doubtful that Russia would be able to repel a Chinese invasion of the RFE by conventional military means, it is not necessary to balance against China's growing military power. This is because China throughout the period of interest has not been perceived as having the intention to commit military aggression against Russia, as such action would be too costly and contrary to its interests for various reasons explained below. The section discusses the

³⁸ Schwartz, Paul N. 'The Military Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations. In Jo Bekkevold and Bobo Lo, eds. *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2019. p. 100, citing Felix K. Chang. 'The Unraveling of Russia's Far Eastern Power'. *Orbis* 43, no. 2 (1999): 267.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101; and Anton Karnaukov, and Vyacheslav Tseluiko. 'Voennaia Doktrina Rossii i Sostoianie Ee Vooruzhennykh Sil: Teoriia i Real'nost' (Russian Military Doctrine and the State of Its Armed Forces: Theory and Reality)'. In Mikhail Barabanov, ed. *Novaia Armia Rossii (Russia's New Army)*. Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies. Moscow. 2010. p. 109. Available at http://militera.lib.ru/science/0/pdf/sb_new-army.pdf. Accessed 02/03/2021.

⁴⁰ Weitz, Richard. 'Russian Military Power and Policy in the Far East'. In Stephen Blank, ed. *The Russian Military in Contemporary Perspective*. Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College. 2019. pp. 918, 930, 954; Schwartz. 'The Military Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations. In Jo and Lo, eds. *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*. 2019. pp. 99-102; Stephen Blank. 'Russian Writers on the Decline of Russia in the Far East and the Rise of China'. In Enders S. Wimbush and Elizabeth M. Portale, eds. *Russia in Decline*. Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation. 2017. pp. 278; and Roger N. McDermott. 'Russia's Conventional Armed Forces: Reform and Nuclear Posture to 2020'. In Stephen Blank, ed. *Russian Nuclear Weapons: Past, Present, and Future*. Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College. 2011. pp. 71-72.

marginal view that China poses a military threat to Russia before turning to an analysis of the prevailing view among experts that it does not.

The most persistent among those that hold the marginal view that China threatens Russia militarily, that Russia should build up its military forces on the Chinese border, and that China will inevitably expand into the RFE, if not by demographic and economic means then by military means, is Khramchikhin. One of the ways the expert attempts to substantiate the argument that China is a military threat to Russia is by denying that agreements delineating the border between Russia and China since the fall of the Soviet Union and the PRC's lack of official territorial claims against Russia mean that China has no territorial claims against Russia. Khramchikhin claims that the 'official historiography of the PRC continues to interpret Russian-Chinese relations as a constant aggression of our country against China' and explains that 'if the claims against us were really removed, then history books and scientific works would not drive the attitude of Russia as an "invader" into the heads of the Chinese'.⁴¹ The expert posits that China's official historiography on Russia has not changed since that of Maoist China in the 60s, and that, despite the border agreements between Russia and the PRC and lack of official territorial claims, China may 'at any moment' reinstate the territorial claims and that the Chinese people are morally prepared for this because of the propagandistic historiography.⁴²

Khramchikhin also claims there is a connection between the Chinese concept of 'strategic borders and living space' and an attempt by the PRC to preemptively justify offensive military

⁴¹ Khramchikhin, Alexander. '«Tret'îm Raduiushchimsiâ» Byt' ne Udastsia ("The Third Rejoicing" Cannot Be)'. Independent Military Review. 22/12/2006. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2006-12-22/1_kitai.html. Accessed 06/11/2019.

⁴² Khramchikhin, Alexander 'Ugroza, Kotoraiâ Sama po Sebe «Ne Rassosetsiâ» (The Threat That "Will Not Resolve Itself")'. Independent Military Review. 22/02/2008. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2008-02-22/2_ugroza.html. Accessed 06/11/2019.

action against other states.⁴³ The expert's interpretation of the concept includes the notion that boundaries only indicate the extent to which a state can 'effectively protect its interests' with 'real power'.⁴⁴ To Khranchikhin, this means that 'the "strategic boundaries of the living space" must move as the "integrated power of the state grows"'.⁴⁵ Khranchikhin then argues that it is obvious that the only direction of expansion that makes sense for China is the RFE, Siberia, and Khazakstan. In the expert's view, this is because southeast Asia is densely populated and lacks natural resources, and India is also densely populated as well being separated from China by the Himalayan mountains.⁴⁶

Another part of Khranchikhin's argument that China poses a military threat to Russia was discussed in the previous section in the context of a demographic threat. It is the notion that China will go to extreme lengths to avoid a slowing of economic growth because it could lead to social discontent and maybe even chaos and civil war. According to the expert, the rate of economic growth required to keep the Chinese public content puts unendurable strain on the country's environment and infrastructure.⁴⁷ The only solution, seemingly to him, is expansion, preferably by peaceful means (demographic and economic), and if not, then by of force. Therefore, in Khranchikhin's view, the source of China's military threat to Russia lies in China's domestic socio-economic problems. The expert explains that such problems could become so severe that the ruling class of the PRC may consider a military attack to be the 'lesser

⁴³ Ibid.; and Alexander Khranchikhin. 'Ugrozy XXI Veka (Threats of the 21st Century)'. National Defense. 08/08/2011. Available at <http://www.oborona.ru/includes/periodics/geopolitics/2011/0808/14297051/detail.shtml>. Accessed 08/11/2019; Alexander Khranchikhin. 'Kitaïskaïa Èkspansiia Neizbezhna (Chinese Expansion is Inevitable)'. Military-Industrial Courier. 02/09/2013. Available at <https://vpk-news.ru/articles/17276>. Accessed. 08/11/2019.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Khranchikhin. 'The Threat That Will Not Resolve Itself'. 2008.

⁴⁷ Khranchikhin. 'Chinese Expansion is Inevitable'. 2013.

evil' compared to domestic upheaval.⁴⁸ Khranchikhin argues that 'the fact that China will not be able to survive without expansion is determined by the laws of nature and economy, and not by any particular Chinese aggressiveness'.⁴⁹ One of the expert's more extreme claims is that 'the very high unemployment among young people and the "shortage of brides" make their own high losses during the hostilities not only permissible, but even desirable for the military-political leadership of [China]'.⁵⁰

Regarding the ground forces of Russia and China, Khranchikhin claims that those of two of the seven military districts of the PRC are stronger than the ground forces of the entire Russian military.⁵¹ Moreover, only about a quarter of Russia's ground forces are in Transbaikalia and the RFE, and it would take 10 weeks under ideal conditions to transfer just one brigade from western Russia'.⁵² The expert also points out that the means by which Russian forces would be transferred from the west to the east is by the Trans-Siberian Railway, the eastern section of which runs along the border with China, therefore, in the event of a war with China, this line of communication may easily be cut.⁵³ Khranchikhin posits that Chinese military capabilities are so superior relative to Russia's in the region that, with the use of the WS-2D (a multiple rocket

⁴⁸ Ibid.; and Alexander Khranchikhin. 'Moskve Predlagaetsia Ochen' Neveselyi Vybor (Moscow Offers a Very Sad Choice)'. Independent Military Review. 10/09/2010. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2010-09-10/1_choice.html?insidedoc. Accessed 03/11/2019; Alexander Khranchikhin. 'Evropa Gotova Vooruzhat' Kitai (Europe is Ready to Arm China)'. Independent Military Review. 21/01/2011. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/forces/2011-01-21/1_china.html. Accessed 07/11/2019.

⁴⁹ Khranchikhin. 'Chinese Expansion is Inevitable'. 2013.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Khranchikhin, Alexander. 'A na Vse pro Vse – Vsego 85 Brigad Postoiannoï Boevoï Gotovnosti (And for Everything about Everything: Only 85 Brigades of Constant Combat Readiness)'. Independent Military Review. 16/10/2009. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/forces/2009-10-16/1_85brigad.html. Accessed 07/11/2019; Khranchikhin. 'Moscow Offers a Very Sad Choice'. 2010; for more of Khranchikhin's comparisons between Russian and Chinese military capabilities in the region see Alexander Khranchikhin. 'Neadekvatnyi "Vostok" (Inadequate East)'. Independent Military Review. 23/07/2010. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/eventsnvo/2010-07-23/1_vostok.html. Accessed 07/11/2019; Alexander Khranchikhin. 'CHetyre Cektora Rossiiskoi Oborony (Four Vectors of Russian Defense)'. Independent Military Review. 21/05/2010. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/forces/2010-05-21/1_4vectors.html. Accessed 07/11/2019; Khranchikhin. 'Threats of the 21st Century'. 08/08/2011.

⁵² Khranchikhin. 'And for Everything about Everything'. 2009.

⁵³ Ibid.

launcher system), China can instantly and suddenly destroy all of the military forces of Russia's Far Eastern Military District, except for those in Buryatia.⁵⁴ In the expert's view, relying solely on nuclear deterrence against China is 'extremely dangerous'.⁵⁵ Moreover, in the event of a Chinese invasion and Russia's use of nuclear weapons in defense, 'China has a completely adequate nuclear response'.⁵⁶ Regarding the effectiveness of Russia's nuclear deterrent against China, Khramchikhin makes the following point in an attempt to substantiate his argument: Chinese forces can withstand nuclear strikes in the borderlands, and it is not clear that Russia would launch a massive nuclear attack on the cities of southeastern China for fear of retaliation on cities in the European part of Russia, which China does not want to capture.⁵⁷ Therefore, the leadership of the PRC may come to the conclusion that Chinese forces can capture the RFE without fear of intolerable retaliation from Russia.⁵⁸

Finally, for Khramchikhin, China's buildup of strategic oil reserves should raise suspicions in Russia.⁵⁹ The expert argues that it does not make sense for the PRC to have such oil reserves, (which are typically for purposes of war, and in China's case, reserved for the event of a war with the US and the blocking of oil supplies from Africa and the Middle East) because China is

⁵⁴ Khramchikhin, Alexander. 'Fenomen Kitaĭskoĭ Voennoĭ Moshchi Poka Eshche Nedoofsened (The Phenomenon of Chinese Military Power is Still Underestimated)'. Independent Military Review. 30/12/2011. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/forces/2011-12-30/1_china.html. Accessed 08/11/2019.

⁵⁵ Khramchikhin, Alexander. 'Moskve Predlagaetsia Ochen' Neveselyĭ Vybor (Moscow Offers a Very Sad Choice)'. Independent Military Review. 10/09/2010. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2010-09-10/1_choice.html?insidedoc. Accessed 03/11/2019.

⁵⁶ Khramchikhin, Alexander. 'Vozdushno-Kosmicheskaiâ Oborona Kak Vozmozhnost' (Aerospace Defense as an Opportunity)'. Independent Military Review. 04/04/2011. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2011-03-04/1_oborona.html. Accessed 08/11/2011.

⁵⁷ Khramchikhin. 'Threats of the 21st Century'. 08/08/2011.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

building oil pipelines from Russia and Central Asia that the US would ‘certainly’ not be able to disrupt in a war.⁶⁰

On the possibility of Chinese expansion by force

As explained above, Khramchikhin’s view on whether China has posed as a military threat to Russia over the period of interest is a marginal one in Russia’s expert community. This section now moves on to an investigation of the dominant view, which is more moderate, avoiding both excessive optimism and alarmism. It begins by examining some texts from the content analysis that respond directly to Khramchikhin’s writings.

Views likely to have influence

Kumachev and Kazennov argue in 2010 that, while there are weaknesses in Russia’s military relative to China’s capabilities in northeast Asia, it is necessary to also consider ‘intentions’ and ‘limiting and constraining factors’ when determining whether the PRC poses a national security threat to Russia.⁶¹ The experts posit that, ‘paradoxically’, the disparity between the general forces of Russia and China in itself deters China from attack.⁶² Since Russia’s conventional forces in the RFE would be immediately overrun, there would inevitably be a ‘quick and spasmodic “vertical escalation”’ to the level of nuclear war.⁶³ Kumachev and Kazennov explain that

‘the main role for [China’s] existence is played by the highly organized, over-urban segment of the territorial structure, in which, to a certain degree, the whole modern potential of China is concentrated ... Such a nodal-hierarchical structure of the economy and management is

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Kumachev, Vladimir, Sergei Kazennov. ‘Ne Nado Absoliutizirovat’ ‘Ugrozu s Vostoka’ (Do Not Absolutize the “Threat from the East”). Independent Military Review. 13/08/2010. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2010-08-13/12_menace.html. Accessed 09/11/2019.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

characterized by the presence of key, critical points, which makes it extremely vulnerable, with a sharply reduced threshold of unacceptable damage. And in a hypothetical conflict with Russia, the PRC loses almost all of the things for which, in fact, the development of the Chinese nation is being carried out at this historical stage. Therefore, a forceful policy towards a state that possesses powerful ... means of nuclear missile deterrence is doomed to failure'.⁶⁴

This paragraph contains one of the main points of disagreement between these experts and Khramchikhin. Kumachev and Kazennov imply that it is unlikely that the PRC would risk massive retaliation on its urban centers by invading the RFE, whereas Khramchikhin argues that China may decide at any point that Moscow would not risk attacking large cities in China in response to an invasion of the RFE out of fear of nuclear retaliation on cities in the European part of Russia.

Kumachev and Kazennov argue that, in addition to the enormous risk the PRC would take by invading the RFE, China is inclined to solve its geopolitical problems in a way so as not arouse fear of its growing power and suspicions of aggressiveness.⁶⁵ According to the experts, Russia is appreciated as a 'reliable rear' at the highest levels of the PRC in the context of China's pursuit of its ultimate aim to ensure the realization of its economic interests by expanding its security perimeter.⁶⁶ Kumachev and Kazennov also claim that China is much more focused on the issues of reuniting with Taiwan and its rivalry with the US, which includes the missile defense system that the PRC perceives as being not as much intended for North Korea as it is for China.⁶⁷ The experts offer an opinion regarding China's intentions towards Russia: the PRC 'absolutely sincerely does not intend to implement its long-term plans in relation to Russia with the help of

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid. This argument is not as strong now, as from the mid-2010s China has been more assertive in protecting its interests, particularly in the East and South China Seas.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

military force, but hopes for a deep complex interaction’, which includes China ‘sucking [natural resources] through a straw’.⁶⁸ To Kumachev and Kazennov, there is no military threat from China. However, there is a threat of peaceful expansion, and whether such expansion occurs depends a lot on Russia itself regarding how effectively it can address the RFE’s demographic and economic problems. In the view of the experts, the worst-case scenario involves a sort of ‘huaqiaoization’ of parts of the RFE, but without any formal challenges to Russia’s sovereignty over the territory.⁶⁹

Finally, Kumachev and Kazennov address the US factor in the question of whether China poses a military threat to Russia. The experts point out that the US would not want China to gain control over Russia’s eastern territories, and in their view ‘the United States objectively should be almost the first to defend Russia’s territorial integrity in Asia’.⁷⁰ Moreover, China ‘is interested in the Russian Federation as the most important element of regional and global strategic balance, and therefore it is unlikely that it will “destroy” the existing balance of forces with its own hands’.⁷¹

Kozlov, in responding directly to an article by Khramchikhin in which he claims that the US European missile defense system does not threaten Russia, argues that Khramchikhin made a number of mistakes in his analysis.⁷² The expert addresses an argument by Khramchikhin that ‘China, unlike Iran, actually threatens humanity, and this is perhaps the biggest threat to humanity in its entire existence’, and the assertion that Russia should join the US against China

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Kozlov, Stanislav. ‘EuroPRO – Pro i Kontra (Euro ABM – Pros and Cons)’. Independent Military Review. 01/07/2011. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2011-07-01/11_europro.html. Accessed 09/11/2019.

rather than vice versa.⁷³ First, the retired lieutenant colonel and Doctor of Physics and Mathematics puts forth a detailed argument that the American missile defense system in Europe may very well threaten Russia, and concludes that Khramchikhin's argument is 'at least premature and unreasonable'.⁷⁴ Regarding Khramchikhin's views on Chinese expansion, Kozlov argues that, while it is 'necessary to take into account the possibility of inappropriate behavior of China in the future', 'it does not make sense to *predict* [italics added] the situation around China for the near future, especially the distant future, since such a multifactorial task relates to probability theories and mathematical statistics with many unknown inputs'.⁷⁵

Former President of the Republic of Sakha, Nikolaev, argues for a strong military presence in the RFE, but only to balance against a potential or hypothetical threat from China. In 2010, Nikolaev wrote that 'the current state of affairs on our borders with Japan and China, of course, hardly threatens Russia in the near future with any serious, let alone armed conflict', however, in his view, while there is little chance of an armed conflict in the near future, there is still the possibility that at some point the PRC may make official territorial claims against Russia, and because of this, Moscow should ensure that the balance of power between the two countries in the region is strengthened in favor of Russia.⁷⁶

It should be noted that, as a statesmen of a federal subject of the RFE, Nikolaev may have been acting the interest of the local population to attract as much money as possible from the federal military budget for the RFE by conveying the view that China is a potential or hypothetical

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Nikolaev, Mikhail. 'ATR i Natsional'naiâ Bezopasnost' Rossii (The APR and Russia's National Security)' International Life. 2010. Available at <https://interaffairs.ru/jauthor/material/217>. Accessed 11/11/2019.

threat, and that Russia should be prepared for the contingency that it becomes a direct threat without necessarily believing that it is likely that such a situation will occur.

A specific example of why China does not pose a military threat to Russia is offered by Arbatov, who wrote in an article published by *Russia in Global Politics* that it was ‘difficult to imagine’ that within the following 10-15 years China would pose a military threat to Russia because their relations are developing very successfully, and China needs Russian military equipment and production licenses.⁷⁷ For Arbatov, if there were a conflict of interests in the future, it would be because ‘factors and trends’ in the RFE that would ‘create prerequisites for a conflict of interest’.⁷⁸

Reshetnikov, in an interview with *Red Star*, said that claims of a threat from China are not justified.⁷⁹ The expert explains that the military threat from China is only potential, and that at the moment an attack on Russia and the seizure of resources in the RFE would be far too costly for two main reasons: the attack would deprive China of a ‘solid rear’ and a ‘reliable partner’; and it is doubtful that China would be able to take on the colossal task of developing, or ‘absorbing’, as he put it, the resources of the region, as it would take ‘enormous resources, strain of all forces, and therefore time’.⁸⁰

Karaganov argues that the use of military force and the threat of its use has gradually been losing its significance.⁸¹ The expert explains that:

⁷⁷ Arbatov, Alexei. ‘Kakaiâ Armiiâ Nam Nuzhna? (What Army Do We Need?)’ *Russia in Global Politics*. 25/02/2003. Available at https://globalaffairs.ru/number/n_475. Accessed 10/11/2019.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Reshetnikov, Leonid. ‘Ėpokha Peremen ili Potriâseniî? (An Era of Change or Turmoil?)’ Interview with *Red Star*. 26/12/2012. Available at <http://archive.redstar.ru/index.php/2011-07-25-15-56-49/item/6669-epoha-peremen-ili-potryaseni-y>. Accessed 12/11/2019.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Karaganov. ‘Weapons for What?’ 2012.

‘The changed political culture and structure of the economy makes it economically pointless to seize territories and the people living on them. It is not possible to keep them under control. The population cannot be exploited to their advantage ... In the era of truly mass communications, which impede (though not cancel) the targeted manipulation of information, the moral and political cost of using military force rises, especially when it comes to its large-scale and long-term use. It is to a certain extent delegated. If before war, to paraphrase Clausewitz’s formula imposed on his teeth, was a normal continuation of politics, now, after two world wars and the advent of nuclear weapons, the use of military force is more often regarded as a political failure’.⁸²

Karaganov explains that the delegitimization and the limited efficacy of the use of military force is largely due to mass communications and the risk of escalation to nuclear war and argues that Russia will not be threatened by any large-scale military threat in the foreseeable future, including from China. The expert explains that claims by experts that a large-scale military threat to Russia exists are by those representing ‘the remnants of the financially and intellectually drained academic part of the Soviet military-industrial complex’ who stoke fears in an effort to get more money from the Ministry of Defense.⁸³ In the expert’s view, regarding the RFE, the threat facing the region is not a military one, but rather a sort of ‘Finlandization’ that could result from the region’s inadequate ‘pace and quality of ... internal development’.⁸⁴ According to Karaganov, Russia’s military strengthening and modernization is not a response to any large-scale threat, but rather an effort to improve and maintain Russia’s ‘international positioning’ and to ‘compensate for the relative weakness in other factors of strength - economic, technological, ideological and psychological’.⁸⁵ The expert writes that the time has come to ‘get rid of the

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

remnants of the “yellow threat” myth’, and called on readers ‘to know Asian history and your place in it’.⁸⁶

Given the qualifications of Kumachev, Kazennov, Arbatov, Reshetnikov, and Karaganov and the fact that most of them have served the Russian government or military, it is reasonable to argue that it is likely that the views the experts convey in the articles referenced above have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

The dominant view among Russian experts identified in this section on the question of whether China poses a military threat to the RFE is that there has been no such threat throughout the period of interest. The main reason for the absence of a military threat, according to the experts, is that forceful expansion into the RFE is harmful to Chinese interests. The cost of aggression against Russia and the implications of a large-scale conflict for China’s fragile socio-economic state make the option unattractive. China’s policy is perceived as being aimed at ensuring good relations with Russia in order to maintain a reliable strategic rear for the contingency of a conflict with the US. The idea of a military threat from China is occasionally addressed in the Russian expert community, but it is almost always framed as a purely hypothetical threat.

Underlying this dominant view is the perception that China’s leadership is rational when considering possible uses of its military power against Russia. This perception of China’s rationality is interesting, given that the PRC attacked Soviet troops at the border in 1969 despite the inferiority of its forces. The texts do not go into the level of depth required to explain the basis of the experts’ perception of China’s rationality in recent decades. When considering

⁸⁶ Karaganov, Sergei. ‘Svoboda v Vyboire Puti (Freedom to Choose a Path)’. Russia in Global Politics. 07/06/2018. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/pubcol/Svoboda-v-vybore-puti-19596>. Accessed 17/11/2019.

possible reasons why the experts perceive China as rational regarding this issue, it is necessary to think outside of 'objective' mutual interests and cost-benefit analysis, since in these areas rationality is presupposed. One of the main causes of the Sino-Soviet split, the peak of which was the border clashes, was ideological differences between the communist parties of the Soviet Union and Maoist China. Beginning in the late 1980s, Russia-China relations were de-ideologized and a more pragmatic basis for the relations was established. It could be that, for these experts who perceive China as rational, the absence of ideological conflict is a necessary condition for the PRC to conduct a rational policy towards Russia. Indeed, as referenced in the official rhetoric analysis in the Appendix, Russian Ambassador to the PRC Sergei Razov said in a speech in 2009 that the successful development of Russia-China relations was only possible with the de-ideologization of their relations.⁸⁷ Ambassador Andrei Denisov explained in 2017 that '[the Soviet Union and China] had allied relations in the 50s. They were then based on ideological identity and bloc solidarity. It did not lead to anything good. Our current alliance is de-ideologized. This means that it is entirely based on mutual interests'.⁸⁸

This is not to say that the development of Russia-China relations over the last two decades has not been based on ideas. One of the arguments this thesis makes is that ideational convergence may have contributed to the avoidance of confrontation. Such convergence is based on the fight against the 'three evils' of terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism in Central Asia, the 'Shanghai Spirit', which includes mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for

⁸⁷ Razov, Sergei. 'Vystuplenie Posla Rossii v KNR S.S.Razova na Konferentsii "60 Let Rossiisko-Kitaiskim Otnosheniim"' (Speech by Russian Ambassador to the People's Republic of China Sergei Razov at the conference "60 Years of Russian-Chinese Relations"). Beijing. 30/09/2009. http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/278530. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁸⁸ Denisov, Andrei. 'Interv'iu Posla Rossii v Kitae A.I. Denisova informagentstvu TASS (Interview with Russian Ambassador to China A.I. Denisov to TASS News Agency)'. 08/02/2017. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/about/professional_holiday/news/-/asset_publisher/I5UF6lkPfgKO/content/id/2631010. Accessed 24/04/2020.

cultural diversity, and pursuit of common development, the rejection of unipolarity in favor of multipolarity, and the promotion of certain principles of international law such as non-interference in internal affairs. In this view, when there is an absence of ideological conflict and ideas that are considered fundamental by both sides are shared, China's actions towards Russia may be perceived as rational.

The quantitative results presented in chapter 4 show that after coders indicated the presence of a perception of an absence of threat in the text analyzed, in response to the follow up request to select a sentence that best describes why, according to the text, China does not pose a threat to Russia, the sentence indicating a sufficient military deterrent (including nuclear weapons) was only the fifth most frequently selected after 'none of the above'. The dominant view identified is reflected in the quantitative finding that the two most frequently selected sentences describing the reason for a given perception of an absence of threat from China indicated a lack of conflict of interest with, and harmful intentions from, China.

Policy

Russia's security policy behavior has tended to be more consistent with the view that the rise of China does not pose a security threat to the RFE than the view that it does in two main ways: continued compliance with the border arms reduction agreement signed in 1996-1997 and the development of cross-border transport infrastructure.

In accordance with the arms reduction agreement, Russia and China have reduced their armed forces on the border, including ground forces, border troops, air forces, and air defense, and the number of the forces' primary weapons within 100 kilometers of the border to a minimum level that resembles a defensive posture. Since 1999, a Joint Control Group (JCG) meets twice a year

and conducts inspections of the armed forces of each side at the border once a year to ensure that they remain at the agreed level. This agreement continues to be observed by Russia despite the acknowledgement of experts (discussed above) that China's conventional capabilities in northeast Asia exceed those of Russia.

Reform of the Russian military starting in late 2008 (mainly in response to the uncovering of flaws during the war with Georgia) involved changes to the forces in the RFE but did not significantly affect the balance of power with China in northeast Asia.⁸⁹ Initially, the changes may have even left the far eastern forces less capable of defending the large territory.⁹⁰ While the Vostok 2010 and 2014 exercises may have been signals to China, there have been no substantial increases to the ground forces stationed in the RFE throughout the 2010s, and while the exercises demonstrated Russia's ability to deploy reinforcements to the region in a peaceful context, it remains unlikely that such deployments could be replicated in war, and even if they could, it is not likely they would significantly affect the result of an invasion by the PLA.⁹¹

Without the bolstering of conventional forces in the RFE, the Vostok 2010 and 2014 exercises would be more accurately interpreted as signals to a potential or hypothetical threat rather than to a direct threat from China, which is consistent with one of the main findings of this chapter.

Russia apparently deemed it unnecessary to send another such signal with Vostok 2018, as China was invited to participate in the exercise. This provided an opportunity not only for the militaries to improve interoperability, but also for China to gain experience operating in the terrain of the

⁸⁹ Schwartz. 'The Military Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations. In Jo and Lo, eds. *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*. 2019. p. 101.

⁹⁰ Ibid., citing Robert Thornton. 'Military Modernization and the Russian Ground Forces'. Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College. 2011. pp. 28-29.

⁹¹ Schwartz. 'The Military Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations. In Jo and Lo, eds. *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*. 2019. p. 102.

RFE and to learn lessons from the Russian military's combat experience in Syria. Consequently, it is likely that the exercise contributed to the building of trust between the militaries as several other Russia-China military exercises likely have. If the dominant perceptions among Russian officials of the implications of China's rise on Russia's security interests included a serious concern about the probability of a military incursion into the RFE by the PLA, then it would be reasonable to expect a buildup of conventional forces in the RFE in an effort to reach parity with China's forces. Additionally, the PLA would not have been invited to participate in Vostok 2018. There also may have been changes in Russia's willingness to comply with the 1996-1997 border arms reduction agreement ranging from the suspension of inspections to a full withdrawal from the agreement.

In the extreme scenario that China invades the RFE, bridges across the Amur River would prove valuable for the swift transport of forces. If dominant perceptions included a serious concern about the probability of such an event, it is doubtful the Russian decisionmakers would support the construction of bridges connecting the countries. In 2013, an agreement on the construction of the Nizheleninskoye-Tongjiang bridge was signed, and construction was completed in 2019. In 2014 a declaration of intent to begin construction on the Blagoveshchensk-Heihe bridge was made and in 2019 construction was completed.

Another infrastructure development that reflects a lack of a perception of threat of a Chinese military invasion of the RFE is the adaptation of some Russian railways to include a 'Chinese gauge'. Russian railways use the 1520mm gauge whereas the Chinese use the international standard gauge of 1435mm. At a 'break of gauge' (where one gauge standard meets another) the most common practices are to either load the freight and/or passengers of the trains on one gauge to trains on the other gauge or to change the bogie of the train to accommodate the change in

gauge, both of which take a considerable amount of time. The inclusion of the 1435mm gauge allows for near seamless cross-border railway transportation, which has significant security implications.

There are currently four railway crossings at the Russian and Chinese border—Zabaikalsk-Manzhouli, Grodekovo-Suifenhe, Nizheleninskoye-Tongjiang, and Makhhalino-Hunchun—the first two of which still have a break of gauge. The Nizheleninskoye-Tongjiang was designed to accommodate both the 1520mm and 1435mm gauges, allowing trains from China to enter Russia without having to stop for mechanical reasons. The Grodekovo-Suifenhe and Makhhalino-Hunchun railway crossings are being adapted to accommodate both gauges as a part of Russia's plan to develop the Primorye-1 and Primorye-2 International Transport Corridors, which will allow for China's quicker access to the Russian ports of Zarubino, Posyet, Vladivostok, and Nakhodka for the export of its goods.⁹² The Zabaikalsk station is undergoing large-scale reconstruction that began in 2012. The reconstruction includes the installation of a new narrow-gauge sorting system, which will allow for much faster transitions from one gauge to another.⁹³

Continued compliance with the arms reduction agreement on the border, the lack of a Russian military buildup to counter China's conventional superiority, and the development of infrastructure that facilitates border crossings are more consistent with the dominant expert view identified in this chapter that China does not pose a military threat to the RFE than the view that

⁹² Vesti Primorye. 'Zheleznui Dorogu po Ktaiskomu Standartu Sobiraiutsia Postroit' v Primor'e (A Railway According to the Chinese Standard is Going to Be Built in Primorye)'. 13/10/2018. Available at <https://vestiprim.ru/news/ptrnews/69068-zheleznuyu-dorogu-po-kitayskomu-standartu-sobirayutsya-postroit-v-primore.html>. Accessed 27/12/2020; and Olga Dobrolyubova. 'Grodekovo Perekhodit na Kitaiskui Kolei (Grodekovo Switches to the Chinese Track)'. ZR Press. 29/11/2019. Available at https://zrpress.ru/business/primorje_29.11.2019_96574_grodekovo-perekhodit-na-kitajskuju-koleju.html. Accessed 27/12/2020.

⁹³ Bamstroyemkhanizatsiya. 'Rekonstruktsiia Sortirovochnoi Sistemy Stantsii Zabaikal'sk (Reconstruction of the Sorting System of Zabaikalsk Station)'. 10/04/2018. Available at http://bsmuk.ru/press-center/news/rekonstruktsiya_sortirovochnoy_sistemy_stantsii_zabaykalsk/. Accessed 27/12/2020.

China currently or is likely at some point in the near- or medium-term to pose such a threat. Relevant perceptions conveyed in fundamental official documents (e.g. national security strategies, foreign policy concepts, etc.) are also consistent with the former view. This is because China is referenced neither directly nor indirectly (e.g. with the term ‘some countries’ in a certain geographical location) in such documents as a threat to national security with regard to the RFE. In contrast, there are clear expressions of concern over military encroachment on Russia’s western borders and over continuing threats in the form of terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized crime.⁹⁴

The ‘Dispositional factors’ section in chapter 2 outlines a framework for analysis that has been followed in this chapter.⁹⁵ Based on the finding that the dominant expert view regarding Russia’s security policies in the RFE relevant to China are held by experts with a high level of potential influence on average, the chapter concludes that it is likely that the view has been successfully communicated directly or indirectly to foreign policy decisionmakers. This is case 1 in the framework. Given case 1, scenarios 1 or 2 are more likely than scenarios 3 and 4.⁹⁶ This means that it is likely that once the dominant view was successfully communicated to the officials, the

⁹⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. ‘Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation’. 01/12/2016. Articles 14-17, 33, 35, 55, 64, 70, 92, and 97. Available at https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICk6B6BZ29/content/id/2542248. Accessed 20/04/2021; Government of the Russian Federation. ‘O Strategii Natsional’noi Bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii (On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation)’. Articles 22, 43, 44, 47, 90. 31/12/2015. Available at <https://www.mchs.gov.ru/dokumenty/ukazy-prezidenta-rf/2933>. Accessed 17/04/2021; and Government of the Russian Federation. ‘O Strategii Natsional’noi Bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii do 2020 Goda (On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020)’. 12/05/2009. Articles 10, 17, 37, 38, 40, and 41. Available at <https://76.mchs.gov.ru/deyatelnost/napravleniya-deyatelnosti/grazhdanskaya-zashchita/organizatsiya-meropriyatiy-grazhdanskoy-oborony/normativno-pravovye-akty/federalnye-zakony/ukaz-prezidenta-rf-ot-12-maya-2009-g-n-537-o-strategii-natsionalnoy-bezopasnosti-rossiyskoy-federatsii-do-2020-goda>. Accessed 17/04/2021.

⁹⁵ pp. 80-86.

⁹⁶ Scenario 3 would be considered most likely if the dominant expert views were held by those with a high level of potential influence on average and Russia’s policies were not consistent with the views. Scenario 4 would be considered most likely if the dominant expert views were held by those with a low level of potential influence on average.

dispositional factors (perceptions and values) of the officials either changed to become more aligned with, or less contradictory to, the dominant view (scenario 1), or the officials' preexisting dispositional factors were reinforced by the dominant view (scenario 2). In both scenarios, dispositional factors that inform the dominant views are likely shared to the point that policy is consistent with the views (in scenario 1, they are shared after the communication, and in scenario 2, they are shared before and after the communication). Therefore, the dispositional factors inherent in the views would explain the policies. Such factors include the perception that China would not commit an aggressive act on the RFE if such an act would be harmful to its interests; and the perception that an aggressive act from China on the RFE would be against China's interests.

Conclusion

This chapter approaches the research question of the thesis with an examination of the perceptions of Russian experts on the demographic and military security of the RFE *vis-à-vis* China. The first section begins by examining expert texts that focus on the demographic imbalance between the RFE and neighboring Chinese provinces and include discussions on the implications of such imbalance from a security perspective. The section reveals that the dominant view among experts throughout the period of interest is that there is no threat of mass immigration from China. For reasons that remain unclear, the experts rarely explain why there is an absence of such a threat. This may be because they view the lack of an immigration threat from China as self-evident. This explanation seems more likely than the alternative that they have no reasons for their beliefs. Larin, in a rare instance of presenting an argument supporting the view that there is no threat of mass immigration from China to the RFE, explains that there is no such threat because there is a lack of economic incentives for the Chinese to move to the

region, and that it is not uncommon for those who do to experience harassment and beatings.⁹⁷ Kamynin offers similar reasoning.⁹⁸ The question of which hypothesis this finding may support depends on the nature of the threat of mass immigration from China to the RFE. If the threat of mass immigration to the RFE is thought to be due to incentives created by Beijing, then the findings support hypothesis 1 because the perception of an absence of threat stems from China's lack of harmful intentions towards Russia.⁹⁹ If the threat of mass immigration is thought to be due to the interests of Chinese immigrants without an incentive created by Beijing, and the interests of the immigrants are included in the definition of 'China's interests', then the finding supports hypothesis 3 because the perception of an absence of threat stems from the non-conflictual nature of the interests of Russia and China.¹⁰⁰

The second section analyzes texts that address the question of whether China poses a military threat to the RFE. The content analysis finds that the dominant view among Russian experts is that, although there is significant disparity in conventional military power in favor of China in northeast Asia, there is no direct military threat. Reasons for this conclusion hinge on four themes identified in the experts' arguments: (1) the socio-economic fragility or vulnerability of the PRC, (2) China's interests, (3) the cost of aggression against Russia (which is strongly related to the first two themes), and (4) the idea that a military threat may exist from China, but it is only hypothetical or potential, not direct. This finding supports hypothesis 1 in that, in this view, Beijing does not intend to harm Russia by means of military aggression.¹⁰¹ The finding

⁹⁷ Larin. 'The PRC Through the Eyes of the Far East'. 2010. p. 127.

⁹⁸ Kamynin. 'Foreign Policy Results of 2007 and Prospects of 2008'. 2008.

⁹⁹ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers do not perceive the rise of China as a threat because they believe China has harmless or benign intentions towards Russia.

¹⁰⁰ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider the compatibility or non-conflictual nature of the interests of Russia and China to be one of the main reasons why China's rise does not threaten Russia.

¹⁰¹ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers do not perceive the rise of China as a threat because they believe China has harmless or benign intentions towards Russia.

supports hypothesis 2 in that it consists of the notion that China would not risk military aggression against the RFE because of its socio-economic vulnerability in the form of its concentrated urban centers driving nearly all of the country's development progress.¹⁰² Finally, the finding supports hypothesis 3 in that, as it is not in China's interest to forcefully expand into the RFE, the interests of the countries in this sense are non-conflictual.¹⁰³

The final section examines Russia's policies relevant to the security of the RFE *vis-à-vis* China with the aim of determining the extent to which they are consistent with the dominant views of experts identified by the content analysis. Three main policies indicate the lack of a perception of threat from the rise of China among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers. First, Russian forces on the Chinese border have remained at a minimum level and the Chinese have been allowed to inspect such forces annually in accordance with the 1996-1997 agreements on the demilitarization of the border. Second, despite the PLA's conventional superiority over the Russian military in northeast Asia since the 1990s, Russia has not built up its forces in the region in response. Third, Russia has been making improvements to cross-border transit infrastructure that allow for quicker and easier access to the RFE in the form of bridges over the Amur River (Nizheleninskoye-Tongjiang and Blagoveshchensk-Heihe), the addition of 1435mm railway gauges (Grodekovo-Suifenhe and Makhhalino-Hunchun), and the installation of a new narrow-gauge sorting system that will allow for quicker transition from the 1435mm gauge to the Russian 1520mm gauge (Zabaikalsk-Manzhouli). It is unlikely that such policies would be authorized and implemented if there were a dominant perception among Russian foreign policy

¹⁰² The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider nuclear deterrence to be one of the main reasons why the rise of China does not threaten Russia.

¹⁰³ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider the compatibility or non-conflictual nature of the interests of Russia and China to be one of the main reasons why China's rise does not threaten Russia.

decisionmakers of a military threat from a rising China. Given that the dominant views held by potentially influential experts identified in the chapter are consistent with the policies, the chapter concludes that scenarios 1 or 2 in the framework explained in the ‘Dispositional factors’ section in chapter 2 are most likely.

In relation to other arguments in Western literature on Russia-China relations, the findings of this chapter are partly contradictory and partly supportive. It has become less common in recent years to argue or imply that fear of mass immigration from China to the RFE significantly influences Russian foreign policy towards China, but such work is found throughout most of the period of interest.¹⁰⁴ The results of the analysis presented in this chapter do not provide evidence that perceptions of a demographic threat in the form of mass immigration from China to the RFE are prevalent among Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military or Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

Literature that refers to various Chinese interests and the way they would be negatively affected by an aggressive policy towards Russia in arguments that China does not pose a direct military threat to the RFE is supported by the findings of this chapter.¹⁰⁵ One main finding of the chapter that is not commonly found in Western literature on Russia-China relations is that Russia’s security policy in the RFE is significantly affected by the perceived socio-economic vulnerability

¹⁰⁴ For relatively recent examples, see Ilan I. Berman. ‘Russia’s Fraught Demographic Future’. In Enders S. Wimbush, and Elizabeth M. Portale, eds. *Russia in Decline*. Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation. 2017. p. 43; Bobo Lo. *Russia and the New World Disorder*. Brookings Institution Press, Chatham House. 2015. p. 149; and Niklas Swanström. ‘Sino–Russian Relations at the Start of the New Millennium in Central Asia and Beyond’. *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 87 (2014): 484–485.

¹⁰⁵ See for example see Paul N. Schwartz. ‘The Military Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations. In Jo Bekkevold and Bobo Lo, eds. *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2019. p. 101; Stephen Blank. ‘Triangularism Old and New: China, Russia, and the United States’. In Jo Bekkevold and Bobo Lo, eds. *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*. 2019. pp. 220–221; and Gilbert Rozman. ‘Sino-Russian Relations: A New Era?’ *Asia Dialogue*. 18/06/2019. Available at <https://theasiadialogue.com/2019/06/18/sino-russian-relations-a-new-era/>. Accessed 23/02/2021.

of China in the form of its concentrated urban centers driving nearly all of the country's development progress. The vulnerability contributes (along with a perceived lack of harmful intentions) to Moscow's confidence that it is highly unlikely that China would risk military aggression towards the RFE, and therefore frees Russia from the burden of balancing against China's superior conventional military power in northeast Asia.

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Chapter 6: Economic Interaction in Central Asia

This chapter contributes to this thesis by addressing an area of significant economic interests of Russia that has been directly affected by the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The economic importance of Central Asia for Russia is evidenced by Moscow's bilateral efforts for economic engagement as well as its multilateral economic integrative efforts that have resulted in the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Russia's economic interests in Central Asia mainly consist of access to, and transport of, the region's energy resources. Central Asian countries also provide export markets for Russian goods and a source of inexpensive labor.

China is interested in access to Central Asia's energy resources and export markets for Chinese goods. Additionally, Beijing is interested in the region's participation in its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), an ambitious plan to revitalize and modernize the overland and maritime Silk Roads connecting China to Europe. The overland route traverses Central Asia, hence Beijing's efforts to reach agreements with countries of the region on infrastructure development projects. China also views the economic development of the region as a preventive measure against social unrest and instability which would have the potential to spread into Xinjiang province (Uygur Autonomous Region).

Since both Russia and China have vital economic interests in the region, it has been considered a hotspot for potential rivalry or even conflict between them. The aim of this chapter is to explain why economic tensions between Russia and China have not risen to the point conflict, focusing on the views of Russian experts on the implications of China's economic expansion in Central Asia for Russia's interests. As explained in chapter 2, these views have been targeted for analysis

because of the likelihood that some have contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors (perceptions and values) of Russian decisionmakers: factors on which Russian foreign policy towards China in the region has been based.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, Russia's economic interaction with China in the region is contextualized with a brief overview of the foreign policies of Russia and China towards Central Asia since 1991. The chapter then turns to the results of the content analysis of Russian expert perceptions. The results are presented in two sections: one on perceptions of the more general subject of China's economic activity, interests, and economic interaction with Russia in Central Asia; and another on perceptions of the more specific and recent subject of China's BRI, its implications for Russia's interests in Central Asia, and its interaction with the EAEU.

The first of these sections reveals two dominant trends in Russian expert thought on China's economic activity, interests, and economic interaction with Russia in Central Asia: first, China's economic interests in Central Asia are 'natural', 'logical', or 'understandable'; and second, economic competition between Russia and China exists, but it is limited and manageable. The section also identifies some skepticism and cautious optimism among experts regarding China's economic activity in Central Asia.

The second section reveals two dominant trends in Russian expert thought on China's BRI, its implications for Russia's interests in Central Asia, and its interaction with the EAEU: first, the BRI and its linking with the EAEU is beneficial to Russia; and second, the BRI and EAEU are compatible initiatives, and their linking will lead to mutual enhancing effects or synergy. The section also identifies some skepticism and cautious optimism among Russian experts regarding the benefits of the BRI for Russia and the practicability of its linking with the EAEU. The

chapter then reports the results of the qualitative aspect of the content analysis relevant to the perceptions of China's establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The analysis finds a dominant view of benefits and an absence of loss, which are indicative of positive-sum thinking among Russian experts with connections to the Russian government or military, and likely among foreign policy decisionmakers. It also finds that the AIIB is widely viewed not only as a challenge to 'traditional' Western-led international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but also as a source of division between the US and its most important allies.

The final section discusses Russia's policies in Central Asia relevant to its economic interaction with China in the region. It is argued that Russia's blocking of the development of multilateral economic cooperation within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and protectionist measures against Chinese imports to the EAEU do not necessarily indicate a perception of threat from China's economic expansion in Central Asia. The section offers the following interpretation of these policies, which is consistent with the dominant expert views found in this chapter and to two other main policies in the region: the linking of the EAEU and BRI beginning in 2015 and the 2018 EAEU-China trade agreement. A lack of protectionism and unchecked Chinese economic activity in Central Asia could be destabilizing because of resulting growth in anti-Chinese sentiments and the failure of domestic businesses that cannot compete with Chinese goods. However, a complete lack of Chinese economic activity, including economic cooperation with Central Asian countries, could also be destabilizing because of resulting economic stagnation and insufficient access to affordable consumer goods. It is also acknowledged in Russia that China's economic expansion in Central Asia in the form of investments and infrastructure development projects contribute to economic development, which is considered by

Russia and China to be important for maintaining stability in the region. Stability in Central Asia is a primary and mutual interest of Russia and China, and both understand the risks of growing anti-Chinese sentiments and a lack of economic development. In this context, Russia's economic balancing policies combined with the linking of the EAEU and BRI beginning in 2015 and the 2018 EAEU-China trade agreement creates a picture of economic interaction between Russia and China in Central Asia characterized not by confrontation and rivalry moving towards conflict but rather by manageable competition moving with caution towards a higher degree of cooperation and coordination in the mutual interest of regional stability. Such policies are consistent with the dominant views of potentially influential experts identified. Therefore, the chapter concludes that scenarios 1 or 2 in the framework explained in the 'Dispositional factors' section in chapter 2 are most likely.

Context

The period of interest of this thesis is 2000 to 2020. However, it is necessary to provide context to Russia's foreign policy towards China in Central Asia with a brief overview of the role of Central Asia in the foreign policies of Russia and China since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Russian foreign policy from 1991 to the mid-1990s can be understood as almost entirely univector, focusing the vast majority of efforts on continued rapprochement and integration with the West. There was also a popular view in Russia that Central Asia was for too long a burden for Russia: a backwater. In addition to the prioritization of the West and a lack of interest in Central Asia, the Russian government was constrained by efforts for state survival. Domestic conditions were largely chaotic due to economic 'shock therapy', a fall in living standards, the rise of criminal organizations, the 1993 constitutional crisis and the shelling of the Russian White House, and the First Chechen War. By the mid-1990s, many in Russia had become

disillusioned with the West for reasons including the perceived failure of the Western model of liberal democracy and free market economy in Russia; inadequate support from the West in transitioning to such a model; unwillingness of the West to treat Russia as an equal partner; accusations of human rights violations in Chechnya; failure to swiftly attain membership in GATT and later the WTO; NATO's eastward expansion, etc. With the arrival of the 'Eurasianist' Evgeny Primakov to the office of Foreign Minister in 1996 came renewed interest in Central Asia. However, Russia lacked the ability to restore its lost economic presence and influence in the region.

Since 2000, under President Putin the Russian government worked to bring Russian oil and gas companies to heel. With the increased influence of the government over the companies, Russia gradually regained the ability to pursue its economic interests in Central Asia, which were centered on the region's natural resources. Russian oil and gas companies were increasingly used strategically to secure Russian interests rather than pursuing only their own interests according to market principles. Through these companies, Russia was willing to pay a higher price for Central Asian oil and gas and work to maintain a monopoly over energy transit routes from the region.

Meanwhile, China began its economic expansion into Central Asia, mostly through bilateral ties at first, almost immediately after the countries of the region gained independence from the Soviet Union. Like Russia, China was interested in Central Asia's energy resources. They have been viewed as a means to diversify its energy imports away from sources which had import routes to China through the Malacca Strait. Dependence on energy passing through the Strait is a strategic liability for China because, in the event of a conflict with the US, the US Navy could block this supply of energy by occupying the Strait. China is also interested in accessing Central Asian markets for the export of its goods. Finally, as mentioned, above, China is interested in the

economic development of the region for stabilizing purposes and in infrastructure development projects as a part of the BRI, which aims to better connect China to the markets of Europe.

According to some analysts in Russia and the West, because both Russia and China have major economic interests in the region, there is a lot of potential for a clash of interests, which could result in conflict. Despite such analysis, Russia and China have so far been able to avoid the level of rivalry and tension in the region expected. This section now turns to Russian expert perspectives on the topic of China's economic activity in Central Asia and its economic interaction with Russia in the region in an effort to explain why this is the case. Please refer to information provided on the institutions and experts in chapter 3 regarding potential influence through government or military connections and qualifications.

Economic Activity, Interests, and Interaction in Central Asia

Natural interests

One theme that has been identified by the content analysis of Russian expert publications is the framing of China's economic activity in Central Asia in a way that makes it more acceptable to Russia. This is done by describing such activity as 'natural', 'logical', or 'understandable', and by contextualizing China's foreign policy towards Central Asia in broader global tendencies, most of which hinge on Chinese-US rivalry, US containment policy towards China, and strategic preparation for the contingency of conflict with US.

The trend in Russian expert thought that China's economic interests and activity in Central Asia can be seen as 'natural', 'logical', or 'understandable' does not always include an explicit statement that such interests and activity can be seen as such. Included in the trend identified by the content analysis are nuanced explanations for China's economic activity in Central Asia that

point to domestic and foreign forces as motivators for such activity, including rivalry and potential conflict with the US, the need for development in Xinjiang for both economic and security purposes, and Russia's integration efforts in the region.

Views likely to have influence

Guzenkova and Vinogradov et al. explain in a report published by *Russian Institute of Strategic Studies (RISS)* that China's prioritization of Central Asia in its foreign policy towards the post-Soviet space is 'logical', not only because of the natural resources, the access to which would reduce its dependence on vulnerable sea routes, but also because of geographical proximity, historical ties, and common regional problems.¹ Moreover, the experts explain that Central Asia 'is attractive to the PRC from the point of view of testing various strategic schemes of foreign policy, since the system of regional relations is still in its infancy and China has the opportunity to actively influence this process, competing not only with Russia, but also with the USA, which is also actively affirming its presence in the region'.²

In an article published by *Russia in Global Politics*, Vorobyov identifies the economic sphere in Central Asia as one in which competition between Russia and China may occur and claims that such competition is 'inevitable and natural'.³ Karataeva, in an article published by *RISS*, dedicates some space to China's development of transit routes as a part of its BRI and its implications.⁴ The expert identifies the potential threat posed by the US to China's oversea

¹ Guzenkova, Tamara and Andrei Vinogradov et al. 'Strany SNG i Baltii v Global'noi Politike Kitaia (CIS and Baltic Countries in China's Global Policy)'. Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Problems of National Strategy 1, no. 10 (2012): 13 Available at https://riss.ru/images/pdf/journal/2012/1/04_%20.pdf. Accessed 27/02/2020.

² Ibid.

³ Vorobyov, Vitaly. 'Summa Skhodiashchikhsia Interesov (Sum of Converging Interests)'. *Russia in Global Politics*. 23/12/2012. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/number/Summa-skhodyaschikhsya-interesov-15795>. Accessed 28/02/2020.

⁴ Karataeva, Karolina. 'Podkhody Osnovnykh Uchastnikov k Razvitiu Evraziiskoi Sistemy Transportnykh Koridorov (The Approaches of the Main Participants to the Development of the Eurasian System of Transit

transport routes as one of the main reasons China began exploring ways to construct land routes to Europe.⁵ Karataeva points out that one of the main aims of China's BRI, which is part of its 'going outside' strategy, is to improve production capacity in western provinces of China, especially Xinjiang, so that the production capacity of China as a whole is distributed more evenly across the country.⁶ The importance of the development of transit in Xinjiang both domestically and across the border to Central Asia stems from the fact that 80% of China's exports to the region consists of products made in Xinjiang.⁷ In an article published by the *Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC)*, Igor Ivanov (ed.) et al. claim that China's attempts to establish the SCO Development Fund, the SCO Development Bank, and an SCO free trade zone are seen by the Russian side as stemming from China's 'natural desire' to advance its interests using its economic advantages.⁸

Given the qualifications of Guzenkova, Vinogradov, Vorobyov, Karataeva, Luzyanin, Petrovsky, Kortunov, Karneev, and Denisov and the fact that they have all served in the Russian government or worked at an FSBI, it is reasonable to argue that it is likely that the views the experts convey in the articles referenced above have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

Corridors'. Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Problems of National Strategy 4, no. 37 (2016). Available at <https://riss.ru/images/pdf/journal/2016/4/10.pdf>. Accessed 06/03/2020.

⁵ Ibid., p. 228.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 228-229.

⁷ Ibid., p. 229.

⁸ Ivanov, Igor (ed.), et al. 'Rossiisko-Kitaiskii Dialog: Model' 2016 (Russian-Chinese Dialogue: Model 2016)'. Russian International Affairs Council. 30/05/2016. p. 34. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/publications/rossiysko-kitayskiy-dialog-model-2016/>. Accessed 10/05/2020.

Views not unlikely to have influence

Regarding Chinese economic interests and activity in the region, Frolova explains in an article published by *National Defense* that China is interested in establishing secure access to natural resources that are transported over land in order to diversify away from sources that are either situationally unstable (the expert makes an example of Iran, China's third most important supplier of oil at the time) or have vulnerable sea routes to China.⁹ Frolova points out that China is also interested in Central Asia as a resource transit space from the Caspian region and eventually from the Persian Gulf, therefore, it is 'obvious that in the future, the PRC will only increase cooperation with the republics of the region in order to increase oil and gas imports with the parallel implementation of infrastructure and transport projects in this area'.¹⁰ Regarding China's investment in transport infrastructure in Central Asia, the expert writes that its interest in such investment is 'understandable', given the need of the region's oil and gas industry for such infrastructure as well as the need for the improvement of the rate of China's exportation of goods to the Middle East and Europe.¹¹

Frolova also identifies specific interests of China in individual Central Asian countries, noting that efforts to establish strong bilateral ties have been the PRC's focus since it failed to create a free trade zone including the region.¹² The expert identifies China's interests in individual Central Asian countries in the following way:

'The main attention of the PRC is now focused on the oil and gas sectors of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, as well as the nuclear industry of Kazakhstan ... In the field of transport, Beijing

⁹ Frolova, Ivetta. 'Reaktsiia Zameshcheniia (Substitution Reaction)'. *National Defense*. 2012. Available at <http://www.oborona.ru/includes/periodics/geopolitics/2012/1009/19009290/detail.shtml>. Accessed 28/02/2020.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

focuses on Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and in the field of water resources, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are coming to the fore'.¹³

Frolova explains that China's interest in establishing free trade zones, including in Central Asia, is a response to the strengthening of protectionism worldwide.¹⁴ While China was not successful in creating a free trade area for the whole of Central Asia, the expert points out that such areas were successfully created in the border areas of Irkeshtam and Torugart, Kyrgyzstan and Karasu-Kulma, Tajikistan.¹⁵

Frolova argues in an article published by *RISS* that security interests are prioritized over economic interests in China's foreign policy towards Central Asia, but they are tightly interconnected.¹⁶ In the expert's view, cooperation with Central Asian countries is in China's national interest because it allows for the creation of favorable conditions for the economic development of northwest China.¹⁷ The development of northwest China, primarily Xinjiang, is important for domestic security as well as for growing consumer demand for Chinese products.¹⁸ The PRC also aims to create favorable conditions in Central Asia for growth in demand for Chinese goods, services, and capital.¹⁹ Frolova points out that, from the perspective of China's total trade with Central Asian countries, which amounts to less than 1%, the region is insignificant, but from the perspective of Xinjiang's trade with Central Asia, which amounts to

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Frolova, Ivetta. 'Ėkonomicheskaia Politika KNR v Sin'tszian-Uĭgurskom Avtonomnom Raione v Kontekste Interesov Stran TŠentral'noĭ Azii (China's Economic Policy in the Xinjiang Uighur Province in the Context of the Interests of Central Asian Countries)'. Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Problems of National Strategy 4, no. 25 (2014): 76. Available at https://riss.ru/images/pdf/journal/2014/4/07_.pdf. Accessed 01/03/2020.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 76-77.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 77.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 79.

about 70% of its trade, the region is very important.²⁰ According to the expert, China is also interested in access to Central Asia's natural resources not only to meet the needs of its growing economy, but also to reduce its dependency on resources that are imported through vulnerable sea routes.²¹

In another article, Frolova explains that China considers economic development and the improvement of quality of life as one of the main ways to promote stability and weaken separatism, and that the BRI can achieve such an aim and contribute to national security.²² According to the expert, other aims of the BRI include: 'expanding China's authority in international affairs and strengthening its economic influence in Asia'; 'to balance the containment policy of China by the United States and its allies in the region' that 'can have a serious negative impact on China'; and 'to reduce its dependence on transport routes passing through the South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca'.²³

Frolova neither has a doctorate nor has she held a position in the Russian government or military. The expert is a specialist in socio-political commentary and has an MA in Journalism.²⁴ Frolova has been engaged in 'scientific work' at *RISS* since 1998, focusing on Russia-China relations and China's economic and foreign policies.²⁵ Despite the lack of a doctorate or history with the government or military, given that Frolova has been at *RISS* (an FSBI) for a considerable amount of time and frequently publishes views through it, it is reasonable to argue that it is not unlikely

²⁰ Ibid., p. 78.

²¹ Ibid., p. 77.

²² Frolova, Ivetta. 'Kitaïskiï Proekt "Ėkonomicheskiï Poïas SHĕlkovogo Puti": Razvitie, Problemy, Perspektivy (The Chinese Project "Silk Road Economic Belt": Development, Problems, and Prospects)'. Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Problems of National Strategy 5, no. 38 (2016): 51-52. Available at <https://riss.ru/documents/562/a92c4825394e4974a7089bfa139b5dbf.pdf>. Accessed 06/03/2020.

²³ Ibid., p. 52.

²⁴ Frolova, Ivetta. Profile at the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Available at <https://riss.ru/profile/frolova/>. Accessed 14/06/2020.

²⁵ Ibid.

that the expert's views have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

This trend in the dominant view of China's economic activity and interests in Central Asia shows a level of understanding that likely would not have been reached if China had been engaging the region over the period of interest with disregard to Russian sensitivities (the following chapter discusses China's respect for Russia's 'special' or 'privileged' interests in the region). Goodwill and accommodation of Russia's interests in Central Asia have likely been enabling factors for the view that China's interests in the region are 'natural', 'logical', or 'understandable'. Such a view is closely related to perceptions of an absence of unmanageable conflicts of interest and harmful intentions from China. These perceptions were the most frequently identified in the quantitative aspect of the content analysis regarding reasons for perceptions of an absence of threat in the texts analyzed. In the context of managing decline, these perceptions have also been important for the formation of a benign image of China, which is one of the most important factors in peaceful power transition between declining and rising powers.

Limited and mitigated competition

Another recurring theme is the view among Russia experts that, while both Russia and China both have major economic interests in Central Asia that may occasionally be contradictory and cause some competition, the threat of a clash between the two countries in the region should not be exaggerated, as they are able to mitigate the negative effects of competition through dialogue at the highest levels of government and institutional mechanisms developed by the SCO. Major clashes of interests are also avoided with the help of Beijing's restraint in Central Asia due to its prioritization of maintaining good relations with Moscow and strict adherence to foreign policy principles such as non-interference in internal affairs.

Views likely to have influence

In an article published by *Strategy of Russia*, Luzyanin acknowledges that there are some ‘discrepancies’ between the interests of Russia and China in Central Asia, however, this does not justify expectations for rivalry between the two in the region.²⁶ The expert explains that SCO mechanisms ‘mitigate these contradictions, helping to adapt Russian and Chinese interests to the needs of infrastructural and socio-economic development in the Shanghai organization zone’.²⁷

In an article published by *Strategy of Russia*, Lukyanov compares the newly elected President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, to a bachelorette who is the target of courting by great powers. The expert does not give the sense that he views the Central Asian country as part of Russia’s sphere of privileged interests—that Russia is entitled to Turkmenistan—but rather he views it as an area of competition in which ‘Russia will need a very serious game’.²⁸ As for the interaction of Russia and China in Central Asia in general, Lukyanov views the countries as economic competitors in a competition that ‘has not yet manifested itself, since China is behaving quite restrained, and does not want to annoy Moscow’.²⁹

In a *RISS* report cited above, Guzenkova and Vinogradov et al. write the following regarding perceptions of China’s presence in the post-Soviet space.

²⁶ Luzyanin, Sergei. ‘Sostoianie Dvustoronnix Otnosheniĭ (The State of Bilateral Relations)’. *Strategy of Russia* 4 (2008). Available at http://sr.fondedin.ru/new/fullnews_arch_to.php?subaction=showfull&id=1208862354&archive=1208863359&start_from=&ucat=14&. Accessed 22/02/2020.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Lukyanov, Fyodor. ‘My i Sosedi: Itodi 2007 Goda. (We and the Neighbors: 2007 Results)’. *Strategy of Russia* 1 (2008). Available at http://www.fondedin.ru/sr/new/fullnews_arch_to.php?archive=1201603769&id=1201600688&start_from=&subaction=showfull&ucat=14. Accessed 22/02/2020.

²⁹ Ibid.

‘China, to a great extent, succeeded in evoking sympathy and reducing wariness regarding its presence in the post-Soviet countries through the strict implementation of the fundamental principle of foreign policy - the principle of non-interference in internal affairs ... Chinese diplomacy firmly promises its partners to respect the principles of mutual respect, recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, equality, and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. Everyone, even the smallest state has a chance to be called a best friend or a good partner, which is tied to a great state with bonds of inseparable friendship. The Confucian tradition of respectful politeness towards the partner and a declaration of respect for the choice of their social system by the peoples and the path of development open many doors that in other cases could have remained closed’.³⁰

Russia in Global Politics published some materials used by the *Valdai Discussion Club* for a report prepared by a research team led by Karaganov under the project management of Bordachev.³¹ Regarding central Eurasia, the team claims that the interests of Russia and China ‘geographically’ overlap, that there are no major contradictions, and that none of those contradictions being discussed are ‘objective or insurmountable’.³² Karaganov et al. explain that

‘from the point of view of the states that participate in regional cooperation (primarily Russia, China, Kazakhstan), Central Eurasia is a territory of cooperation and harmony, and not competition of development models or areas of economic orientation. To create conditions for their own growth and prosperity, all parties are ready to seek mutually acceptable compromises and take into account each other's interests in any areas of cooperation’.³³

³⁰ Guzenkova and Vinogradov et al. ‘CIS and Baltic Countries in China’s Global Policy’. 2012. p. 8.

³¹ Karaganov, Sergei, et al. ‘Budushee Tsentral’noĭ Evrazii (The Future of Central Eurasia)’. *Russia in Global Politics*. 05/04/2015. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/budushhee-czentralnoj-evrazii/>. Accessed 05/03/2020.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

In an article published by *RISS*, Gubin addresses China's BRI and its implications for Russia and its interests.³⁴ The expert notes that while Western analysts have argued that a clash of interests between Russia and China in Central Asia is inevitable, 'there are no signs of serious discord'.³⁵ Gubin claims that Russia and China have mutually accommodated each other's interests in the region, with Russia being privileged in the political sphere while China is privileged in the economic sphere.³⁶

In a workbook published by the *RIAC*, Luzyanin et al. argue that while there are competing interests between the two countries in the energy sphere of Central Asia, such competition is not hostile because Europe remains the main importer of Russian oil and gas.³⁷ The experts point out that there are several areas in which there is no conflict of interest between Russia and China, including labor migration, arms supply, transport infrastructure, and mechanical engineering.³⁸ Luzyanin et al. describe China's activity in Central Asia as being guided by both its own interests as well as 'the relevance of cooperation' between Russia and China in the region.³⁹ According to the experts, the implementation of the BRI will not lead to rivalry and a clash of interests, but rather it will allow for further development of Russia and China's partnership in Central Asia.⁴⁰ The experts prefer to call the EAEU and BRI 'asymmetric' rather than

³⁴ Gubin, Andrei. 'Project "Economic Belt New Silk Road"'. Russian Institute of International Studies. Problems of National Strategy 4, no. 37 (2016). Available at <https://riss.ru/images/pdf/journal/2016/4/6.pdf>. Accessed 09/03/2020.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 146.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Luzyanin, Sergei, et al. 'Perspektivy Sotrudnichestva Rossii i Kitaia v Tsentral'noĭ Azii (Prospects for Cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia)'. Russian International Affairs Council. 27/05/2016. pp. 21-22, 30. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/workingpapers/perspektivy-sotrudnichestva-rossii-i-kitaya-v-tsentralnoy-az/>. Accessed 06/03/2020.

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 30-31.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 34.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

contradictory, and they call for the creation of institutions to overcome the asymmetries and facilitate cooperation.⁴¹

Given the qualifications of Luzyanin, Lukyanov, Guzenkova, Vinogradov, Karaganov, Bordachev, Gubin, Zvyagelskaya, and Kazantsev, that most of them have held positions in the Russian government, and that the views they convey in the articles referenced above were published by an FSBI and institutions with connections to the Russian government, it is reasonable to argue that it is likely that the experts' views have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

This trend in the dominant view of China's economic activity, interests, and interaction with Russia in Central Asia consisting of the perception of a lack of unmanageable conflicts of interests is one of the most important factors contributing to the formation of the perception among Russian experts and foreign policy decisionmakers that China does not pose a threat to Russia. This qualitative finding is reflected in the quantitative results presented in chapter 3. A commitment to mutual consultation (a principle of the 'Shanghai Spirit') and a commitment to the solution of conflicts through frequent dialogue have likely contributed to the formation of the perception of a lack of unmanageable conflicts of interest.

If you can't beat them, join them

Lukin has frequently expressed the view that Russia's refusal to participate in multilateral economic cooperation efforts led by China with the intention of slowing China's economic expansion in the region does not work and is contrary to Russia's interests.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 41-42.

Views likely to have influence

In an article published by *International Life*, Lukin analyzes the SCO and Russia's chairmanship of the organization from 2008 to 2009.⁴² Regarding economic activity in the region, the expert points out that in the eight years of the organization's existence, the SCO has not implemented plans for a single multilateral project of economic cooperation, except for two roads, the construction of which began before the creation of the SCO. Lukin then explains the points of view of China and Russia regarding economic cooperation in the SCO. According to the expert, China is 'seriously disappointed' in the lack of multilateral economic cooperation in the organization and points to the contradiction of Russia's passivity and lack of interest in such cooperation in the SCO and the existence of such cooperation within the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC).⁴³

Lukin then addresses two main concerns held by the Russian supporters of limiting multilateral economic cooperation in the SCO: the high cost of proposed economic projects and China's infringing on Russian interests. The expert questions the first concern by specifying the amount of money Russia contributes annually to other international organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, the Eurasian Economic Bank, and the Union State of Russia and Belarus, the individual sums of which are each greater than the entire SCO budget. Lukin then asks whether these organizations are so important that Russia cannot come up with adequate resources for the SCO. The expert challenges the validity of the second concern with three main points. First, Russia and China are equal members of the SCO, as they contribute the same amount to the annual budget and the

⁴² Lukin, Alexander. 'SHOS: Itogi Rossiiskogo Predsedatel'stva (SCO: Results of Russia's Chairmanship)'. *International Life*. 2009. Available at <https://interaffairs.ru/jauthor/material/31>. Accessed 24/02/2020.

⁴³ Ibid.

organization only adopts decisions by consensus. Second, China's expansion of economic influence in Central Asia is already happening despite Russia's lack of economic cooperation in the SCO. Lukin adds that this unwillingness to cooperate occasionally leads to unnecessary competition, and that 'active cooperation with China in Central Asia in the economic field will create an opportunity for a coordinated policy and mutual consideration of interests'.⁴⁴ Third, Lukin claims that the view that China is attempting to plunder Central Asia at the expense of Russia's interests is false. The expert supports this claim by arguing that China is primarily interested in stability and development in Central Asia, and that China is not as interested in trade because of its small scale, pointing out that China's trade with all of Central Asia and Russia amounted to just 3.3% of its total trade.

In addition to the effort to debunk the concerns of Russian supporters of limiting economic cooperation with China within the SCO, Lukin posits that the lack of such cooperation will lead to the strengthening of the economic presence of the West in the region, especially the EU and its member states. The expert also argues that, ironically, a lack of economic cooperation with China in the SCO will lead to what Russian supporters of limiting economic cooperation fear: an expansion of Chinese economic influence in Central Asia at the expense of Russian interests. While Lukin argues against limiting multilateral economic cooperation in the SCO, he implies that such cooperation should proceed with caution by acknowledging that China often exaggerates the stabilizing effects of trade and development, and expresses the view that China needs to 'clarify the social and political dangers to which the hasty opening of the markets of Central Asian states can lead to'.⁴⁵ In sum, Lukin argues that China's economic influence is

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

going to expand in Central Asia whether Russia engages in multilateral economic cooperation in the region or not. With Russia's participation in such cooperation, it will at least be possible to coordinate interests, avoid unnecessary competition, and strengthen Russia and China's economic presence in Central Asia relative to that of the West.

In an article published by *Strategy of Russia*, Lukin reiterates his claim that ignoring China's efforts for multilateral economic cooperation in the SCO will not stop China's strengthening of its role in the SCO at the expense of the interests of the other member states and makes an example of China's unilateral allocation of \$10 billion for SCO trade development.⁴⁶

In an article published by *Russia in Global Politics*, Lukin claims that 'Beijing recognizes traditional Russian interests in the region, and Moscow welcomes the stabilizing Chinese economic presence'.⁴⁷ The expert acknowledges that 'a number of Russian ministries believe that if the [SCO] bank is created, then China, with greater financial capabilities, will dominate it, and Russian interests are more likely to actively use the Eurasian Development Bank created within the EurAsEC, in which the Russian share significantly exceeds the shares of other participants'.⁴⁸ Lukin writes that this position 'seems shortsighted', arguing, as he has elsewhere, that China already has the ability to unilaterally dominate the region economically regardless of whether the SCO bank is created, and that if Russia allows for the creation of the bank and

⁴⁶ Lukin, Alexander. 'V Kitae Zhdut Predlozheniĭ (China Waits for Proposals)'. *Strategy of Russia* 5 (2010). Available at http://sr.fondedin.ru/new/fullnews_arch_to.php?subaction=showfull&id=1274438336&archive=1274438711&start_from=&ucat=14&. Accessed 24/02/2020.

⁴⁷ Lukin Alexander. 'Nuzhno li Rasshirit' SHOS? (Should the SCO Be Expanded?)' *Russia in Global Politics*. 06/11/2011. Available at <https://www.globalaffairs.ru/articles/nuzhno-li-rasshiryat-shos/>. Accessed 15/03/2020.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

participates in it, projects in Russia could be funded and Russia would be able to influence China's participation in the bank.⁴⁹

In the *Bulletin of MGIMO*, the results of the 2010 SCO forum reported by Lukin were published. The expert was the head of the delegation of seven Russian experts sent to the forum. Lukin reported that at the forum 'most participants agreed that economic cooperation within the framework of the SCO is not sufficiently effective, and at the multilateral level, it is practically not conducted at all'.⁵⁰ Chinese participants characteristically advocated spurring economic cooperation within the SCO.⁵¹ Lukin, in a speech he gave at the forum, pointed out that proposals for the creation of the SCO Development Fund and anti-crisis fund are rejected by the governments of some of the member states despite Russian experts' arguments that such rejection is groundless and harmful.⁵² The report makes conclusions and recommendations that the SCO needs to follow if it is to develop into a real organization and avoid becoming 'another club for discussion by regional leaders'.⁵³ One of these recommendations is to develop multilateral economic cooperation, which was being blocked by Russia's economic ministries. The report calls such blocking 'shortsighted' and 'extremely harmful', and argues that it 'undermines Russian influence in the region' and 'will soon lead to the loss by Russia of a significant number of economic positions in Central Asia due to the growing influence of China and the EU'.⁵⁴ Lukin also repeats his argument that China has the power to economically

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Lukin, Alexander. 'Problemy i Perspektivy Razvitiia Shangkhaïskoi Organizatsii Sotrudnichestva: Mneniia Ekspertov (Problems and Development Prospects of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Expert Opinions)'. *Bulletin of MGIMO* 2, no. 16 (2011): 85. Moscow. Available at <http://vestnikold.mgimo.ru/sites/default/files/vestnik/2011-16-2.pdf>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 85.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., pp 87-88.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 88.

dominate Central Asia unilaterally, and that multilateral economic cooperation within the SCO at least gives Russia the opportunity to coordinate its interests with those of China.⁵⁵

Lukin's arguments are relevant to Russia's management of its decline relative to China.

Throughout the period of interest, Russia has joined Chinese institutions and projects active in Central Asia, including the SCO, the AIIB, and the BRI. Lukin stresses repeatedly that China's economic expansion will happen with or without Russia's participation, and that Beijing will deal with Central Asian countries bilaterally if necessary, which would leave Moscow relatively uninformed. In addition to the logic of having influence with a seat at the table, the idea that Russia may be better able to defend its interests from within China's institutions and projects because of easier access to information on China's activity in Central Asia has likely contributed to reasoning behind the decision to participate. This case forms an empirical basis for the contribution of theoretical insight this thesis makes to the literature on managing decline. Such insight consists of the notion that, in some cases, powers in decline may be motivated to participate in the institutions and projects of rising powers in order to gain access to information that would allow them to more easily defend their interests.

Skepticism and cautious optimism

The trends in Russian expert thought on China in Central Asia identified above are essentially cautiously optimistic or forgiving. However, the content analysis also revealed some skepticism among Russian experts regarding the implications of China's economic activity in the region for Russian interests.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Views likely to have influence

In a report published by the *Valdai Discussion Club*, Bordachev et al. observe that China's intention seems to be to strengthen the economic dependence of Russia and Central Asia on China to the extent that, in the event of a crisis, they would have no choice but to remain loyal to the PRC.⁵⁶ The experts predict that China will more assertively pursue its economic interests in Central Asia while worrying less about Moscow's reaction.⁵⁷ At the same time, 'China will generally try to avoid major frictions with Russia in the region'.⁵⁸

In another report published by the *Valdai Discussion Club*, regarding economic integration between the EAEU and the SCO, Bordachev et al. point out that some are concerned that advanced forms of integration, including a free trade zone, would not be good for the EAEU, as their finished goods would be uncompetitive compared to inexpensive Chinese goods.⁵⁹ Nonetheless, the experts argue that 'China and Russia should continue negotiations on a free trade agreement between China and the EAEU'.⁶⁰

Given the qualifications of Bordachev, Lukyanov, Stapran, Toloraya, Kashin, Afontsev, and Lukin and that most of them have held positions in the Russian government, it is reasonable to argue that it is likely that the views the experts convey in the articles referenced above have

⁵⁶ Bordachev, Timofey, et al. 'Zaglianut' v Budushee: Stsenarii Dlia Azii i Rossii v Azii do 2037 Goda (A Look into the Future: Scenarios for Asia and Russia in Asia until 2037)'. Valdai Discussion Club. 27/11/2017. pp. 21-22. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/files/18485/>. Accessed 10/03/2020.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 24-25.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 28.

⁵⁹ Bordachev, Timofey ed. 'Preobrazovanieevrazijskogo Prostranstva: Obshchie Perspektivy v Predstavlenii Analiticheskix Tsentrov Kitaia, Rossii i Kazaxstana (Transformation of the Eurasian Space: General Perspectives in the Representation of the Analytical Centers of China, Russia, and Kazakhstan)'. Valdai Discussion Club. July 2017. p. 12. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/files/16539/>. Accessed 09.03.2020.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

Views not unlikely to have influence

In a *National Defense* article cited above, Frolova argues that ‘the influence and presence of China in the Central Asian region will only increase. At the same time, China, as the experience of its interaction with Central Asian countries in recent decades has shown, will put its own interests in the foreground, which at some point may conflict with Russia's interests in the region’.⁶¹ According to Frolova, the greatest economic and trade contradiction between the interests of Russia and China in Central Asia that may occur would be ‘in the oil and gas sector, in particular, access to the region’s energy resources and directions of their transportation, development of shelf resources of the Caspian Sea, and the laying of new oil and gas pipelines’.⁶²

In an article published by *RISS* cited above, Frolova raises concerns about the trade structure between China and countries of Central Asia.⁶³ Much like its trade relationship with the Russian Far East (RFE), which was analyzed in chapter 4, China’s trade relationship with Central Asia consists of mostly raw materials exported to China from Central Asia and finished goods exported to Central Asia from China.⁶⁴ To Frolova, this represents an ‘unfavorable trend’ in the economic development of Central Asia, as local manufacturing and even agriculture are being displaced because of the low prices of Chinese products, resulting in a ‘stagnation of production’

⁶¹ Frolova. ‘Substitution Reaction’. 2012.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Frolova. ‘China’s Economic Policy in the Xinjiang Uighur Province in the Context of the Interests of Central Asian Countries’. 2014.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 80-81.

in the region.⁶⁵ In addition to this unfavorable trend, Frolova notes that countries of Central Asia are increasingly dependent on Chinese credit in the form of loans, the conditions of which include the participation of Chinese companies in projects, which are carried out mainly in China's interests.⁶⁶ This has also led to debt dependence and its economic and political consequences.⁶⁷ Finally, Frolova argues that neither Russia nor the countries of Central Asia will be able to stop Chinese economic expansion in the region, and because of that, 'the states of Central Asia and Russia need to find the intersection points of mutual interests and learn to use the Chinese presence for their own socio-economic development'.⁶⁸

As explained above, despite Frolova's lack of a doctorate and history with the government or military, given that the expert has been at *RISS* (an FSBI) since 1998 and that she publishes her views through it, it is reasonable to argue that it is not unlikely that her views have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

The BRI and Its Linking with the EAEU

The benefits

Regarding China's BRI and its linking with the EAEU, two dominant trends in Russian expert thought are that the initiative and mutual efforts to increase its cooperation with the EAEU are beneficial for Russia and the Union. The section now moves on to present the results of the qualitative aspect of the content analysis. Please refer to information provided on the institutions

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 81.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 81-82.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 84-85.

and experts in chapter 3 regarding potential influence through government or military connections and qualifications.

Views likely to have influence

In an article published by *International Life*, Lukin provides an analysis of Russia's idea of Eurasian integration, China's BRI, the compatibility of the two, and the potential for their interaction under the auspices of the SCO.⁶⁹ According to the expert, China does not consider Russia's Eurasian integration project a hinderance for its BRI, but rather 'useful'.⁷⁰ In Lukin's view, Russia also seems to 'appreciate' China's BRI.⁷¹ According to the expert, the BRI could be a 'catalyst for multilateral economic cooperation', which he has been advocating for years, going so far as to say that blocking such cooperation is harmful for Russia. Lukin identifies two main challenges for China's BRI: continued security concerns within China, primarily Xinjiang, and the contradiction between China's drive for advancing cooperation with neighboring countries and the intensification of territorial disputes with some of them, which causes concern in some of its neighbors.⁷²

In a workbook published by the *RIAC*, Luzyanin et al. focus on the BRI and how it fits in Eurasia with the rest of its initiatives, organizations, and integration projects.⁷³ In chapter 3 of the workbook, Smirnova argues that it is in Russia's interest to participate in China's BRI, as it is the only way to fully understand the initiative and it will allow Russia to find common ground with

⁶⁹Lukin, Alexander. 'Ideia «Èkonomicheskogo Poiasa SHelkovogo Puti» i Evraziiskaia Integratsiia (The Idea of the Silk Road Economic Belt and Eurasian Integration)'. *International Life*. 2014. Available at <https://interaffairs.ru/jauthor/material/1101>. Accessed 01/03/2020.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Luzyanin, Sergei, et al. 'SHankhaïskaia Organizatsiia Sotrudnichestva: Model' 2014–2015 (Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Model 2014–2015)'. Russian International Affairs Council. 27/05/2015. Available at https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/workingpapers/shankhayskaya-organizatsiya-sotrudnichestva-model-2014-2015/?PROJECT_THEME_ID_4=34&TYPE_4=analytic. Accessed 03/03/2020.

China.⁷⁴ The expert also notes that Central Asian countries will try to attract investment from Russia as a way of reducing dependence on China.⁷⁵

In a publication cited earlier in this chapter, Karaganov et al. argue that it is necessary for Russia to participate in China's BRI for the following reasons: the initiative has the potential to influence Russia's regional leadership role as well as its broader position in global affairs; it will stimulate the development of Russia's economy; and Chinese investment will lead to more socio-economic stability in Central Asia, which will strengthen the EAEU.⁷⁶ It is also noted that the EAEU provides a valuable route for the transit of Chinese goods, as it provides a unified customs area that borders both China and the EU market.⁷⁷

The *RIAC* published a report written by Lisovolik et al. on the results of the conference titled 'Russia and China: Towards a New Quality of Bilateral Relations', which was held on 30 and 31 May 2016 and attended by Russian and Chinese officials and experts.⁷⁸ According to the experts, China's BRI is 'fully consistent' with the interests of the EAEU because the initiative's development of transport corridors and infrastructure 'would create additional incentives for the implementation of multilateral projects and integration in the Eurasian space, and the development of integration and unification of economic regulation, trade, and investment regimes would ensure greater efficiency of the EAEU in mediating trade and investment flows between the East and the West'.⁷⁹ The experts advocate the linking of the EAEU and the BRI,

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Karaganov et al. 'The Future of Central Eurasia'. 2015.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Lisovolik, Yaroslav, et al. 'Vtoraia Mezhdunarodnaia Konferentsiia «Rossiia i Kitai: k Novomu Kachestvu Dvustoronnikh Otnoshenii». Itogi Meropriiatiia (Results of the Event – Second International Conference "Russia and China: Towards a New Quality of Bilateral Relations)". Russian International Affairs Council. Moscow. 2016. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/conferencereports/vtoraya-mezhdunarodnaya-konferentsiya-rossiya-i-kitay-k-novo/>. Accessed 08.03.2020.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 32-33.

and suggest that the complementarity of the initiatives ‘can be enhanced by liberalization of trade and greater coordination of economic policy, the formation of alliances in the field of investment cooperation, the development of cross-border trade, and the creation of industrial parks’, all of which would ‘reduce the costs of doing business in the region, increase the predictability of economic policies, and improve the investment climate’.⁸⁰ Lisovolik et al. argue that the linking of the EAEU and the BRI will also bring benefits in the form of enhanced positions of EAEU countries in their interactions with the EU and greater opportunities for economic integration and cooperation between the EAEU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).⁸¹

Regarding bilateral economic ties between Russia and China, Lisovolik et al. write that the linking of the EAEU and the BRI may lead to quicker development of the less developed regions of the two countries (the RFE and western provinces of China) with the use of ‘specialized tools, including cross-border cooperation and the creation of free economic zones’.⁸² Moreover, the BRI’s development of transport infrastructure would also strengthen the economic connections between the more developed parts of Russia and China (European Russia and eastern China).⁸³ However, according to Lisovolik et al., full liberalization of trade between Russia and China in the form of a free trade zone is not the best way to maximize the potential for bilateral economic cooperation or to ‘build balanced economic interaction’.⁸⁴

In an article published by *RISS*, Karataeva dedicates some space to China’s development of transit routes as a part of its BRI and the project’s implications.⁸⁵ According to the expert, China

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 33-34.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 35.

⁸² Ibid., p. 38.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 40

⁸⁵ Karataeva, Karolina. ‘Podkhody Osnovnykh Uchastnikov k Razvitiu Evraziiskoi Sistemy Transportnykh Koridorov (The Approaches of the Main Participants to the Development of the Eurasian System of Transit

is right in believing that ‘the development of transport links will ultimately contribute to the deepening of mutually beneficial economic integration of the countries of the region’, and she expects that since a lot of the transit infrastructure projects are being implemented in EAEU countries, the BRI presents for Russia and China ‘a deep potential for ensuring a unified transport policy and the successful implementation of joint transport projects’ and ‘additional opportunities for finding points of interaction’.⁸⁶

An article written by Karaganov and published by *Russia in Global Politics* addresses a wide range of issues in international affairs.⁸⁷ According to the expert, the linking of the EAEU and the BRI in 2015 was a wise decision by Moscow and Beijing to ‘[convert] the potential of contradictions into a resource of cooperation’.⁸⁸ However, Karaganov points out that, while the linking of the EAEU and the BRI presents significant opportunities for the economic development of Eurasia, concrete measures need to be taken through ‘systematic bureaucratic efforts’, which had virtually not yet been made.⁸⁹

In an article published by *RISS*, Gubin addresses China’s BRI and its implications for Russia and its interests.⁹⁰ The expert acknowledges both contradictions between the EAEU and the BRI and potential benefits for Russia. Regarding the contradictions, Gubin merely states that they exist, and does not elaborate.⁹¹ As mentioned above, the expert argues that while Western analysts

Corridors’). Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. *Problems of National Strategy* 4, no. 37 (2016). Available at <https://riss.ru/images/pdf/journal/2016/4/10.pdf>. Accessed 06/03/2020.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 234.

⁸⁷ Karaganov, Sergei. ‘Kontury Peremen: Mirovye Tendensii-2015 i Rossiiskaia Politika (Outlines of Change: World Trends 2015 and Russian Politics)’. *Russia in Global Politics*. 06/03/2016. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/kontury-peremen/>. Accessed 06/03/2020.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Gubin, Andrei. ‘Project “Economic Belt New Silk Road”’. *Russian Institute of International Studies. Problems of National Strategy* 4, no. 37 (2016). Available at <https://riss.ru/images/pdf/journal/2016/4/6.pdf>. Accessed 09/03/2020.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 139-140.

have argued that a clash of interests between Russia and China in Central Asia is inevitable, ‘there are no signs of serious discord’.⁹² Gubin also argues that Russia’s participation in the BRI would be beneficial to all participants for two reasons: the profitability of investment in their economies and their potential as a large investor.⁹³

In an article cited above, Bordachev et al. are optimistic about China’s intentions with the BRI and the benefits that the initiative will bring, not just for China, but also for the entire world.⁹⁴ According to the experts, ‘China is ready to work with these countries on a voluntary, equal and mutually beneficial basis, to jointly build a mutually beneficial cooperation network within the framework of the [BRI], in order to achieve practical progress, mutual learning, openness and innovation, and inclusion of all interested parties in the process of interaction and global development’.⁹⁵

In an article published by *RISS*, Kokarev et al. analyze China’s foreign policy in Asia and its implications for Russia’s interests.⁹⁶ Regarding the linking of the EAEU and the BRI, the experts see a challenge as well as an opportunity. According to Kokarev et al., the linking of the initiatives presents the opportunity for Russia ‘to improve forms of economic interaction with partners in the EAEU, as well as with China’.⁹⁷

⁹² Ibid., p. 146.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 149.

⁹⁴ Bordachev, Timofey ed. ‘Preobrazovanieevrazijskogo Prostranstva: Obshchie Perspektivy v Predstavlenii Analiticheskix Tsentrov Kitaia, Rossii i Kazaxstana (Transformation of the Eurasian Space: General Perspectives in the Representation of the Analytical Centers of China, Russia, and Kazakhstan)’. Valdai Discussion Club. July 2017. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/files/16539/>. Accessed 09.03.2020.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Kokarev, Konstantin. ‘Politika Kitaia v Azii i Interesy Rossii (China’s Policy in Asia and Russia’s Interests)’. Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Problems of National Strategy 5, no. 44 (2017). Available at <https://riss.ru/images/pdf/journal/2017/5/04.pdf>. Accessed 10/03/2020.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 44.

Regarding the BRI, its implications for Russia, and its linking with the EAEU, Ivanov (ed.) et al. claim in a report published by the *RIAC* that the initiative presents an opportunity for Russia to strengthen its transit role to the point of becoming a ‘transit leader’ with respect to routes from Asia to Europe as well as improve ties between Russia and China in social, educational, and scientific spheres.⁹⁸ The experts name the linking of the EAEU and the BRI as a ‘priority area of cooperation’ between Russia and China.⁹⁹ They also emphasize that the matter being addressed is not how Russia and the rest of the EAEU will join the BRI or become a part of it, but rather how the EAEU and the BRI will integrate as equal entities.¹⁰⁰

According to Ivanov (ed.) et al., in a report published by the *RIAC*, it is in China’s interest that integration within the EAEU continues and strengthens, as evidenced by its provision of \$10 billion to VEB.RF for EAEU integration efforts.¹⁰¹ Moreover, the infrastructure projects that China is implementing in EAEU member states as a part of its BRI are beneficial to the Union’s integration.¹⁰²

Given the qualifications of Lukin, Smirnova, Karaganov et al., Lisovolik, Timofeev, Karataeva, Gubin, Bordachev et al., Kokarev, Luzyanin, Kortunov, Karneev, Petrovsky, and Kashin, that most of them have served in the Russian government, and that the views they convey in the articles referenced above were published by FSBI and institutions with connections to the

⁹⁸ Ivanov, Igor (ed.), et al. ‘Rossiisko-Kitaiskii Dialog: Model’ 2018 (Russian-Chinese Dialogue: Model 2018)’. Russian International Affairs Council. 30/05/2018. pp. 56, 131. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/publications/rossiysko-kitayskiy-dialog-model-2018/>. Accessed 10/05/2020.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 131

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 56-57.

¹⁰¹ Ivanov, Igor (ed.), et al. ‘Rossiisko-Kitaiskii Dialog: Model’ 2019 (Russian-Chinese Dialogue: Model 2019)’. Russian International Affairs Council. 28/05/2019. p. 38. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/publications/rossiysko-kitayskiy-dialog-model-2019/>. Accessed 10/05/2020. Citing Nezhdanov, Vladimir. ‘Pairing the EAEU and the Silk Road: China Is Changing Its Strategy’. Eurasia Expert. 04/12/2018. Available at <http://www.eurasia.expert/sopryazhenie-eaes-i-shelkovogo-puti-kitay-menyaet-strategiyu/>. Accessed 26/03/2020.

¹⁰² Ivanov (ed.), et al. ‘Russian-Chinese Dialogue: Model 2019’. pp. 38-39.

Russian government, it is reasonable to argue that it is likely that the experts' views have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

The dominant view discussed above that China's BRI not only does not harm Russia's interest, but, on the contrary, presents Russia with opportunities for benefits contributes to the perception among Russian experts and Russian foreign policy decisionmakers that there are no unmanageable conflicts of interest between Russia and China, which in turn contributes to the perception of an absence of threat from China. The results of the quantitative aspect of the content analysis reflect this dominant view by showing that two of the most frequently given reasons for why there was a perception of an absence of threat from China in the texts analyzed are a lack of harmful intentions and a lack of conflicts of interest.

In the context of managing decline, China's accommodation of Russia's interests by agreeing to link the BRI with the EAEU has likely contributed to a peaceful (mostly economic) power transition in Central Asia and Moscow's acceptance of China's growing role in the region. Negotiation over international order is an important factor in power transition. As discussed in the following chapter, part of this negotiation in the case of Russia and China in Central Asia has been a largely successful establishment of a division of labor in the region wherein Russia focuses mostly on security and political issues while China focuses on economic and development issues.

Complementarity and synergy

Another theme identified by the content analysis, which may be considered a theme within the previously identified theme that the BRI and its linking to the EAEU are beneficial to Russia and

the Union, is the view that the initiatives do not contradict each other, but rather, they are complementary, feeding off each other in a way that produces a synergetic effect causing both to enhance the other.

Views likely to have influence

In an article published by the *Izborsky Club*, Glaziev argues that the EAEU and BRI are ‘organically combined’, and that their linking can have a ‘synergistic effect’, by which each compliment and strengthen the other.¹⁰³ The expert explains that the EAEU is fundamentally different, in that the Union is a ‘common market for goods, services, capital and labor’, while the ‘BRI is a set of regional investment projects’ that ‘does not pretend to form either a common market, a single economic space, or even a free trade zone’.¹⁰⁴ According to Glaziev, the initiatives may benefit each other if the BRI implements investment projects ‘for the development of transcontinental transport infrastructure - railways, highways and aviation corridors’ and if the EAEU offers ‘a simplified and facilitated customs regime for customs clearance of investment goods transported across the Russian-Chinese border’.¹⁰⁵

In a publication cited above, Karaganov et al. point out that Russia and China have proven capable of undertaking large joint efforts for positive-sum gains.¹⁰⁶ Much like Glaziev, Karaganov et al. argue that the cooperation between the EAEU and BRI can produce ‘synergy’, as they complement and strengthen each other: ‘the EAEU will create the legal conditions for

¹⁰³ Glaziev, Sergei. ‘KNR Kak Novyĭ Global’nyĭ Lider (The PRC as a new Global Leader)’. *Izborsky Club* 8, no. 32 (2015): 30-31. Available at https://izborsk-club.ru/magazine_files/2015_08.pdf. Accessed 03/03/2020.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Karaganov, Sergei, et al. ‘Budushee Tsentral’noĭ Evrazii (The Future of Central Eurasia)’. *Russia in Global Politics*. 05/04/2015. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/budushhee-czentralnoj-evrazii/>. Accessed 05/03/2020.

creating transport and logistics infrastructure and joint development, and the [BRI] will give it a tremendous trade and investment impetus'.¹⁰⁷

In an article published by *Russia in Global Politics*, Karaganov writes that a future situation in Central Asia, in which Russia is the supplier of security and stability and China is the supplier of investments and resources, can be beneficial to everyone.¹⁰⁸

The *Valdai Discussion Club* published a report by Barabanov et al., in which a wide range of topics are addressed, including Russia and China's interaction in Central Asia.¹⁰⁹ Regarding the complementarity of capabilities, the experts claim that as China's investment in BRI projects in Central Asia grows so will security vulnerabilities, and suggest that Russia is the only country capable of providing the necessary security services.¹¹⁰

In a report published by the *RIAC*, Ivanov (ed.) et al. describe Russia's prioritization of security issues and China's prioritization of economic issues as a 'distribution of roles' that are strategically complementary and will 'contribute to the stable development of the SCO for the medium and long term, as well as to the Organization as a whole as one of the pillars of the emerging world order'.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Karaganov, Sergei. 'Kontury Peremen: Mirovye Tendensii-2015 i Rossiiskaia Politika (Outlines of Change: World Trends 2015 and Russian Politics)'. *Russia in Global Politics*. 06/03/2016. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/kontury-peremen/>. Accessed 06/03/2020.

¹⁰⁹ Barabanov, Oleg, et al. 'Voïna i Mir XXI Veka: Mezhdunarodnaïa Stabil'nost' i Balans Novogo Tipa (War and Peace of the 21st Century: International Stability and a New Type of Balance)'. *Valdai Discussion Club*. 21/01/2016. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/files/10673/>. Accessed 05/02/2020.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ivanov, Igor (ed.), et al. 'Rossiïsko-Kitaïskiï Dialog: Model' 2016 (Russian-Chinese Dialogue: Model 2016)'. *Russian International Affairs Council*. 30/05/2016. p. 36. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/publications/rossiysko-kitayskiy-dialog-model-2016/>. Accessed 10/05/2020.

In an article published by *International Life*, Petrovsky argues that the linking of the EAEU and the BRI can be done ‘organically’ in a way in which each initiative enhances the other, and that such linking ‘opens up opportunities for the sustainable economic development of Eurasia’.¹¹²

In an article cited above, Bordachev et al. express their view that Russia and China have different and complementary roles in mind for each other.¹¹³ According to the experts, ‘from the point of view of Russia, the ideal role of China in the EAEU is the role of an investor helping the development of the region. From the perspective of China, Russia's ideal role is to help eliminate economic barriers in Eurasia and maintain order in the sphere of defense and security’.¹¹⁴

Regarding the linking of the EAEU and the BRI, Bordachev et al. recognize the complementarity between the two initiatives, writing that ‘while the EAEU forms the legal foundation for creating transport and logistics infrastructure and joint development, the Silk Road Economic Belt should give integration plans a huge trade and investment impetus’.¹¹⁵

In a report published by the *Valdai Discussion Club*, Karaganov et al. observe that, in contrast to the rivalry between Russia and China in Central Asia predicted by some, the countries are forming a ‘strategic partnership’ in the region, in which they play complementary roles: ‘Russia is responsible more for security, and China for welfare’.¹¹⁶ Bordachev is listed as a co-author of

¹¹² Petrovsky, Vladimir. ‘Na Puti k Bol’shomu Evraziiskomu Partnerstvu: Vyzovy i Vozmozhnosti (Towards a Greater Eurasian Partnership: Challenges and Opportunities)’. *International Life*. 2017. p. 101. Available at https://interaffairs.ru/virtualread/ia_rus/62017/files/assets/downloads/publication.pdf. Accessed 10/03/2020.

¹¹³ Bordachev ed. ‘Transformation of the Eurasian Space’. 2017.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹¹⁶ Karaganov, Sergei, et al. ‘K Velikomu Okeanu – 5: Ot Povorota na Vostok k Bol’shoi Evrazii (To the Great Ocean – 5: From the Turn to the East to Greater Eurasia)’. *Valdai Discussion Club*. September 2017. p. 6. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/files/17048/>. Accessed 10/03/2020.

the report. Among those who are recognized as having contributed to the situational analysis of the report include Barabanov, Lukin, and Lukyanov.¹¹⁷

In an article published by *International Life*, Sayamov analyzes the BRI and draws optimistic conclusions about its implications, including that ‘it will grow out of lively and comprehensive equal cooperation and mutually beneficial cooperation of neighboring countries and regions, generating a synergistic effect of development’, and that ‘it opens up unique opportunities for Eurasia and the whole world for the development of economic and political cooperation in the interests of sustainable development, peace and the formation of a new, more reliable and fair world structure’.¹¹⁸

Given the qualifications of Glaziev, Karaganov et al., Lukyanov, Barabanov, Suslov, Sushentsov, Luzyanin, Petrovsky, and Sayamov, that most have served in the Russian government, and that the views the experts convey in the articles referenced above were published by an FSBI and institutions with strong ties to the Russian government (except for the *Izborsky Club*), it is reasonable to argue that it is likely that the experts’ views have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

This subsection identifies a dominant view among potentially influential Russian experts that the BRI and the EAEU enhance each other, contributing to the argument that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers have likely perceived China as not having harmful intentions towards Russia and have not perceived unmanageable conflicts of interests between the two countries in this sphere of their relations. The dominant expert view identified in this subsection, like that of the previous

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 1.

¹¹⁸ Sayamov, Yuri. ‘Mezhdunarodnye Otnosheniia i Proekt «Novyĭ SHeikovyĭ Put’» (International Relations and the “New Silk Road” Projects)’. *International Life*. 2019. pp. 211, 213. Available at https://interaffairs.ru/virtualread/ia_rus/32019/files/assets/downloads/publication.pdf. Accessed 11/03/2020.

one, is reflected in quantitative results of the content analysis, which show that two of the most frequently given reasons for why there was a perception of an absence of threat from China in the texts analyzed were a lack of harmful intentions and a lack of conflicts of interests.

Skepticism and cautious optimism

The two trends found by the content analysis on Russian expert thought on China's BRI and its linking with the EAEU reported above focus mostly on the benefits of the Chinese initiative for Russia and the EAEU, the complementarity of the BRI and the EAEU, and the 'synergy' the initiatives may produce. However, the content analysis also found some negative views, skepticism, and cautious optimism, although not as much as those reported in the previous section on Russian expert thought on China's economic activity, interests, and interaction with Russia in Central Asia in general.

In the first chapter of an *RIAC* workbook cited above, Luzyanin argues that an analysis of the prospects for cooperative interaction between the EAEU, SCO, and BRI begin with an acknowledgement of two points: first, Russia and China have different interests regarding the rate of integration and transport routes; second, the prospect of cooperation or linking of the Union and the initiative is unclear.¹¹⁹ The expert posits that it would be in Russia's interest to pursue rapprochement first between the states of the EAEU, then between the SCO and BRI.¹²⁰

In chapter 2 of the workbook, Matveev, regarding the EAEU and BRI, writes that there are 'emerging contradictions' between Russia and China that have not yet reached the official level, and agrees with Luzyanin in that, in his view, it is not yet clear how the projects could

¹¹⁹ Luzyanin et al. 'Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Model 2014-2015'. 2015. p. 7.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

cooperate.¹²¹ The expert portrays Russia's attitude towards the BRI in a less than positive light by writing that 'Russia cannot escape from the hidden (for now) call of Chinese integration and/or impede the development of the Chinese initiative [the BRI]'.¹²² Matveev suggests that Russia, under the conditions of the time, should focus on intraregional cooperation in the manufacturing industry apparently as a response to China's competitive advantage in the industry, although the expert does not explicitly say so.¹²³ Regarding the competition between transport routes promoted by Russia and China, in this case the Trans-Siberian Railway and the China—Central Asia—Europe Highway, Matveev writes that Russia should prioritize the former, 'given the growing competition from Chinese roads'.¹²⁴ The expert argues that it is necessary to 'smooth out' contradictions in Central Asia, to create a roadmap for the establishment of multilateral economic cooperation within the SCO, and to create 'mechanisms for interaction' between the EAEU and the SCO, but he does not venture to make suggestions as to how this should be done.¹²⁵ Matveev notes that there are also contradictions between Russia and China in the energy sphere, but in a more optimistic tone the expert points out that, since these contradictions have not yet resulted in 'real clashes', it seems that the power of the strategic partnership of Russia and China is sufficient to resolve disputes that might arise.¹²⁶

In an article cited above, regarding the EAEU and the BRI, Ivanov (ed.) et al. write that 'the achievement of a complete consensus on all projects is not possible', but this 'does not mean the

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 18.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 19.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 23.

abolition of joint work'.¹²⁷ For Ivanov (ed.) et al., it is obvious that the BRI does not aim to undermine the SCO or the EAEU.¹²⁸

In an article published by *Russia in Global Politics*, Larin addresses several topics relevant to the geopolitical situation in eastern Eurasia.¹²⁹ In the expert's view, the EAEU and the BRI are competing integration projects and the BRI is more attractive because of its prospects and China's financial resources.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, according to Larin, the linking of the initiatives was 'a logical result of their recognition not only of common economic and political interests, but also of responsibility for the fate of the continent'.¹³¹

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a regional multilateral development bank that was officially launched in 2013 with intended capital of \$100 billion and began operations in 2016. Despite it being a regional bank focused on development in Asia, the AIIB has allowed non-Asian countries to become founders and members, including the UK, France, and Germany. Russia is the third largest shareholder in the bank after China and India.

This section reports the results of the qualitative aspect of the content analysis relevant to Russian expert views of the AIIB that were categorized as being likely to have influence and not unlikely to have influence based on the experts' connections with the Russian government or

¹²⁷ Ivanov (ed.) et al. 'Russian-Chinese Dialogue: Model 2016'. 2016. p. 4.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 42.

¹²⁹ Larin, Viktor. 'Novaia Geopolitika Dlia Vostochnoi Evrazii (New Geopolitics for Eastern Eurasia)'. *Russia in Global Politics*. 13/09/2018. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/novaya-geopolitika-dlya-vostochnoj-evrazii/>. Accessed 10/03/2020.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

military, their qualifications, and whether their views were published by institutions with connections to the Russian government or military.

The benefits

Russian experts generally perceive the AIIB similarly to the BRI. This is likely because one of the main objectives of the bank is to fund BRI projects. For example, immediately after writing about the ‘huge opportunities’ provided by the linking of the EAEU and BRI, Karaganov et al. add that there was mutual readiness in the EAEU and China for the development of cooperation involving the AIIB.¹³² Vorobyov argues that the SCO also ‘receives new useful opportunities’ from the AIIB.¹³³ Ivanov (ed.) et al. argue that it is because of the strong resources in the form of the AIIB that the BRI ‘can become an important systemic factor in the development of joint Russian-Chinese projects in the energy, transport, and construction spheres, the production of machinery and equipment, and high technologies’.¹³⁴ According to Voronkov, the establishment of the AIIB and Russia’s joining the bank is a concrete step towards ‘strengthening bilateral and multilateral relations between developing countries and providing mutual political and economic support’, which is ‘of great importance’.¹³⁵

Glaziev continues the theme of complementarity observed in this section on the BRI and its linking with the EAEU, but with specific reference to the role of the AIIB. The expert considers

¹³² Karaganov, Sergei, et al. ‘K Velikomu Okeanu 4: Povорот na Vostok Predvaritel’nye Itogi i Novye Zadachi (To the Great Ocean – 4: Turn to the East. Preliminary Results and New Tasks)’. Valdai Discussion Club. Moscow. May 2016. p. 24. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/files/12395/>. Accessed 24/03/2021.

¹³³ Vorobyov, Vitaly. ‘Shos i Tret’ia Faza Kitaia (The SCO and the Third Phase of China). Russia in Global Politics. 14/01/2016. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/shos-i-tretya-faza-kitaya/>. Accessed 24/03/2021.

¹³⁴ Ivanov, Igor (ed.), et al. ‘Rossiisko-Kitaiskii Dialog: Model’ 2017 (Russian-Chinese Dialogue: Model 2017)’. Russian International Affairs Council. 28/05/2017. p. 5. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/publications/rossiysko-kitayskiy-dialog-model-2017/>. Accessed 24/03/2021.

¹³⁵ Voronkov, Lev S. ‘Mezhdunarodnye Organizatsii: Osnovnye Prichiny Ikh Vosniknoveniia i Razvitiia (International Organizations: The Main Reasons for the Establishment and Development)’. Bulletin of MGIMO 4, no. 43 (2015): 107. Available at <https://vestnik.mgimo.ru/jour/article/view/406/406>. Accessed 24/03/2021.

both the EAEU and the AIIB to be integration projects, but emphasizes their differences, explaining that ‘the EAEU is a supranational regulatory body that ensures the functioning of a single economic space’ while the AIIB is a ‘development institution’.¹³⁶ Glaziev argues that ‘their joint application opens up additional opportunities to realize the integration potential of each of these projects’, and provides examples of potential results of such joint application, including a ‘single airspace’ and ‘new air corridors with the transition to aircraft of their own development and manufacture’, ‘the opening of inland waterways with the construction and use of vessels of their own production’, and ‘the construction of transcontinental transport corridors with the development of its own base of railway and road engineering’.¹³⁷ Bordachev likewise sees a lack of severe conflicts of interest. The expert argues that organizations such as the SCO and the AIIB are ‘overlapping but not competing’ and that ‘the Eurasian Economic Union, if it can be made a real working tool for promoting the priorities of the participating countries, will take its rightful place in this overall picture’.¹³⁸

In the views of Luzyanin et al., since the AIIB and similar institutions will be implementing joint projects of Russia and China in Russia and Central Asia, attracting these institutions ‘should be one of the important tasks of Russian diplomacy’.¹³⁹ Bordachev (ed.) et al. see much potential benefit from the AIIB as well, and argue that Russia should take advantage of the financial

¹³⁶ Glaziev, Sergei. ‘KNR Kak Novyĭ Global’nyĭ Lider (The PRC as a new Global Leader)’. *Izborsky Club* 8, no. 32 (2015): 30. Available at https://izborsk-club.ru/magazine_files/2015_08.pdf. Accessed 24/03/2021

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Bordachev, Timofey. ‘Chto Ne Tak s Evraziĭskoĭ Integratsiei i Kak Èto Ispravit’ (What Is Wrong with Eurasian Integration and How to Fix It)’. *Valdai Discussion Club*. 14/11/2017. Available at https://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/something-went-wrong/?sphrase_id=432678. Accessed 24/03/2021.

¹³⁹ Luzyanin, Sergei, et al. ‘Perspektivy Sotrudnichestva Rossii i Kitaia v Tsentral’noĭ Azii (Prospects for Cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia)’. *Russian International Affairs Council*. 27/05/2016. p. 43. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/workingpapers/perspektivy-sotrudnichestva-rossii-i-kitaya-v-tsentralnoy-az/>. Accessed 24/03/2021.

capabilities of the bank.¹⁴⁰ The experts explain that the AIIB ‘could provide financing and credit guarantees for cross-border transactions, infrastructure construction and other priority projects for the EAEU region’, and point out that ‘unlike infrastructure and resource cooperation, which takes a long time to establish, financial cooperation can be established easily and quickly enough to deepen trade, communication networks and infrastructure’.¹⁴¹

According to Petrovsky, it is ‘extremely important’ for Russia to participate in the AIIB, specifically for ‘the advanced socio-economic development of Eastern Siberia and the Far East and the revitalization of integration processes within the EAEU’.¹⁴² Svedentsov points out that the AIIB is regionally focused, prioritizing infrastructure projects in Asia, and that the charter of the bank considers Russia an Asian state.¹⁴³ According to the expert, this stated prioritization has been confirmed in practice by the AIIB’s choosing of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Tajikistan as the sites of its first three projects.¹⁴⁴ This presents a valuable opportunity for the development of Russia’s eastern territories. Additionally, Svedentsov argues that the AIIB’s participation in development projects in the RFE will include oversight that will ‘provide additional guarantees to prevent misappropriation of funds’.¹⁴⁵ In a similar vein, Karaganov argues that ‘to transform

¹⁴⁰ Bordachev, Timofey (ed.), et al. ‘Preobrazovanieevrazijskogo Prostranstva: Obshchie Perspektivy v Predstavlenii Analiticheskix Tsentrov Kitaia, Rossii i Kazakhstana (Transformation of the Eurasian Space: General Perspectives in the Representation of the Analytical Centers of China, Russia, and Kazakhstan)’. Valdai Discussion Club. July 2017. pp. 23-24. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/files/16539/>. Accessed 09.03.2020.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Petrovsky, Vladimir. ‘Dilemmy Aziatsko-Tikhookeanskoï Integratsii v Geoëkonomicheskom i Geopoliticheskom Kontekste (Dilemmas of Asia-Pacific Integration in the Geoeconomic and Geopolitical Context)’ International Life. 2015. p. 115. Available at https://interaffairs.ru/virtualread/ia_rus/82015/files/assets/downloads/publication.pdf. Accessed 24/03/2021.

¹⁴³ Svedentsov, Vladimir. ‘Aziatskii Bank Infrastrukturnykh Investitsii kak Faktor Politiki "Miagkoï Sily" KNR v Stranakh Aziatsko-Tikhookeanskogo Regiona (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank as a Factor of China's "Soft Power" Policy in the Asia-Pacific Region)’. Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Problems of National Strategy 3, no. 42 (2017): 180. Available at <https://riss.ru/documents/628/8ba271616d924699bdbd169238efb494.pdf>. Accessed 24/03/2021.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 183.

Siberia and the Far East' it is necessary for Russia to actively participate in the AIIB and to promote the regions' agenda within the institution.¹⁴⁶ Zaitsev argues that it is not only desirable but necessary for Russia to turn to alternative development institutions such as the AIIB since being shunned by 'global donor forums'.¹⁴⁷

Claims among Russian experts that the AIIB or the proportion of Russia's shares in the bank relative to China's represent a direct threat to Russian interests are virtually absent in the texts analyzed. This is not counterintuitive, as it seems that it would follow logically that if the BRI benefits Russia (a dominant view among Russian experts identified above), then an institution with a primary motive to fund the initiative would also be viewed as beneficial, or at least non-threatening.

With regard to Russia's ambitions, Bordachev explains that, while 'Russia can and wants to offer the world a new concept of joint development and regulation of international relations, it 'does not have the material resources to effectively promote its ideas'.¹⁴⁸ The expert claims that 'even the United States cannot initiate projects on the scale of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank'.¹⁴⁹ Leksyutina argues that the AIIB as well as other efforts undertaken by Beijing 'create public goods to fill gaps in the existing global economic governance system', and that China does so 'without claiming to dominate, dictate or impose its norms and values on other

¹⁴⁶ Karaganov, Sergei. 'Povorot na Vostok: Itogi i Zadachi (Turn to the East: Results and Challenges)'. Russia in Global Politics. 06/02/2015. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/povorot-na-vostok-itogi-i-zadachi/>. Accessed 24/03/2021.

¹⁴⁷ Zaitsev, Yuri. 'Rossiia kak Mezhdunarodnyi Donor: Trudnosti v Otsenke Pomoshchi Razvitiu (Russia as an International Donor: Difficulties in Assessing Development Aid)'. Russian International Affairs Council. 07/08/2020. Available at https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/rossiya-kak-mezhdunarodnyy-donor-trudnosti-v-otsenke-pomoshchi-razvitiyu/?sphrase_id=73859156. Accessed 25/03/2021.

¹⁴⁸ Bordachev, Timofey. 'Dat' Kitaiu Poprobovat' (Give China a Try)'. Valdai Discussion Club. 29/11/2016. Available at https://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/dat-kitayu-poprobovat/?sphrase_id=432678. Accessed 24/03/2021.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

countries'.¹⁵⁰ In this view, the establishment of the AIIB, its activities, and China's position as the largest shareholder are not necessarily losses for Russia to China, as Russia never had the ability to lead such an enterprise. In sum, with regard to the AIIB, the dominant view of benefits and an absence of loss are indicative of positive-sum thinking among Russian experts with connections to the Russian government or military, and likely among foreign policy decisionmakers.

A challenge to Western financial institutions and cohesion

Another main trend in Russian expert thought on the AIIB is the view that the bank represents a challenge from China to 'traditional' Western-led international financial institutions, such as the Bretton Woods Institutions: the World Bank and the IMF. It is also very commonly expressed that the establishment of the AIIB has contributed to a fracturing of the West. This refers mainly to the failed US campaign to dissuade its allies to join the bank. All of America's major allies ended up joining the bank, except for Japan, which leads another of the AIIB's main competitors: the Asian Development Bank (ADB). These are dominant views among Russian experts with connections to the Russian government or military regarding the AIIB, but they are not without variation.

There are those that view the AIIB as a direct challenge to the global financial institutions established by the West after WWII. For example, Savchanko views China's establishment of the AIIB as a result of the US' refusal fully accommodate China in such institutions.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Leksyutina, Yana. 'Kitaĭ kak Otvetstvennaia Velikaia Derzhava: Ozhidaniia Zapada i Politika Pekina (China as a Responsible Great Power: Expectations of the West and Beijing's Policy)'. *International Processes* 16, no. 2 (2018): 60, 68-71. Available at <http://intertrends.ru/system/Doc/ArticlePdf/2000/CRoLo7oFv9.pdf>. Accessed 26/03/2021.

¹⁵¹ Savchenko, Evgeny. 'Strategiia Natsional'noi Bezopastnosti SShA i Problemy Ee Realizatsii v Sovremennykh Usloviakh (US National Security Strategy and the Problems of Its Implementation in Modern Conditions)'. *Military Thought*. 09/12/2016. Available at <https://vm.ric.mil.ru/Stati/item/117177/>. Accessed 25/03/2021.

According to the expert, the US expected that the reforms proposed by developing countries would strengthen their positions and weaken the influence of the US.¹⁵² Likewise, Mazyrin considers the AIIB to be a direct challenge from Beijing to the World Bank dominated by the US and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) dominated by Japan.¹⁵³ According to Tkachenko, China views the IMF as an ‘instrument of American policy’ and established the AIIB in response.¹⁵⁴ Tsyrendorzhiev and Kuroedov view the establishment of the AIIB as a response to the US’ reluctance to allow the strengthening of the positions of non-Western powers in global financial institutions. The experts additionally argue that

‘the development of the system of international relations can be expected in the next decade and in the medium term under the influence of a balance between two antagonistic trends. On the one hand, the desire of the ruling circles of the United States to ensure their own dominance in the system of international relations with the support of the system of economic and military-political organizations and agreements, and on the other hand - the conscious desire of a number of major powers of the Non-Western World, such as Russia, China, India, Iran, etc., to form a more just new world order and rejecting the “exceptionality” of the only center of power’.¹⁵⁵

Kovalev argues that China’s establishment of the AIIB was ‘the result of a fundamental divergence of positions and the inability to engage in a balance-by-balance dialogue with the IMF’.¹⁵⁶ The expert considers the establishment of the bank to be ‘an indicator of the desire to

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Mazyrin, Vladimir. ‘Strany Indokitaia v Razreze Ekonomicheskogo Rosta (The Countries of Indochina by Economic Growth)’. *International Processes* 15, no. 3 (2017): p. 38. Available at <http://intertrends.ru/system/Doc/ArticlePdf/1762/sZwxAXnKOD.pdf>. Accessed 25/03/2021.

¹⁵⁴ Tkachenko, Stanislav. ‘«Bol’shaia Dvadtsatka»: Perekhod k Bipolarnosti? (“G20”: Moving to Bipolarity?)’. *Valdai Discussion Club*. 04/12/2018. Available at https://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/bolshaya-dvadtsatka-perekhod/?sphrase_id=432677. Accessed 26/03/2021.

¹⁵⁵ Tsyrendorzhiev, Samba R. and Boris V. Kuroedov. ‘Perspektivy Razvitiia Sistemy Mezhdunarodnykh Otnoshenii i Usloviia Obespecheniia Voennoi Bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii (Prospects for the Development of the System of International Relations and Conditions for Ensuring the Military Security of the Russian Federation)’. *Military Thought* 6 (2017). Accessed 25/03/2021.

¹⁵⁶ Kovalev, Andrei. ‘Politika Dvoinykh Standartov kak Ugroza Natsional’noi Bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii (Double Standards Policy as a Threat to the National Security of the Russian Federation)’. *Security Issues* 5 (2017). Available at http://e-notabene.ru/nb/article_24084.html. Accessed 25/03/2021.

move away from the globalization paradigm to the regional and national sphere'.¹⁵⁷ Suslov views the AIIB and other alternative financial institutions as 'positioned as direct competitors to the IMF, the World Bank and the Japan-controlled Asian Development Bank'.¹⁵⁸ According to the expert, with the establishment of alternative institutions and mechanisms, China 'seeks to create an order around itself in the region [Asia-Pacific] in which Washington has no place' and, at the global level, 'demands a greater role in economic governance'.¹⁵⁹ Voronkov argues that it is important for opponents of Western financial structures to establish alternative institutions 'on the basis of the sovereign equality of the participating states', and that the establishment of the AIIB is a step in this direction.¹⁶⁰

In Karataev's view, the refusal of the West to reform the Bretton Woods Institutions led to the establishment of the AIIB, and considers this alternative international financial institution and others like it to be 'the only opportunity to bring changes to the activities of such important elements of the global financial architecture as international financial institutions'.¹⁶¹ The expert observes that the appearance of alternatives has created 'an arena of confrontation between the ideologies of financial organizations of the old and new types', and argues that 'the main advantage of the AIIB ... is the absence of requirements for borrowing states to change their

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Suslov, Dmitri. 'Regionalizatsiia i Khaos vo Vsaimozavisimom Mire: Global'nyi Kontekst k Nachalu 2016 Goda (Regionalization and Chaos in an Interdependent World: A Global Context at the Beginning of 2016)'. Valdai Discussion Club. Valdai Notes 3, no. 43 (2016): 11. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/files/22151/>. Accessed 25/03/2021.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ Voronkov, Lev. 'Vliianie Kontseptsii Odnopoliarnogo Mira na Sistemy Evropeiskoi i Mezhdunarodnoi Bezopasnosti (The Influence of the Concept of a Unipolar World on Systems of European and international Security)'. International Life. 2016. pp. 148-149. Available at https://interaffairs.ru/virtualread/ia_rus/112016/files/assets/downloads/publication.pdf. Accessed 25/03/2021.

¹⁶¹ Karataev, Sergei. 'Novyi Mirovoi Finansovyi Poriadok Po-Kitaiski (The New World Financial Order in Chinese)'. Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. 20/01/2016. Available at <https://riss.ru/article/6940/>. Accessed 26/03/2021.

national economic policy'.¹⁶² According to Karataev, this 'innovation' leads to a more fair and equitable global management system.¹⁶³

Other experts view the AIIB as more of an informal or indirect challenge to Western-led financial institutions. Prokofev et al. argue that while the AIIB is not a formal competitor of the IMF, 'as its main objective is to finance infrastructure projects, it clearly undermines the system of dominance of the Bretton Woods Financial Institutions'.¹⁶⁴ Frolova sees the establishment of the AIIB as less of a direct challenge to the existing Western-led international financial order and more of a reflection of 'China's desire to reduce the infrastructure shortage in Asia, while making strategic decisions on its own without resorting to traditional international financial organizations that see Beijing as part of the American world'.¹⁶⁵ According to the expert, the challenge came in response to the policy of the US to deter China. This is manifested as 'the release of Chinese ambitions from the regional to the global level in international cooperation and to Beijing's introduction of new ambitious ideas to reform the world economic system'.¹⁶⁶

Lisovolik views the AIIB as an alternative to Western-led international financial institutions, but not necessarily as a direct challenge. The expert argues that the AIIB provides 'alternative financing mechanisms for infrastructure development in terms of credit conditions, regional

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Prokofev, Igor, et al. 'BRICS i Mezhdunarodnaia Finansovaiia Arkhitektura: ot MVF k Spravedlivomu Mnogopoliarnomu Miroporiadku (BRICS and the International Financial Architecture: from the IMF to a Fair Multipolar World Order)'. Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Problems of National Strategy 3, no. 30 (2015): 26. Available at <https://riss.ru/documents/439/1bbbc70f0d1340e593a4b11948473e9c.pdf>. Accessed 25/03/2021.

¹⁶⁵ Frolova, Ivetta. 'Kitaiskii Proekt "Ekonomicheskii Poias SHelkovogo Puti": Razvitie, Problemy, Perspektivy (The Chinese Project "Silk Road Economic Belt": Development, Problems, and Prospects)'. Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Problems of National Strategy 5, no. 38 (2016): 54. Available at <https://riss.ru/documents/562/a92c4825394e4974a7089bfa139b5dbf.pdf>. Accessed 06/03/2020.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 52.

coverage and representation’ and ‘appears to be a critical step towards building a more balanced and sustainable global economy’.¹⁶⁷

In the views of Prokofev et al., the establishment of the AIIB is a reaction to the ‘inefficiency’ of current international financial institutions and the particular type of globalization occurring.¹⁶⁸

The experts point out that Beijing has been making efforts to explain its approach to international economic development and promote a ‘new concept of globalization’.¹⁶⁹ The concept includes a new model of relations between peoples on an inter-party level, i.e. a form of interaction in which ‘the political parties of the world could jointly promote common interests while maintaining their own differences’.¹⁷⁰

According to Petrovsky, China’s establishment of the AIIB was due to its decision, made after many years of protest against underrepresentation, to wait no longer for the approval of reforms of the Western-led international financial institutions. In the expert’s view, the bank’s establishment is part of Beijing’s way of beginning to ‘redraw world financial relations’.¹⁷¹

Kokarev et al. point out that in establishing the AIIB, Beijing has not explicitly stated that it has done so in order to create a competitive alternative to the World Bank, and that, in accordance with articles 1 and 35 of the Charter of the AIIB, cooperation has been established not only with

¹⁶⁷ Lisovolik, Yaroslav. ‘Aziatskiĭ Bank Infrastrukturnykh Investitsiĭ Sdelaet Mirovuiu Ėkonomiku Bolee Sbalansirovannoĭ (The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank Will Balance the World Economy)’. Valdai Discussion Club. 01/07/2016. Available at https://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/aziatskiy-bank-infrastrukturnykh-investitsiy/?sphrase_id=432674. Accessed 26/03/2021.

¹⁶⁸ Prokofev, Igor, et al. ‘Budushchee Globalizatsii pod Ugrozoĭ? (Is the Future of Globalization at Stake?)’ Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Problems of National Strategy 3, no. 48 (2018): 41. Available at <https://riss.ru/documents/705/e8aed55ca7aa4a2f87948fcc01aeb431.pdf>. Accessed 26/03/2021.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Petrovsky, Vladimir. ‘Dilemmy Aziatsko-Tikhookeanskoĭ Integratsii v Geoekonomicheskom i Geopoliticheskom Kontekste (Dilemmas of Asia-Pacific Integration in the Geoeconomic and Geopolitical Context)’ International Life. 2015. Available at https://interaffairs.ru/virtualread/ia_rus/82015/files/assets/downloads/publication.pdf. Accessed 26/03/2021.

the World Bank but also with the ADA and other traditional financial institutions.¹⁷² That being said, the experts also concede that the AIIB undermines the US dominated global financial system.¹⁷³ Kokarev et al. also claim that ‘the AIIB will become the guarantor of the gradual internationalization of the yuan’ and contribute to the erosion of the central role of the dollar in the global market.¹⁷⁴

The final main view identified by the content analysis is that the establishment of the AIIB has contributed to division in the West. Prokofev et al. observe a ‘lack of cohesion’ in the West regarding China’s efforts in general, and point out the ‘bewilderment’ of many Western states at the refusal of the US to reform quotas and votes within the IMF to reflect China’s economic weight, followed by their ignoring America’s urging against joining the AIIB.¹⁷⁵ Karataev recounts the dissuasion campaign launched by the US in an effort to prevent its allies from joining the AIIB, which, according to the expert, claimed an ‘inability of Asian countries to ensure the functioning of a modern development bank, the openness and efficiency of its activities, as well as adherence to the implementation of international social and environmental standards for potential projects’.¹⁷⁶ In Prokofev’s view, by joining the AIIB, countries of the EU have shown their desire to not only diversify its international economic relations, but also to

¹⁷² Kokarev, Konstantin, et al. ‘Politika Kitaia v Azii i interesy Rossii (China’s Policy in Asia and Russia’s Interests)’. Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Problems of National Strategy 5, no. 44 (2017): 33-34. Available at <https://riss.ru/documents/648/36b0cc1262ae40b59f3714cc87037241.pdf>. Accessed 26/03/2021.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Prokofev, Igor, et al. ‘Vostok protiv Zapada: Bitva za Reformirovanie Mirovoi Ekonomiki (East vs. West: The Battle to Reform the World Economy)’. Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Problems of National Strategy 6, no. 33 (2015): 75-76. Available at <https://riss.ru/documents/487/3daff79d034fd7a3698602f35c7e13.pdf>. Accessed 26/03/2021.

¹⁷⁶ Karataev, Sergei. ‘Novyi Mirovoi Finansovyi Poriadok Po-Kitaiski (The New World Financial Order in Chinese)’. Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. 20/01/2016. Available at <https://riss.ru/article/6940/>. Accessed 26/03/2021.

‘weaken American influence’.¹⁷⁷ While discussing the establishment of the AIIB, Trush notes that the heterogeneity of EU countries due to its eastern expansion has been exploited by China. The expert explains that ‘China's investment and foreign trade attractiveness, its free financial resources and undoubtedly strong foreign policy reputation’ have attracted a number Central and Eastern European states and allowed for China’s advancement into the European market.¹⁷⁸

While the implications of the division caused by China with its establishment of the AIIB among Western allies for Russia is not directly discussed by the experts, it is reasonable to expect that the siding of major US allies such as the UK, France, and Germany with China would be perceived by Russian experts and foreign policy decision makers as having positive implications for Russia. First, Western solidarity in general threatens Russia with the potential for collective action, e.g. in the form of sanctions. Second, China’s attracting major wealthy US allies to its side may be viewed as beneficial to a certain degree by extension, i.e. a successful development for China, Russia’s main partner in foreign and economic affairs, has potential to yield benefits at home.

Policy

It is more difficult to determine the extent to which Russia’s foreign policy actions in Central Asia are consistent with the dominant views identified in this chapter than in the previous two chapters on the RFE because, despite Russia’s considerable political influence in the region, the countries of Central Asia may engage with China bilaterally in ways that are not always in

¹⁷⁷ Prokofev, Igor, et al. ‘Budushchee Globalizatsii pod Ugrozoï? (Is the Future of Globalization at Stake?)’ Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Problems of National Strategy 3, no. 48 (2018): 48-49. Available at <https://riss.ru/documents/705/e8aed55ca7aa4a2f87948fcc01aeb431.pdf>. Accessed 26/03/2021.

¹⁷⁸ Trush, Sergei. ‘Evropa Mezhdú SSHA i Kitaem (Europe between the USA and China)’. International Life. 2020. pp. 106-107. Available at https://interaffairs.ru/virtualread/ia_rus/122020/files/assets/downloads/publication.pdf. Accessed 26/03/2021.

Russia's best interest. It is not uncommon among Western analysts to consider Russia's blocking of the development of multilateral economic cooperation under the auspices of the SCO and its hesitation to lower or remove tariffs or trade barriers for goods imported from China to the countries of the EAEU to be signs that China's economic expansion in Central Asia threatens Russian interests. However, the content analysis shows that this might not necessarily be true. A number of implications of China's increasing economic activity in Central Asia for Russia's interests in the region are too complex to fit entirely either in a 'threatening' or 'not threatening' category.

It is important to consider the protectionism of the Central Asian countries of the EAEU and SCO driven by Russia in the context of the mutual interest of Russia and China in the socio-economic stability of Central Asia. On the one hand, the protectionist measures ensure that the importation of inexpensive Chinese goods does not reach the extent that it puts important domestic industries out of business, potentially causing instability. On the other hand, the demand for affordable consumer goods must also be met to a certain extent in the interest of maintaining socio-economic stability, and here China is grateful for the export markets. Russian experts and officials also acknowledge that China's economic expansion in Central Asia in the form of investments and infrastructure development projects contribute to economic development, which is considered by Russia and China to be important for maintaining stability in the region.

While Russia likely prefers to be the main driver of economic development in Central Asia, the reality is that it simply lacks the ability to do so. In this sense, China is achieving gains in Central Asia but not necessarily at the expense of Russian interests. As long as there is the balance described above created by protectionist measures, Russia also stands to benefit from much of

China's economic activity in the region in the form of socio-economic stability and development on its southern border. In its fundamental official documents, Russia makes it clear that it views stability and security as linked to economic development, and in such documents and other official rhetoric it refers to its partnership with China as one that is important for regional stability.¹⁷⁹ Some economic competition between Russia and China does exist in Central Asia. However, as explained above, the dominant perceptions identified by the content analysis include the view that competition between neighboring great powers is natural, and that the economic competition between Russia and China in the region is not so severe as to be unmanageable due to the countries' continuing development of cooperation and China's restraint out of a recognition of Russia's 'privileged' interests. Major policy trends in Central Asia, including the linking of the EAEU and BRI beginning in 2015 and the EAEU-China trade agreement reached in 2018, and official rhetoric are consistent with this dominant view and indicate less a move towards confrontation or conflict due to perceptions of threat and more the development of cooperation facilitated by perceptions of positive-sum outcomes and frequent mutual accommodations of interests. If zero-sum thinking with regard to economic activity in Central Asia were dominant among Russian officials, and as a result China's BRI and bilateral economic advances in the region were perceived to be more threatening to Russia's interests, the agreement for the linking of the EAEU and the BRI and the EAEU-China trade deal may not

¹⁷⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 'Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation'. 01/12/2016. Articles 42, 84. Available at https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/2542248. Accessed 20/04/2021; Government of the Russian Federation. 'O Strategii Natsional'noi Bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii (On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation)'. Article 95. 31/12/2015. Available at <https://www.mchs.gov.ru/dokumenty/ukazy-prezidenta-rf/2933>. Accessed 17/04/2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 'Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation'. Article 80. 18/02/2013. Available at https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/122186. Accessed 20/04/2021; as explained on page 71, one of the four main themes identified in the analysis of Russia's official rhetoric in the Appendix emphasizes the importance of Russia and China's cooperation for regional and global stability.

have been reached. Such agreements would have been even less likely if not for the shared perception among Russian and Chinese leaders that economic development increases stability.

The ‘Dispositional factors’ section in chapter 2 outlines a framework for analysis that has been followed in this chapter.¹⁸⁰ Based on the finding that the dominant expert view regarding Russia’s economic interaction with China in Central Asia is held by experts with a high level of potential influence on average, the chapter concludes that it is likely that the view has been successfully communicated directly or indirectly to foreign policy decisionmakers. This is case 1 in the framework. Given case 1, scenarios 1 or 2 are more likely than scenarios 3 and 4.¹⁸¹ This means that it is likely that once the dominant view was successfully communicated to the officials, the dispositional factors (perceptions and values) of the officials either changed to become more aligned with, or less contradictory to, the dominant view (scenario 1), or the officials’ preexisting dispositional factors were reinforced by the dominant view (scenario 2). In both scenarios, dispositional factors that inform the dominant views are likely shared to the point that policy is consistent with the views (in scenario 1, they are shared after the communication, and in scenario 2, they are shared before and after the communication). Therefore, the dispositional factors inherent in the views would explain the policies. Such factors include the value of protecting Russia’s economic interests in Central Asia; the perception that China’s economic interests in Central Asia are ‘natural’, ‘logical’, or ‘understandable’; the perception that conflicts of economic interest between Russia and China in Central Asia are not so severe as to be unmanageable through diplomatic efforts; the perception that the BRI and the EAEU are

¹⁸⁰ pp. 80-86.

¹⁸¹ Scenario 3 would be considered most likely if the dominant expert views were held by those with a high level of potential influence on average and Russia’s policies were not consistent with the views. Scenario 4 would be considered most likely if the dominant expert views were held by those with a low level of potential influence on average.

compatible; and the perception that the BRI is beneficial to Russia and the EAEU countries of Central Asia.

Conclusion

This chapter reports the results of the qualitative aspect of the content analysis of Russian expert views on China's economic activity in Central Asia from 2000 to 2020 and its implications for Russian interests. It does so with the intention of contributing to the broader aim of this thesis to provide an explanation for Russia's foreign policy behavior towards China in the context of a drastic shift in the balance of power between the two countries due to the fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of China. The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section analyzes Russian expert views on China's economic activity in Central Asia in general, and the second focuses on the more specific issue of China's BRI, its linking with the EAEU, and its implications for Russia's interests in Central Asia and the development of the EAEU.

The first section identifies two main trends in Russian expert thought. The first is that China's economic interests in Central Asia are 'natural', 'logical', or 'understandable' because of certain global developments or processes, most of which are related to China's rivalry with the US.

While uncommon, the claim that Russia mostly views China's economic expansion in Central Asia as a natural outgrowth of its power does exist in Western literature on the subject and is supported by the findings of this chapter.¹⁸²

The second trend consists of an acknowledgement of economic competition between Russia and China in Central Asia along with an argument that such competition should not be perceived as

¹⁸² See for example Andrew Kuchins. 'Russian Perspectives on China: Strategic Ambivalence'. In James Bellacqua, ed. *The Future of China-Russia Relations*. University Press of Kentucky. 2010. p. 43.

being out of control and a threat to Russia-China relations. This is because the negative effects of the competition are mitigated by processes at both the bilateral level and multilateral level within the SCO. This finding contradicts much of what is found in Western literature on the subject. However, some in the West have recognized that these ‘relationship management efforts’, which include ‘mutual accommodation and compromise’ have allowed Russia and China to avoid significantly harmful discord in Central Asia.¹⁸³

The second section identifies two main trends in Russian expert views of China’s BRI and its linking with the EAEU. First, the BRI is beneficial for both Russia and the rest of the EAEU members for various reasons. Second, the BRI and the EAEU are complementary and have a synergetic effect on one another. The section also reports the results of the qualitative aspect of the content analysis relevant to perceptions of China’s establishment of the AIIB. The analysis finds a dominant view of benefits and an absence of loss for Russia, which are indicative of positive-sum thinking among Russian experts with connections to the Russian government or military and likely among foreign policy decisionmakers. It also finds that the AIIB is widely viewed as a challenge to ‘traditional’ Western-led international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the IMF. The bank’s establishment is also viewed as considerably divisive for the West, as it prompted a US campaign to dissuade its allies from joining the AIIB, which largely failed as such countries as the UK, France, and Germany became shareholders in the bank. These findings support hypothesis 3 in that they provide evidence of dominant perceptions

¹⁸³ See for example Samuel Charap et al. ‘Russia and China: A New Model of Great-Power Relations’. *Survival* 59, no. 1 (2017): 25-26.

among Russian experts, and likely decisionmakers, that the interests that drive China's BRI and AIIB do not conflict with Russia's interests to the point of causing perceptions of threat.¹⁸⁴

The final section discusses Russia's policies in Central Asia relevant to its economic interaction with China in the region. For some Western analysts, Russia's policy of hindering the development of multilateral economic cooperation under the auspices of the SCO and its hesitation to lower or remove tariffs or trade barriers for goods imported from China to the countries of the EAEU are signs that Russia is threatened by China's economic expansion in Central Asia.¹⁸⁵ The section argues that this is not necessarily the case and proposes considering such policies in the context of Russia and China's mutual interest in stability in the region.

From the perspective of both sides, economic development in Central Asia serves a stabilizing function, and this has primarily been driven by China over the period of interest. While Russia may prefer to be the primary driver of economic development in the region, it is simply not capable of doing so. In this sense, China's economic expansion serves not so much as a loss as a gain in the form of more stability on Russia's southern border. Russia's policy of hindering the development of multilateral economic cooperation in the SCO and its hesitation to lower or remove EAEU tariffs on imported Chinese goods may also be viewed as serving a stabilizing function by protecting domestic industry in Central Asia. As shown by the content analysis, economic competition between Russia and China in Central Asia is acknowledged by experts but

¹⁸⁴ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider the compatibility or non-conflictual nature of the interests of Russia and China to be one of the main reasons why China's rise does not threaten Russia.

¹⁸⁵ See for example Alexander Cooley. 'Tending the Eurasian Garden: Russia, China and the Dynamics of Regional Integration and Order'. In Jo Bekkevold, and Bobo Lo, eds. *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2019. pp. 113-139; Stephen Blank. 'Triangularism Old and New: China, Russia, and the United States'. In Bekkevold, and Lo, eds. *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*. 2019. p. 222; Morena Skalamera. 'Russia's lasting influence in Central Asia'. *Survival* 59, no. 6 (2017): 134; and Bobo Lo. *Russia and the New World Disorder*. Brookings Institution Press, Chatham House. 2015. pp. 126, 149.

is also viewed as being not so severe as to be unmanageable through processes developed at the bilateral level and multilateral level within the SCO. In this context, Russia's policies have a balancing effect that serves the interests of both Russia and China in regional stability and are not as much a response to a direct threat from China as they are a response to a potential threat in the form of socio-economic upheaval in Central Asia prompted by the failure of domestic businesses due to an influx of inexpensive Chinese consumer goods and the growth of anti-Chinese sentiments. Given that the dominant views of potentially influential experts identified in the chapter are consistent with Russia's policies, the chapter concludes that scenarios 1 or 2 in the framework explained in the 'Dispositional factors' section in chapter 2 are most likely.

This perspective of Russia's economic balancing policies combined with two other main policies—the linking of the EAEU and BRI beginning in 2015 and the 2018 EAEU-China trade agreement—creates a picture of economic interaction between Russia and China in Central Asia characterized less by confrontation and rivalry moving towards conflict and more by manageable competition moving with caution towards a higher degree of cooperation and coordination in the mutual interest of regional stability.

It is generally not acknowledged in Western literature on Russia-China relations that an understanding of China's interests in Central Asia as 'natural', 'logical', or 'understandable' exists in Moscow and that the understanding is important for explaining Russia's economic interaction with China in the region.¹⁸⁶ Explanations of such interaction that include a dominant perception among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers that Russia benefits from the BRI and that the initiative and the EAEU are mutually complementary, producing a synergistic effect, are

¹⁸⁶ For a notable exception see Andrew Kuchins. 'Russian Perspectives on China: Strategic Ambivalence'. In James Bellacqua, ed. *The Future of China-Russia Relations*. University Press of Kentucky. 2010. p. 43.

uncommon in Western literature. The chapter offers support for arguments that the negative effects of economic competition between Russia and China in Central Asia are mitigated by diplomatic efforts on both sides consisting of mutual accommodation and compromise and restraint on China's side.¹⁸⁷

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¹⁸⁷ See for example Maximilian Hess. 'Russia and Central Asia: Putin's Most Stable Region?' *Orbis*, 64(3). 2020. pp. 421-433; Samuel Charap et al. 'Russia and China: A New Model of Great-Power Relations'. *Survival*. Vol. 59, no. 1. 2017. pp. 25-27, 33-34; Marcin Kaczmarek. 'The Asymmetric Partnership? Russia's Turn to China'. *International Politics* 53, no. 3 (2016): 415-434; and Marcin Kaczmarek. *Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order*. Routledge. 2015. pp. 100-101.

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Chapter 7: Security Interaction in Central Asia

One of the most important aspects of Russia's relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC) is their interaction regarding the security of Central Asia. Both are interested in a peaceful and developing 'back yard', and, in order to achieve and maintain stability, Russia and China often cooperate against threats of terrorism, separatism, and organized crime. Because this is such an important area of the countries' relationship, it deserves careful analysis in the process of achieving the aim of this thesis, which is to provide a thorough explanation of Russia's foreign policy towards China from 2000 to 2020 in the context of the drastic shift in the balance of power between the two as a result of the fall of the Soviet Union and China's rise.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, it contextualizes Russia's security interaction with China in Central Asia with a brief overview of Russia's and China's security presence and interests in the region since the early 1990s. The chapter then presents the results of the content analysis of Russian expert views on China's security-related activity and interaction with Russia in Central Asia. Three dominant trends are identified. First, Russian experts tend to claim that there is no serious clash of interests between Russia and China in Central Asia. They acknowledge that there are some minor conflicts of interest, but they argue that such conflicts are easily manageable at the bilateral and multilateral levels because of the good state of Russia's relationship with China. Second, there is a tendency in the Russian expert community to view China's security-related interests and activities in Central Asia through the lens of China's rivalry with the US. In this context, for China, Central Asia is a 'reliable rear' that can serve as a relatively safe theater of operations and a less vulnerable source of natural resources in the event of a conflict with the US. Third, there is a tendency in Russia's expert community to believe that

China genuinely respects Russia's 'special' or 'privileged' interests in Central Asia and behaves in the region accordingly. The maintenance of good relations with Russia is a top priority for China, and because of this, Beijing usually opts not to implement certain policies in Central Asia if there is a chance that they will cause a severe negative reaction from Moscow.

Then, the chapter reports some other noteworthy views found by the content analysis. Russian experts have analyzed the strengthening of China's 'soft power' in Central Asia and discuss its implications for Russian interests in the region. Such analysis tends to be nuanced and objective while the discussions of implications occasionally include either positive or negative views towards China's soft power initiatives in Central Asia. The section ends with a discussion on some other negative views on China's security-related activity in the region found by the content analysis.

Finally, the chapter discusses Russia's security policies in Central Asia, China's expanded security role in Tajikistan in recent years, Russia's response to this development, and the implications of the development for Russia's interests in Central Asia in the views of Russian experts. The section finds that there is nothing in Russia's response (neither in its official rhetoric nor its policy actions) that indicates that China's increased security role on the Tajik-Afghan border threatens Russian interests, and that the dominant view of Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military holds that China's actions are logical and do not contradict Russian interests. Since the dominant expert views regarding China's security presence in Central Asia identified are consistent with Russia's security policies in the region, the chapter concludes that scenarios 1 or 2 in the framework explained in the 'Dispositional factors' section in chapter 2 are most likely.

Context

As explained in the previous chapter, Russia's foreign policy was virtually univector in the early 1990s, focusing on continued rapprochement and integration with the West. The combination of the univectoriness of Russia's foreign policy, the popular view that Central Asia had been a burden for Russia, and the demands of the chaotic domestic environment resulted in neglect of Central Asia. However, serious issues that had implications for the national security of Russia began to appear shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union, which made Central Asia difficult to ignore. One of the earliest of such issues to appear was the outbreak of civil war in Tajikistan on 5 May 1992, in which Russian forces eventually intervened. The security of Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan was one of the main imperatives that drove the decision to intervene. Russia was also concerned about the burgeoning of radical Islam in the Fergana Valley of Uzbekistan in the early 1990s. The perceived need for security engagement soon after the fall of the Soviet Union is evidenced by the signing of Russia, Armenia and four Central Asia states (and later Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Belarus) of the Collective Security Treaty on 15 May 1992. Since 2002, the treaty has served as the basis for the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), of which the Central Asian countries of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan are still members alongside Russia. The need for a security presence in the region also grew as a result of Western expansion in Central Asia, one form of which was the accession of all five of the former Soviet republics of the region to NATO's Partnership for Peace program in 1994.

In 1996, with the arrival of Foreign Minister Evgeny Primakov came a strengthened view of the need for a more proactive policy in Central Asia. However, as explained in the previous chapter, this did not eliminate the constraints on Russia's ability to implement such a policy in the region. Nevertheless, Russia effectively participated in the Shanghai Five mechanism, which was

established in 1996 and consisted of Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan. The primary aim was to demarcate and demilitarize the borders between the member states. The Shanghai Five gradually took on more security tasks and became the foundation on which the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was established in 2001. Russia also managed to reach an agreement with Tajikistan in April 1999 on basing rights in the country.

Since 2000, a resurgent Russia under President Putin continued strengthening its security presence and mechanisms in Central Asia. With the help of rising oil prices, Russia's GDP grew, and with it its military expenditure (doubled from 1999 to 2005)¹ and ability to effectively address security issues in Central Asia. However, the geopolitical and strategic landscape of the region changed drastically after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. In the aftermath of the attacks, Moscow moved quickly to assure the US that it had Russia's support in the coming War on Terror. As US-Russian relations began to deteriorate in the mid-2000s, security cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia was strengthening.

Russia and China cooperate on security issues in Central Asia, but the extent to which each directly contributes to the maintenance of security in the region is not equal. Russia has a much larger security presence than China in the region, and the PRC generally seems to accept this for two main reasons: first, China recognizes the region as a sphere of Russia's 'privileged' interests; and second, China has remained wary (although decreasingly so) of having a military presence abroad. Nevertheless, the PRC participates with Russia in multilateral security structures in the region, including the SCO Regional Anti-terrorist Structure (RATS) and SCO Peace Mission military exercises. China has also expanded its security presence in Tajikistan in

¹ SIPRI. 'Military Expenditure by Country, in Constant (2018) US\$ m., 1988-2019'. Available at <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>. Accessed 01/06/2020.

recent years, which may have implications for Russian perceptions of the ‘division of labor’ in Central Asia.

Dominant Trends in Russian Expert Thought

Clash? What clash?

One trend in Russian expert thought identified by the content analysis is the claim that Russia’s and China’s interests in Central Asia are not in serious conflict. In this view, the security interests of the two countries in the region are mostly aligned or complementary, and because of this they are able to establish security-related cooperation and most of the time avoid competition. It is often acknowledged that occasionally there are interests that are not perfectly aligned, but these contradictions are not so strong as to cause open rivalry and hostility between Russia and China. In this perspective, claims that there is a major conflict of interest between Moscow and Beijing in Central Asia that will inevitably lead to a clash between the two are exaggerated, unsubstantiated, and misinformed.

The section now moves on to present the results of the qualitative aspect of the content analysis. Please refer to information provided on the institutions and experts in chapter 3 regarding potential influence through government or military connections and qualifications.

Views likely to have influence

In a *Red Star* interview, the First Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, Colonel General Yuri Baluevsky argues that the view often found in the media that a clash between Russia and China is imminent is ‘a deep misconception’ and that the Russian military should be careful not to harm the relationship between the two countries, which

he describes as good and neighborly.² Baluevsky explains that it is not out of fear that the Russian military should act in the interest of maintaining good relations with China, but rather because Russia and China have common goals that can be reached through cooperation of all types, including within the framework of the SCO.³ The expert also expresses his belief that as the SCO gains strength it will create ‘a zone of peace and stability’.⁴

In an article published by *International Life*, Lukin argues that China’s interests in the region are ‘mainly not economic, but strategic in nature, not in terms of establishing control, but of eliminating the threats of instability and terrorism that emanate from it for China itself’.⁵ In 2014, the expert reiterates this argument.⁶

In an article published by the *Bulletin of MGIMO*, Lukin analyzes the SCO and Russia’s interests in Central Asia.⁷ Regarding China’s activity in the region in general, the expert claims that ‘Russia welcomes the stabilizing Chinese economic presence’.⁸ In an article published by *Russia in Global Politics*, Lukin repeats this claim, but points out that there are some in Russia who worry about China’s growing influence in the region, and adds that ‘India’s entry from this point of view is welcome’.⁹

² Baluevsky, Yuri. ‘Takim My Vidim Budushee Armii (So We See the Future of the Army)’. Interview with Red Star. 25/10/2003. Available at http://old.redstar.ru/2003/10/25_10/1_02.html. Accessed 13/03/2020.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Lukin, Alexander. ‘SHOS: Itogi Rossiiskogo Predsedatel’sstva (SCO: Results of Russia’s Chairmanship)’. *International Life*. 2009. Available at <https://interaffairs.ru/jauthor/material/31>. Accessed 24/02/2020.

⁶ Lukin, Alexander. ‘Ideia «Ekonomicheskogo Poiasa SHelkovogo Puti» i Evraziiskaia Integratsiia (The Idea of the Silk Road Economic Belt and Eurasian Integration)’. *International Life*. 2014. Available at <https://interaffairs.ru/jauthor/material/1101>. Accessed 01/03/2020.

⁷ Lukin, Alexander. ‘SHankhaïskaia Organizatsiia Sotrudnichestva i Rossiiskie Interesy v TSentral’noï Azii i Afganistane (The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Russian Interests in Central Asia and Afghanistan)’. *Bulletin of MGIMO* 5, no. 20 (2011).

⁸ Ibid., p. 43.

⁹ Lukin Alexander. ‘Nuzhno li Rasshirit’ SHOS? (Should the SCO Be Expanded?)’ *Russia in Global Politics*. 06/11/2011. Available at <https://www.globalaffairs.ru/articles/nuzhno-li-rasshiryat-shos/>. Accessed 15/03/2020.

In another article analyzing the SCO and Russia's interests in Central Asia, Lukin argues that Russia's interests in Central Asia are not in conflict neither with the interests of the countries of the region nor with those of China or the US.¹⁰ In the expert's view, 'all sorts of ideas of "chessboards" and "great games" based on the inevitability of a tough fight by external players here either create a wish for reality or are brought to life by a poor knowledge of reality and a desire to gain popularity with catchy slogans'.¹¹ According to Lukin, not only do the interests of Russia, China, and the US not contradict each other, but they are aligned in that they all want to maintain political stability and secularism in Central Asian countries and their governments, and they want economic development in the region, as it 'can only become the basis of political stability'.¹²

In an article published by the *Russian Institute of Strategic Studies (RISS)*, Guzenkova and Vinogradov et al. analyze China's foreign policy towards the post-Soviet space.¹³ The experts claim that, despite China's active policy in Central Asia, 'many Russian Sinologists still do not see serious risks in China's policy in the post-Soviet space, including for Russia'.¹⁴

In an article published by *Russia in Global Politics*, Vorobyov denies that Central Asia is 'a field of rivalry' for Russia and China.¹⁵ According to the expert, this view 'eliminates the importance of the states of the region as independent players' and it 'is a manifestation of an unrealistic

¹⁰ Lukin, Alexander. 'The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Russian Interests in Central Asia and Afghanistan'. *Bulletin of MGIMO* 5, no. 20 (2011).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Guzenkova, Tamara and Andrei Vinogradov et al. 'Strany SNG i Baltii v Global'noĭ Politike Kitaia (CIS and Baltic Countries in China's Global Policy)'. *Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Problems of National Strategy* 1, no. 10 (2012): 7-56. Available at https://riss.ru/images/pdf/journal/2012/1/04_%20.pdf. Accessed 27/02/2020.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Vorobyov, Vitaly. 'SHOS Kak Rastushchiĭ Vlastel'in Xartlenda (The SCO as a Growing Ruler of the Heartland)'. *Russia in Global Politics*. 19/02/2012. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/shos-kak-rastushhij-vlastelin-hartlenda/>. Accessed 15/03/2020.

approach in theory and myopia in practice’ that is ‘promoting the alarmist thesis about Russian-Chinese relations as a whole as an inescapable confrontation’.¹⁶ Vorobyov acknowledges that there is ‘of course’ competition between Russia and China in the region due to ‘the deep historical proximity of the two countries and Central Asia’ and ‘their position in the modern globalizing world’, and if it were otherwise it would be strange.¹⁷ The expert argues that the motive for the SCO is not a conflict of interests, but rather ‘the coincidence of views on the importance of such factors as predictability and the peaceful development of the overall situation in Central Asia, awareness of the explosiveness of the occurrence of splits and dividing lines there, in terms of readable goals of their own policies for the long term’.¹⁸ Vorobyov describes the SCO as a product of Russia and China’s ‘new type of relations’ and describes the organization as ‘one of the significant and visible elements that embody today the Russian-Chinese strategic trust partnership’.¹⁹ The expert argues that the view that Russia and China are battling for hegemony in Central Asia is biased and does not map onto the reality of what is happening in the SCO, adding that ‘the constructively oriented ideology, dubbed the “Shanghai Spirit”, does not allow undivided domination of one state, regardless of its parameters’.²⁰

In another article published by *Russia in Global Politics*, Vorobyov again analyzes Russia and China’s interaction in Central Asia.²¹ In Vorobyov’s view, in the SCO, ‘signs of antagonism are imperceptible’ between Russia and China and that ‘in cultural terms, the region is and will be distinctive in relation to both powers, and therefore one should hardly expect a Russian-Chinese

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Vorobyov, Vitaly. ‘Summa Skhodiashchikhsia Interesov (Sum of Converging Interests)’. *Russia in Global Politics*. 23/12/2012. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/number/Summa-skhodyaschikhsya-interesov-15795>. Accessed 28/02/2020.

confrontation in this area’.²² However, the expert points out that there are two areas where Russia and China may compete—economics and soft power—the former of which is ‘inevitable and natural’.²³ According to Vorobyov, Russia and China’s ‘strategic trust partnership’ provides a basis for hope that the two countries will ‘get along with each other’ in Central Asia and avoid competition for hegemony.²⁴

In a report published by the *Valdai Discussion Club*, Koldunova and Kundu claim that China’s ‘good-neighborliness diplomacy’ provided secular governments in Central Asia the support they needed to stave off radical Islam.²⁵ Regarding the SCO, they claim that ‘many experts agree’ that within the organization Russia and China have struck a ‘balance of interests’ in which Russia handles multilateral political cooperation and security while China handles economic cooperation.²⁶

In a report published by *Russia in Global Politics*, Karaganov et al. claim that Russia and China have no majorly conflicting interests in Central Asia.²⁷ In the experts’ view, US policy forces Russia and China closer together and pushes these and other countries in Central Eurasia in the direction of security cooperation.²⁸ At the same time, there are some who believe that Eurasia is an area of rivalry between Russia and China, and this prompts efforts from ‘external forces’ to

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Koldunova, Ekaterina and Nivedita Das Kundu. ‘Rol’ Rossii v SHOS i TŠentral’noĭ Azii: Vyzovy i Vozmozhnosti (The Role of Russia in the SCO and Central Asia: Challenges and Opportunities)’. Valdai Discussion Club. Moscow. December 2014. p. 37. Available at http://vid-1.rian.ru/ig/valdai/SCO_rus.pdf. Accessed 29/02/2020.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 45.

²⁷ Karaganov, Sergei, et al. ‘Budushee TŠentral’noĭ Evrazii (The Future of Central Eurasia)’. *Russia in Global Politics*. 05/04/2015. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/budushhee-czentralnoj-evrazii/>. Accessed 05/03/2020.

²⁸ Ibid.

‘drive a wedge between Moscow and Beijing’.²⁹ However, Karaganov et al. argue that ‘none of the contradictions discussed in political and scientific circles are objective or insurmountable’.³⁰

In another report published by the *Valdai Discussion Club*, Karaganov et al. argue that potential instability in Central Asia ‘has already led to the choice of a model of cooperation rather than competition’ and that such instability ‘represents a kind of ideal overall challenge, the answer to which is possible only through a rational game with a positive amount’.³¹

In an article published by *Valdai Discussion Club*, Bordachev analyzes Russia and China’s interaction in Central Asia.³² The expert reiterates the argument above that the region’s potential for destabilization is an ‘ideal common challenge’ for Russia and China, which can only be solved ‘through a rational game with a positive amount’.³³ Bordachev acknowledges that there are those who think the appropriate response to Russia’s declining influence and China’s strengthening influence in Central Asia is to cooperate with the US in the region. The expert writes that such a view ‘may be aimed at undermining confidence between Moscow and Beijing’.³⁴ Bordachev is confident that, due to ‘objective factors’, it is likely that Russia and China will choose to cooperate in Central Asia, and that efforts to stabilize this region can be

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Karaganov, Sergei, et al. ‘K Velikomu Okeanu 4: Povorot na Vostok Predvaritel’nye Itogi i Novye Zadachi (To the Great Ocean – 4: Turn to the East. Preliminary Results and New Tasks)’. Valdai Discussion Club. May 2016. p. 36. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/files/12395/>. Accessed 19/03/2020.

³² Bordachev, Timofey. ‘Rossiia i Kitai v Tsentral’noi Azii: Bol’shaia igra s Pozitivnoi Summoï (Russia and China in Central Asia: A Great Game with a Positive Sum)’. Valdai Discussion Club. June 2016. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/valdai-papers/valdayskaya-zapiska-50/>. Accessed 18/03/2020.

³³ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

uniting for Russia and China in a common global context'.³⁵ The expert explains that the obstacles Russia and China face for cooperation in Central Asia are mostly subjective.³⁶

In an article published by the *Valdai Discussion Club*, Bordachev et al. analyze the activities of Russia, China and the US in Central Asia.³⁷ Regarding Russia and China's interaction in Central Asia, the experts argue that the common interest of the two countries in maintaining stability in the region can cause such interaction to be one based on cooperation rather than competition.³⁸ Bordachev et al. repeat the argument that 'the potential instability in Central Eurasia is a kind of "perfect common challenge", the solution of which is possible only through a rational game with a positive sum'.³⁹ The experts explain that, in the event of instability, Russia and China 'will not be able to channel the problem in the direction of another player and, thus, will be forced to cooperate "on the spot"'.⁴⁰ According to Bordachev et al., another reason why Russia and China are likely to choose cooperation over competition in Central Asia is that both countries prefer to ensure stability by supporting the current regimes in the region, unlike the EU for example, which prefers the transformation of its neighbors through its Neighborhood Policy initiative.⁴¹

³⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

³⁷ Bordachev, Timofey, et al. 'Rossiia, Kitaĭ i SSHA v TŖentral'noĭ Azii: Balans Interesov i Vozmozhnosti Sotrudnichestva (Russia, China, and the USA in Central Asia: Balance of Interests and Opportunities of Cooperation)'. Valdai Discussion Club. September 2016. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/files/13120/>. Accessed 19/03/2020.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Bordachev, speaking at a discussion session held by the *Valdai Discussion Club* claimed that the interests of Russia and China in Central Asia do not contradict each other in the fields of security, labor migration, or energy.⁴²

Related to the view that the security-related interests of Russia and China in Central Asia are not in serious conflict and will not lead to a clash is the observation that Beijing strictly adheres to certain principles of diplomacy and foreign policy, such as non-interference in internal affairs, while acting in the region. This principled approach constrains China's options for unilateral actions in Central Asia that may lead to a major conflict of interest with Russia.

Guzenkova and Vinogradov et al. explain that China has put post-Soviet countries, including those of Central Asia, at ease with its foreign policy, which is strictly guided by the principle of non-interference in internal affairs.⁴³ In contrast to Western foreign policy, Chinese foreign policy does not aim to compel others to adopt 'civilizational-block standards' through agreements to reform and does not include lecturing others on moral values such as human rights or freedom of speech.⁴⁴ According to Guzenkova and Vinogradov et al., the principle of non-interference in internal affairs is a credo of the PRC's diplomatic and expert community.⁴⁵

In an article cited above, Vorobyov explains that principles of 'non-interference in internal affairs, respect for peoples' choices of social system and methods of development, equality and mutual benefit, solving problems by political means, and promoting good neighborliness' is a

⁴² Bordachev, Timofey. 'Dinamika Situatsii v Stranakh «Obshchego Sosedstva» Rossii i Kitaia (The Dynamics of the Situation in the Countries of the "Common Neighborhood" of Russia and China)'. Valdai Discussion Club. April 2017. Available at https://ru.valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/obshchee-sosedstvo-rossiya-kitai/?sphrase_id=15272. Accessed 10/03/2020.

⁴³ Guzenkova and Vinogradov et al. 'CIS and Baltic Countries in China's Global Policy'. 2012 p. 8.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 54. 'China is not forcing anyone to comply with civilizational-block standards. Chinese relations with foreign partners are not burdened by long-term and comprehensive reform programs. Chinese officials, unlike Washington and Brussels, do not interfere in internal affairs and do not moralize about the need to respect human rights, freedom of speech and other democratic freedoms'.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

‘pivotal point of the Chinese partnership strategy’ in Central Asia.⁴⁶ The expert claims that in Central Asian countries, in the context of being abandoned by Moscow, ‘the ruling circles saw that China was not turning away and was not seizing the moment to instructively intervene, but, on the contrary, was extending a hand, if not in friendship, then help’.⁴⁷

In an article published by the *Valdai Discussion Club*, Bordachev observes that China truly behaves in accordance with the principle of non-interference in internal affairs.⁴⁸ In a report also published by the *Valdai Discussion Club*, Bordachev et al. address the possibility of forceful continental expansion by China in Central Asia.⁴⁹ According to the experts, such expansion would not be rational for four reasons: first, China would face resistance from powerful players, including Russia and India; second, the region does not have enough resources to satisfy China’s needs; third, the markets of Central Asian countries are ‘negligible’; and fourth, ‘lasting domination’ would be very costly.⁵⁰ Bordachev et al. explain further that China strives primarily to be a great maritime power with global interests, and that ‘the priority of the Pacific direction in relation to the continental derives from the scale of the Chinese economy’.⁵¹ Moreover, the experts argue that China’s economy, because of its size, cannot be sated by the resources of any one region.⁵² In this view, China cannot risk sacrificing positions in other regions of the world for a firmer hold on any one region through force, including Central Asia.

⁴⁶ Vorobyov. ‘Sum of Converging Interests’. 2012.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Bordachev, Timofey. ‘Rossiia i Kitaï v Tsentral’noi Azii: Bol’shaia igra s Pozitivnoi Summoï (Russia and China in Central Asia: A Great Game with a Positive Sum)’. Valdai Discussion Club. June 2016. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/valdai-papers/valdayskaya-zapiska-50/>. Accessed 18/03/2020.

⁴⁹ Bordachev, Timofey, et al. ‘Zaglianut’ v Budushee: Stsenarii Dlia Azii i Rossii v Azii do 2037 Goda (A Look into the Future: Scenarios for Asia and Russia in Asia until 2037)’. Valdai Discussion Club. 27/11/2017. Available at <https://ru.valdaiclub.com/files/18485/>. Accessed 10/03/2020.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 9.

⁵² Ibid.

In an opinion piece published by the *Valdai Discussion Club*, Barabanov addresses the issues of ‘zero-sum game’ perceptions among major powers in Central Asia.⁵³ The expert observes that in expert communities around the world, including the US, there is ‘a kind of jealousy’ over Russia’s close relations with China that occasionally leads to the view that Moscow is losing its ability to implement its foreign policy towards others independently because it is under too strong an influence from Beijing.⁵⁴ For Barabanov, such a conclusion seems to have an underlying ‘zero-sum’ logic of ‘either you are with us, or you are with them’.⁵⁵ The expert observes that in the US one can find opinions that, given the rapprochement between Russia and China, the US should attempt to improve relations with Moscow because it is China that is the long-term adversary of the US, not Russia.⁵⁶

While acknowledging that overcoming such ‘jealousy and doubts’ is difficult in practice, Barabanov argues that ‘it is clear that in the 21st century there can be no zero-sum game and partnership with one country does not automatically terminate partnership with another (or even hostility)’.⁵⁷ The expert points out that it is one of the main objectives of the SCO to overcome zero-sum thinking in the relations of the countries of Eurasia in order to produce a ‘synergy of various initiatives and transform it into a much larger unity of Eurasia as a whole, which will enhance both the economic and political benefits of each of the players’.⁵⁸ Barabanov claims that the zero-sum thinking of ‘you are either with us, or you are with them’ has been overcome in the past, using the example of the USSR’s ‘quite trusting and constructive’ relationships with several

⁵³ Barabanov, Oleg. ‘Put’ Kitaïa k Global’nomu Liderstvu: Perspektivy i Vyzovy Dlia Rossii (China’s Path to Global Leadership: Prospects and Challenges for Russia)’. Valdai Discussion Club. 14/05/2019. Available at https://ru.valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/put-kitaya-k-globalnomu-liderstvu/?sphrase_id=15272. Accessed 22/03/2020.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

countries that participated in the non-alignment movement during the Cold War.⁵⁹ The expert argues that you can see the same zero-sum logic with the ‘new non-alignment movement’ that forces countries to choose between the US, China, and the non-aligned.

Another way in which the security interests of Russia and China in Central Asia are viewed as complementary, or at least non-conflicting, by Russian experts is the idea that the economic development of the region driven by China has a stabilizing effect, which is in the security interests of all parties. For example, in an article published by *RISS*, Frolova explains that one of the intentions of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is to ensure stability in Xinjiang through economic development and rising living standards.⁶⁰

In a workbook on cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia published by *RIAC*, Sergei Luzyanin et al. claim that China’s BRI and its linking with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) ‘can become the most important tool for solving growing security problems’.⁶¹ Luzyanin et al. explain that this is because the ‘dynamic economic development’ that the initiatives would bring can ‘reduce the risks of destabilization’ in Central Asia.⁶² Put another way, ‘progressive socio-economic development is one of the best forms of preventing the growth of activity of extremists and terrorists’: it is ‘a recipe for political stability’.⁶³

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Frolova, Ivetta. ‘Kitaïskii Proekt “Ėkonomicheskiĭ Poias SHĕlkovogo Puti”’: Razvitie, Problemy, Perspektivy (The Chinese Project “Silk Road Economic Belt”: Development, Problems, and Prospects)’. Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. Problems of National Strategy 5, no. 38 (2016): 51. Available at <https://riss.ru/documents/562/a92c4825394e4974a7089bfa139b5dbf.pdf>. Accessed 06/03/2020.

⁶¹ Luzyanin, Sergei, et al. ‘Perspektivy Sotrudnichestva Rossii i Kitaia v Tsentral’noĭ Azii (Prospects for Cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia)’. Russian International Affairs Council. 27/05/2016. p. 6. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/workingpapers/perspektivy-sotrudnichestva-rossii-i-kitaya-v-tsentrallynoy-az/>. Accessed 06/03/2020.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 18.

A significant number of Russian experts explicitly claim that Russia and China share an interest in preventing the strengthening of the presence of a third power in Central Asia. This can be seen as having a unifying effect that contributes to preventing a major clash of interests between Russia and China in the region. For example, according to Luzyanin et al., Russia and China are not only interested in preventing instability in Central Asia on the bordering areas of their own countries and the spread of terrorist activity and radical Islam from the region to their territories, but also in preventing the rise of a ‘third force’ in the region.⁶⁴ The experts explain that China views Central Asia as a ‘reliable rear’ to have as it implements its Asia-Pacific policy, while for Russia the region consists of CSTO allies or neutral areas, which are useful for balancing against NATO.⁶⁵ According to Bordachev et al., ‘Russia and China are equally interested in the withdrawal of foreign military bases from the territory of the countries of Eurasia, with their constant geopolitical and economic intrigues’.⁶⁶ Bordachev et al. do not name the US, but it is reasonable to assume that the withdrawal of US military bases from Central Asia is included in this interest. This common strategic interest in Central Asia as a reliable rear contributes to an understanding among experts that Russia’s and China’s security-related interests in the region are more aligned than conflictual, and therefore, a clash between the two is less likely than cooperation.

Given the qualifications of Baluevsky, Lukin, Guzenkova, Vinogradov, Vorobyov, Stapan, Toloraya, Koldunova, Karaganov, Bordachev, Barabanov, Frolova, and Luzyanin, Zvyagelskaya, Kazantsev, and Kuzmina, that most of them have served in the Russian government or military,

⁶⁴ Luzyanin, Sergei, et al. ‘Perspektivy Sotrudnichestva Rossii i Kitaia v Tsentral’noĭ Azii (Prospects for Cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia)’. Russian International Affairs Council. 27/05/2016. p. 7. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/workingpapers/perspektivy-sotrudnichestva-rossii-i-kitaya-v-tsentralnoy-az/>. Accessed 06/03/2020.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Bordachev et al. ‘Transformation of the Eurasian Space’. 2017. p. 13.

and that the views they convey in the articles referenced above were published by FSBI and institutions with connections to the Russian government, it is reasonable to argue that it is likely that their views have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors (perceptions and values) of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

The dominant view identified in this section is that the security interests of Russia and China in Central Asia are non-conflictual or shared. The coincidence of interests contributes to the general perception that between the two countries there is a lack of unmanageable conflicts of interests, which in turn contributes to the formation of the perception of an absence of threat from China among Russian experts and foreign policy decisionmakers. The quantitative aspect of the content analysis shows that a lack of conflict of interests between Russia and China is one of the most frequently identified reasons for perceptions of an absence of threat from China in the texts analyzed.

A ‘reliable rear’

The second major trend in Russian expert thought on Russia and China’s interaction in Central Asia identified by the content analysis is the view that Beijing avoids serious conflict with Moscow over the region because the area is strategically important as a ‘reliable rear’ in the context of its rivalry and potential conflict with the US. Central Asia is important for China not only as a relatively secure area of operations in the context of such a conflict, but also as a source of natural resources that may be more securely transported over land. This supply would be critical in a conflict with the US, as most of China’s current supply routes are by water and vulnerable to disruption by the US Navy.

Views likely to have influence

Vorobyov claims that China views the region as a strategically important ‘deep rear’ that is valuable in its heightening struggle with the US.⁶⁷ In an *RIAC* workbook cited above, Bordachev et al. explain that China views Central Asia as a ‘reliable rear’ to have as it implements its Asia-Pacific policy, while for Russia the region consists of CSTO allies or neutral areas, which are useful for balancing against NATO.⁶⁸

Despite the fact that among the experts of the work referenced above only Vorobyov has held a position in the Russian government, given the qualifications of Bordachev, Zvyagelskaya, Kazantsev, and Kuzmina, that the work referenced above was published by institutions with connections to the Russian government, and that Bordachev may be considered being in close proximity to the government, it is reasonable to argue that it is likely that the experts’ views have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

Views not unlikely to have influence

In an article published by *International Processes*, Mamonov claims that China’s foreign policy towards Central Asia is constrained by its prioritization of keeping a reliable rear to its north and northwest and in ensuring that Russia remains neutral with regarding to its efforts to secure energy supplies from the region.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Vorobyov. ‘Sum of Converging Interests’. 2012.

⁶⁸ Bordachev et al. ‘Prospects for Cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia’. 2016. p. 7.

⁶⁹ Mamonov, Mikhail. ‘«Strategiia Profilaktiki Opasnosti» vo Vneshnei Politike KNR (“Danger Prevention Strategy” in the Foreign Policy of the PRC)’. *International Processes* 5, no. 3 (2007): 37. Available at <http://intertrends.ru/rubrics/realnost/journals/integratsiya-i-natsionalnyy-interes>. Accessed 13/03/2020.

In an article published by *National Defense*, Frolova analyzes China's interests and activity in Central Asia.⁷⁰ According to the expert, China's interests in the region include: maintaining social and political stability in Xinjiang, a province whose 'problems and development prospects' serve as a lens through which China views Central Asia; providing itself a 'strategic rear'; transit to Europe, the Middle East, and the Caucasus; export markets for Chinese goods; and energy resources.⁷¹ China's energy interests in Central Asia are prompted by instability in regions that supply its energy resources through the Straits of Hormuz and Malacca.⁷² In an article published by *RIS*, Frolova reiterates that China is interested in gaining access to energy resources in Central Asia in order to reduce its dependence on sources from which they import energy via vulnerable sea transit routes.⁷³ The expert also points out that China's construction of transport infrastructure in the region is important for the mobility of its armed forces in case a deployment to Central Asia or the Middle East is necessary.⁷⁴

Mamonov has a doctorate, however, the expert has not held a position in the Russian government or Military. He is the Director of the Center Institute for International Studies and a Senior Researcher in the Center for International Economics Studies at MGIMO.⁷⁵ Despite the expert's lack of service to the Russian government or military and that the views he conveyed in the article above were published by an institution that does not have apparent connections to the government, given his qualifications and employment at the Federal State Autonomous

⁷⁰ Frolova, Ivetta. 'Reaktsiia Zameshcheniia (Substitution Reaction)'. *National Defense*. 2012. Available at <http://www.oborona.ru/includes/periodics/geopolitics/2012/1009/19009290/detail.shtml>. Accessed 28/02/2020.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Frolova, Ivetta. 'Ekonomicheskaia Politika KNR v Sin'tszian-Uigurskom Avtonomnom Raione v Kontekste Interesov Stran Tsentral'noi Azii (China's Economic Policy in the Xinjiang Uighur Province in the Context of the Interests of Central Asian Countries)'. Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. *Problems of National Strategy* 4, no. 25 (2014). Available at https://riss.ru/images/pdf/journal/2014/4/07_.pdf. Accessed 01/03/2020.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 77-78.

⁷⁵ Mamonov, Mikhail. Profile at the Website of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations. Available at <https://mgimo.ru/people/mamonov/>. Accessed 19/06/2020.

Educational Institute MGIMO, it is reasonable to argue that it is not unlikely that his views have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers. Despite Frolova's lack of a doctorate and history with the government or military, given that she has been at the FSBI *RISS* since 1998 and she publishes her views through it, it is reasonable to argue that it is not unlikely that her views have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

There is a trend in expert views regarding security interaction between Russia and China in Central Asia identified in this section that China considers the region to be a strategic rear that is to be relied upon in the event of a conflict with the US. In this view, Beijing is careful not to come into conflict with Moscow in Central Asia to an extent that would compromise the region's strategic value. Throughout the period of interest, Russian experts and, likely, foreign policy decisionmakers have come to this conclusion by continuous reassessment of China's geopolitical and geostrategic position in the context of its rivalry with the US. Such a conclusion provides Moscow with confidence that China does not have harmful intentions towards Russia and that Beijing will avoid unmanageable conflicts of interest with Russia in Central Asia. The quantitative aspect of the content analysis shows that a lack of conflicts of interest between Russia and China is one of the most frequently identified reasons for perceptions of an absence of threat from China in the texts analyzed.

Respecting Russia's special interests

The third trend in Russian expert thought on China's security-related activities and interaction with Russia in Central Asia identified by the content analysis is the observation that Beijing always or usually prioritizes maintaining good relations with Moscow over making unilateral

advances in Central Asia when the two interests come into conflict. Such behavior also stems from China's 'respect' for or 'recognition' of Russia's interests in the region, which are considered special due to traditional, cultural, and historical ties.

Views likely to have influence

There are various reasons why staying on Russia's good side by treading carefully in Central Asia is important for China's global foreign policy, but in the views of some Russian experts it is also important for its regional foreign policy. For example, in an article published by *Russia in Global Politics*, Chernyavsky claims that, with regard to Central Asia, 'Chinese diplomacy is based on the recognition of the traditional political and economic interests of its northern neighbor in the region and its leading role in the field of regional security'.⁷⁶ According to the expert, China's 'offensive line' in Central Asia is 'dictated' by its need to cooperate with Russia and countries in the region to defeat Uighur separatism.⁷⁷ In this view, Beijing does not want to risk damaging relations with Moscow by acting unilaterally in Central Asia not only for the sake of maintaining good relations, but also because China needs Russia's help in tackling its own security problem in Xinjiang. Chernyavsky also points out that cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia can play a role in deterring unwanted US action in the region.⁷⁸

In an article published by *RISS*, Lukin disputes the claim that China intends, by unilateral means, to become more influential in Central Asia.⁷⁹ The expert also points out that while China is

⁷⁶ Chernyavsky, Stanislav. 'Tsentral'naia Aziia v Èpoxu Peremen (Central Asia in an Era of Change)'. *Russia in Global Politics*. 13/12/2005. Available at <https://www.globalaffairs.ru/articles/czentralnaya-aziya-v-epohu-peremen/>. Accessed 13/03/2020.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Lukin, Alexander. 'V Kitae Zhdut Predlozheniĭ (China Waits for Proposals)'. *Strategy of Russia* 5 (2010). Available at http://sr.fondedin.ru/new/fullnews_arch_to.php?subaction=showfull&id=1274438336&archive=1274438711&start_from=&ucat=14&. Accessed 24/02/2020.

disappointed in Russia's failure to live up to its proclaimed 'main role' in the region, it still recognizes this role.⁸⁰

In an article cited above, Guzenkova and Vinogradov et al. explain that, while China recognizes Russia's leadership in the post-Soviet space and implements a principled foreign policy in the area, this does not mean it does not have geopolitical interests there, that it considers the whole area to be one of exclusive Russian interests, or that it does not pursue an independent foreign policy in the region.⁸¹

In an article published by the *Independent Military Observer*, Gavrilov claims that 'Beijing is pursuing a friendly and coordinated policy towards Moscow' and that in Central Asia, China, 'to the maximum extent possible for it, is observing Russia's national interests'.⁸²

In a report cited above, Bordachev et al. claim that China is making a serious effort to take into account Russian interests in Central Asia, and that, as long as China's political influence does not become as strong as its economic influence, they do not see a reason to expect a negative reaction from Russia.⁸³

Given the qualifications of Chernyavsky, Lukin, Guzenkova and Vinogradov et al., Gavrilov, and Bordachev, the fact that a significant number of them have served in the Russian government or military, and that the views they conveyed in the articles referenced above were published by an FSBI and institutions with connections to the Russian government, it is reasonable to argue

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Guzenkova and Vinogradov et al. 'CIS and Baltic Countries in China's Global Policy'. 2012. p. 11.

⁸² Gavrilov, Viktor. 'Moskva i Pekin: Novoe Ispytanie (Moscow and Beijing: A New Test)'. Independent Military Observer. 06/03/2015. Available at http://nvo.ng.ru/concepts/2015-03-06/1_pekin.html. Accessed 18/03/2020.

⁸³ Bordachev et al. 'Russia, China, and the USA in Central Asia: Balance of Interests and Opportunities of Cooperation'. 2016. p. 9.

that it is likely that their views have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

The trend in the dominant view regarding security interaction between Russia and China in Central Asia identified in this section is related to the trend identified in the previous section that China considers the region a reliable strategic rear. It is perceived that Beijing recognizes Moscow's 'special interests' in Central Asia in order to avoid conflict that would compromise the strategic value of the region in the event of a conflict with the US. The trend also includes the view that China respects Russia's interests in Central Asia to facilitate security cooperation in the interest of combatting Uighur separatism and terrorism. Again, the analysis finds confidence among Russian experts that China does not have harmful intentions towards Russia and that Beijing will avoid unmanageable conflicts of interests with Russia in Central Asia. The quantitative aspect of the content analysis shows that a lack of conflict of interests between Russia and China is one of the most frequently identified reasons for perceptions of an absence of threat from China in the texts analyzed.

Other Noteworthy Views

'Soft power'

Another aspect of Russian expert thought on China's security-related activity in Central Asia and its implications for Russian interests worth addressing in this chapter is 'soft power'. Views on the waning of Russia's soft power and strengthening of China's soft power in the region tend to be nuanced and generally neutral, but occasionally imply some potential positive or negative implications that such a shift may bring for Russia.

Views likely to have influence

In a workbook published by the *RIAC*, Luzyanin et al. address the issue of soft power in Central Asia.⁸⁴ In the third chapter of the workbook, Smirnova explains that the strategic ‘triangle’ in Central Asia, i.e. Russia, China, and the West, and their competition for influence in the region can be thought of as a struggle between two sides with Russia and China on one side and the US on the other.⁸⁵ In this view, it is logical that as China’s influence increases, so does Russia’s.⁸⁶ However, the experts ask whether when considering certain aspects of soft power such as language or education, perhaps the opposite may be true: as China’s soft power influence increases so does that of the West to the detriment of Russian influence.⁸⁷ This is because English is becoming more popular to learn in Central Asia, and English language capabilities bring opportunities for stronger ties with China.⁸⁸ Smirnova explains that the language barrier between China and Central Asian countries is so strong that English may eventually become the main *lingua franca* between the two.⁸⁹

One of the strongest ties between Central Asian countries and China is through China’s BRI, which includes the construction of transit infrastructure managed by Chinese companies in the region. According to Smirnova, the operations of Chinese companies that include foreigners are carried out with communication in English.⁹⁰ The expert also points out that China’s educational system is well integrated with the Western system.⁹¹ These factors combined with the greater

⁸⁴ Luzyanin, Sergei, et al. ‘SHankhaĭskaĭa Organizatsĭia Sotrudnichestva: Model’ 2014–2015 (Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Model 2014-2015)’. Russian International Affairs Council. 27/05/2015. Available at https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/workingpapers/shankhayskaya-organizatsiya-sotrudnichestva-model-2014-2015/?PROJECT_THEME_ID_4=34&TYPE_4=analytic. Accessed 03/03/2020.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 25.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 24.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 24-25.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 24.

⁹¹ Ibid.

attraction to China as opposed to Russia in terms of economic opportunities will make English language education more appealing in Central Asia. Thus, according to Smirnova, it is worth considering the potential that China's increasing soft power in Central Asia may lead to its assuming the role of a 'civilizational bridge' between Central Asia and the West.⁹² The expert emphasizes that it is not likely that China will do so intentionally and points out that such an outcome would be attributed to Russia itself because of its relative international isolation and lack of an attractive and innovative economy. Smirnova argues that Russia should not try to prevent the development of ties between Central Asia and China or the West because ultimately it is in Russia's interest that Central Asian countries continue to be interested in their cooperation.⁹³ The expert points out that if the countries of the post-Soviet space that do not see a satisfying rate of development, then they may blame Russia and turn away from it towards China or the West, as Ukraine did.⁹⁴

In a workbook on cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia published by the *RIAC*, Luzyanin et al. observe that Russia's soft power in the form of cultural influence, education, and the use of the Russian language in Central Asia is traditionally strong, however, it is waning as China's soft power in the region is growing rapidly.⁹⁵ The experts do not express a view on whether this is harmful for Russian interests, but rather they simply write that 'there is a need to harmonize approaches and tools so that they meet both the interests of Russia and China, and the needs of the Central Asian peoples'.⁹⁶ Luzyanin et al. also point out that China is providing a

⁹² Ibid., p. 25.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 27.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Luzyanin, Sergei, et al. 'Perspektivy Sotrudnichestva Rossii i Kitaia v Tsentral'noĭ Azii (Prospects for Cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia)'. Russian International Affairs Council. 27/05/2016. p. 8. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/workingpapers/perspektivy-sotrudnichestva-rossii-i-kitaya-v-tsentralnoy-az/>. Accessed 06/03/2020.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

growing number of Central Asians with secular education at universities in Xinjiang, which is good for countering the spread of extremism and radical Islam.⁹⁷

In an article published by *International Life*, Zhigarkov analyzes Russian and Chinese soft power initiatives in Central Asia and the countries' potential for cooperation and competition.⁹⁸ The expert explains that both Russia and China have soft power projects and influence in Central Asia: Russia has Rossotrudnichestvo and the Russkiy Mir Foundation as well as continued popularity of Russian education, while China has established in the region Confucius Institutes, Confucius Classes, and the Union of Universities of China and Central Asia based in Urumqi. Russia's soft power in the region is strong and can potentially be maintained, although it is 'based mainly on a common Soviet past'.⁹⁹ Chinese soft power efforts take advantage of the cultural ties between ethnic groups in Central Asia and northwest China in order to spread the Chinese language in Central Asia through the Education Office of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, an institution whose responsibilities include 'rendering assistance to the universities of the SCO member countries in the creation of Confucius Institutes, development of multilingual teaching aids, educational exchanges, and the development of friendly relations with the states of the region'.¹⁰⁰ Zhigarkov observes that while Russian soft power efforts 'rely primarily on interaction with compatriots' and target mostly Russian-speaking people in Central Asia, 'Chinese organizations work with wider segments of the population, encouraging their interest in the Chinese language and oriental culture, using the interest in cooperation with a

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 49.

⁹⁸ Zhigarkov, Grigory. '«Miagkaia Sila» s Kitaïskoï Spetsifikoï: Konkurentsiia za Obshchestvennoe Mnenie (Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics: Competition for Public Opinion)'. *International Life*. 2018. Available at <https://interaffairs.ru/jauthor/material/2031>. Accessed 22/03/2020.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

promising neighbor'.¹⁰¹ The expert notes that Russia still receives more Central Asian students at its universities than China, however, he also observes that 'education in the PRC is already popular among the youth of Central Asia' and argues that 'given the narrowing of the range of use of the Russian language in Central Asian countries and the significant financial resources that China is ready to devote to education, including direct material support to students, this gap will tend to narrow in the future'.¹⁰² For Zhigarkov, the prospects for Chinese media to contribute to the strengthening of Chinese soft power in Central Asia are also promising, as it has a 'single organizing center, extensive financial resources and a consolidated system of foreign broadcasting, including a Russian one'.¹⁰³

Regarding Russia's motives for projecting soft power in Central Asia for the purpose of gaining influence, Zhigarkov simply explains that the region is strategically important for Russia.¹⁰⁴ According to the expert, China is motivated by its desire to improve its image in the minds of the Central Asian public in preparation for the implementation of BRI projects and other initiatives such as 'Big State Diplomacy with Chinese Characteristics' and the 'Community of the United Fate of Humanity'.¹⁰⁵ Zhigarkov argues that 'under these conditions, the tendency towards competition of the "soft power" strategies of the PRC and other states, including Russia, will take on ever more distinct forms'.¹⁰⁶ However, from the expert's point of view, soft power competition in Central Asia is not inevitable. According to Zhigarkov, the political trust that has been established between Russia and China will allow them to cooperate and create joint projects

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

in the ‘soft power spheres of education, culture, and information.’¹⁰⁷ The expert makes an example of the SCO University, which has united many existing universities of the member states and observer states of the organization for the purpose of educational, academic, and scientific cooperation and integration.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, Zhigarkov argues that it is in Russia’s interest to research further the implications for the possibility of soft power competition between Russia and China in Central Asia. The expert notes that, in order to achieve the aim of the SCO, the EAEU, and the BRI of the unity of Greater Eurasia, Russia must also work on the image of China in its own country. Zhigarkov points out that negative views of China in Russia still exist, and that they are ‘quite clearly manifested both in the media and in the statements of the leaders of public opinion (the so-called LOMov)’.¹⁰⁹ The expert calls on Russia to strive to change this perception by working ‘not only and not so much with the elites through expert reports, but directly with people in completely different media formats’.¹¹⁰

Despite the lack of service to the Russian government or military of the experts, except for Zhigarkov, given the qualifications of Luzyanin and Bordachev, Matveev, Smirnova, Bordachev, Zvyagelskaya, Kazantsev, Kuzmina, and Zhigarkov, and that Luzyanin and Bordachev may be considered in close proximity to the Russian government, it is reasonable to argue that it is likely that the experts’ views have directly or indirectly contributed to the formation of the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Concerns

The chapter has reported results of the content analysis that have shown expert thought in Russia on China's security activity in Central Asia have tendencies to downplay the potential for a clash of interests between Moscow and Beijing, emphasize the compatibility of interests and successful coordination, point out reasons why it is not in China's interest to implement policies in the region despite Russia's disapproval, and give mostly neutral nuanced assessments while generally avoiding alarmism. However, the content analysis also revealed concerns and negative views regarding China's security policies in Central Asia and their implications for Russia's interests.

Views likely to have influence

In an article published by *Russia in Global Politics*, Safranchuk analyzes security cooperation in Central Asia, and acknowledges that the CSTO and SCO are 'increasingly drawn into non-public and dangerous competition' as their 'areas of responsibility ... overlap to a large extent both functionally and geographically'.¹¹¹ In 2007, tensions between the organizations were addressed, resulting in a 'memorandum of understanding' between their secretariats, in which the organizations agreed to various forms of cooperation. Safranchuk sees two possible scenarios of the implementation of cooperation and its results: one unlikely and one likely. The unlikely scenario entails the separation of functional responsibilities, which, according to Safranchuk, will be very difficult. The second and more likely scenario the expert gives is that the CSTO and the SCO fail to completely separate responsibilities and continue to implement parallel projects, but

¹¹¹ Safranchuk, Ivan. 'Konkurentsiia za Bezopasnost' Tsentral'noj Azii (Central Asian Security Competition)'. *Russia in Global Politics*. 16/12/2007. Available at <https://globalaffairs.ru/articles/konkurencziya-za-bezopasnost-czentralnoj-azii/>. Accessed 13/03/2020.

their secretariats will ‘coordinate action plans and avoid open contradictions’.¹¹² Safranchuk points out that in this more likely scenario the CSTO will lose its significance as China will gain indirect influence over the workings of the organization.¹¹³ The expert compares this loss of significance with that of the Western European Union, which became obsolete after the establishment of NATO.¹¹⁴

In an article published by the *Bulletin of MGIMO*, Chernyavsky addresses problems of water supply experienced in Central Asia and China and their potential to cause conflict.¹¹⁵ The expert points out that even within the region of Central Asia there is uneven distribution of freshwater resources.¹¹⁶ Fresh water in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan is plentiful, and the countries are depended on for supply in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. However, while the freshwater resources of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are great, they may not hold up under domestic and foreign supply pressures. Chernyavsky observes two main areas of conflict potential: first, with the rate of population growth at the time, annual water consumption at 5-6 thousand liters per person was unsustainable; second, there was a conflict between the interests of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in using its water resources for hydroelectricity, and the interests of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan in using those water resources primarily for agricultural purposes.¹¹⁷

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Chernyavsky, Stanislav. ‘Rossiia i Sovremennaia Gidropolitika (Russia and Modern Hydropolitics)’. *Bulletin of MGIMO* 2, no. 16 (2011): 25-30.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 27.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

Chernyavsky argues that China's water supply needs tie into the potential for conflict over fresh water in Central Asia in two main ways.¹¹⁸ First, there is a shortage of fresh water in China due partly to river pollution; and second, China's efforts for the accelerated development of Xinjiang include projects that divert water from the rivers Irtysh and Ili.¹¹⁹ These rivers feed Lake Balkhash and Lake Zaisan in Kazakhstan, which means a diversion of their flow is a threat to Kazakhstan's already insufficient domestic water supply.¹²⁰ By extension, such projects may be perceived as a threat to stability in Central Asia.

In the volume that followed, another article addressing freshwater problems was published, this time written by a collective of experts led by Chechevishnikov.¹²¹ Referring to the same Chinese projects, the experts warn that their implementation will lead to shortages in parts of Kazakhstan.¹²² The article was based on a report co-authored by Orlov, Chechevishnikov, Chernyavsky.¹²³

Views not unlikely to have influence

In the same volume of the *Bulletin of MGIMO*, Borishpolets also addresses the issue of water security in Central Asia.¹²⁴ Regarding China's plan to divert water from the Irtysh and Ili rivers for the sake of Xinjiang's industrial development, the expert claims that some other experts

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 27-28.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Chechevishnikov, Alexander. 'The Problem of Fresh Water: The Global Context of Russian Policy'. *Bulletin of MGIMO* 3, no. 17 (2011): 45-52. Available at <http://vestnikold.mgimo.ru/>. Accessed 20/06/2020.

¹²² Ibid., p. 49.

¹²³ Orlov, Alexander, et al. 'Problema Presnoĭ Vody. Global'nyĭ Kontekst Politiki Rossii (The Problem of Fresh Water. The Global Context of Russian Politics)'. Moscow: MGIMO University. 2011. Available at https://mgimo.ru/library/publications/issues_190229/. Accessed 20/06/2020.

¹²⁴ Borishpolets, Ksenia. 'Vodno- Ėnergeticheskie Problemy TŠentral'noĭ Azii i Sravnitel'nye Vozmozhnosti EvrAzĖS I SHOS v Dele Ikh Resheniĭa (Water and Energy Problems of Central Asia and the Comparative Capabilities of the EurAsEC and SCO in Resolving Them)'. *Bulletin of MGIMO* 2, no. 16 (2011): 31-37.

believe that the project ‘seriously jeopardizes the ecological and economic interests of Russia and Kazakhstan’.¹²⁵

In an article cited above, Frolova argues that, as China’s influence in Central Asia grows, it will continue to prioritize its interests over those of others, ‘which at some point may conflict with Russia's interests in the region’.¹²⁶ The main areas in which their interests may come into conflict are in ‘providing political influence on the leaders of Central Asian states ... the formation of social groups oriented towards Russia or China’, and ‘influence in the field of culture and education’.¹²⁷

Frolova perceives Russia’s and China’s activity in Central Asia as a zero-sum game. The expert explains how China’s gains in the region mean Russia’s loss in the following way.

‘The implementation of the Chinese concept of turning China into a global trading power, along with the country's production and investment capabilities, leads to a decrease in the importance of Russia as a trade and economic partner for the countries of Central Asia. In turn, the economic consolidation of China in the region reduces the influence and significance of Russia as a political partner and a partner in ensuring regional security’.¹²⁸

Frolova argues that ‘in the event of force majeure circumstances in the region, Moscow should be ready to use all means available to prevent the strengthening of the positions of both the PRC and other large countries in Central Asia’.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 36.

¹²⁶ Frolova, Ivetta. ‘Reaktsiia Zameshcheniia (Substitution Reaction)’. National Defense. 2012. Available at <http://www.oborona.ru/includes/periodics/geopolitics/2012/1009/19009290/detail.shtml>. Accessed 28/02/2020.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

In another article cited above, Frolova argues that there are certain ways that China may threaten security in Central Asia.¹³⁰ First, China's expansion in the oil and gas sectors of the region may cause social upheaval that could threaten supply channels. A situation in which China acts to ensure the safety of such channels 'could result in a serious threat to the national security of Central Asian states'.¹³¹ Second, Chinese canals that divert water from the Irtysh River have already caused water shortages in Central Asia and the cessation of shipping on a part of the Irtysh between Russia and Kazakhstan.¹³² Frolova claims that 'if the Chinese side realizes its plans to increase water withdrawal, this will lead to a critical shallowing of the river in the next 15 years'.¹³³

Policy

In general, Russia's security policy in Central Asia over the period of interest has consisted of a sustained and dominant security presence through the maintenance of its military bases in the region, supplying arms and military equipment, providing training for Central Asian troops, and conducting military exercises both bilaterally and multilaterally within the frameworks of the CSTO and the SCO. As discussed above, the main purpose of the policy has been to fight terrorism, separatism, extremism, organized crime, and drug trafficking, to support current regimes in Central Asia in the interest of stability, and, along with China, to balance against the rise of a 'third force' in the region, namely the US. Fundamental documents and official rhetoric

¹³⁰ Frolova. 'China's Economic Policy in the Xinjiang Uighur Province in the Context of the Interests of Central Asian Countries'. 2014.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 82.

¹³² Ibid., p. 83.

¹³³ Ibid.

indicate that Russia considers its partnership with China in addressing such matters to be important for regional security.¹³⁴

In recent years, China has been increasing its security presence in Tajikistan, calling into question how much longer the ‘division of labor’ in which Russia handles security and China economic development will last or whether it is already deteriorating. This increased security presence mainly refers to the Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism China-Tajikistan-Pakistan-Afghanistan (QCCM) formed in 2016, bilateral Chinese-Tajik military exercises conducted most recently in 2015, 2016, and 2019, and the appearance of a Chinese outpost on Tajik territory near the border of China and Tajikistan in 2019.

The outpost has received considerable attention among analysts due to its significance as only the second military presence China has abroad. Much of it seems to have been sparked by the Washington Post article written by Gerry Shih in February 2019, in which he refers to the outpost as a ‘base’.¹³⁵ The journalist met a Chinese soldier stationed at the outpost who told him that they had been there for three or four years. Some scholars and analysts were quick to adopt the label ‘military base’ to refer to the outpost and discuss its implications.¹³⁶ The Chinese

¹³⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. ‘Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation’. 01/12/2016. Articles 84. Available at https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/2542248. Accessed 20/04/2021; Government of the Russian Federation. ‘O Strategii Natsional’noi Bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii (On the National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation)’. Article 95. 31/12/2015. Available at <https://www.mchs.gov.ru/dokumenty/ukazy-prezidenta-rf/2933>. Accessed 17/04/2021; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. ‘Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation’. Article 80. 18/02/2013. Available at https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/122186. Accessed 20/04/2021; as explained on page 77, one of the four main themes identified in an analysis of Russia’s official rhetoric (detailed analysis in the Appendix) is the role of Russia and China’s coordination in regional and global stability.

¹³⁵ Shih, Gerry ‘In Central Asia’s Forbidding Highlands, a Quiet Newcomer: Chinese Troops’. Washington Post. 19/02/2019. Available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/in-central-asias-forbidding-highlands-a-quiet-newcomer-chinese-troops/2019/02/18/78d4a8d0-1e62-11e9-a759-2b8541bbbe20_story.html. Accessed 30/12/2020.

¹³⁶ See for example Stephen Blank. ‘China’s Military Base in Tajikistan: What Does it Mean?’ The Central Asia-Caucases Analyst. 18/04/2019. Available at <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13569->

Foreign and Defense Ministries made no comment when requested for one by Shih, and in a statement released by the Tajik Foreign Ministry it denied the presence of a Chinese military base in Tajikistan or plans for one to be established. An annual report to US Congress titled ‘Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2020’ from the Office of the Secretary of Defense corroborates the claim that China does not have a military base in Tajikistan, going only so far as to say that China has ‘likely considered’ Tajikistan as a location for a military logistics facility.¹³⁷

The outpost Shih refers to in the Washington Post article was likely installed as part of an agreement signed by Tajikistan and China in 2016, by which China provided a grant for the construction of three commandant's offices, four border outposts, four border posts, and one training center on the Tajik-Afghan border.¹³⁸ China was also given the right to build or renovate approximately 30-40 security posts on Tajikistan’s side of its border with Afghanistan.¹³⁹

The effort to strengthen the border is understandable, given the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan and that in 2015 the Taliban took control of about 80% of Badakhshan, a province

chinas-military-base-in-tajikistan-what-does-it-mean?.html. Accessed 30/12/2020; Emil Avdaliani. ‘China Opens a New Military Base in Tajikistan’. Modern Diplomacy. 13/03/2019. Available at <https://modern diplomacy.eu/2019/03/13/china-opens-a-new-military-base-in-tajikistan/>. Accessed 30/12/2020; and Michał Bogusz and Mariusz Marszewski. ‘China’s Military Presence in Tajikistan’. Centre for Eastern Studies. Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich. 27/02/2019. Available at <https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2019-02-27/chinas-military-presence-tajikistan>. Accessed 30/12/2020.

¹³⁷ Office of the Secretary of Defense of the United States. ‘Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2020’. 01/09/2020. pp. x, 128-129. Available at <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF?fbclid=IwAR0P56sTP7J83TN2ebe2QkqHU40D2LjxHv5wuAEdmNhbp3WKa-ZJgC63mko>. Accessed 30/12/2020.

¹³⁸ Isamova, Lydia. ‘Kitai Vydelt Tadzhiqistanu Grant na Ukreplenie Tadzhiqsko-Afganskoĭ Granitsy (China to Provide Tajikistan with a Grant to Strengthen the Tajik-Afghan Border)’. RIA Novosti. 26/09/2016. Available at <https://ria.ru/20160926/1477880156.html>. Accessed 30/12/2020.

¹³⁹ Panfilova, Viktoria. ‘Kitai Vyshli na Okhranu Tadzhiqsko-Afganskoĭ Granitsy (The Chinese Came out to Guard the Tajik-Afghan Border)’. Nezavisimaya Gazeta. 30/07/2019. Available at https://www.ng.ru/cis/2019-07-30/1_7636_border.html. Accessed 31/12/2020; and Office of the Secretary of Defense of the United States. ‘Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2020’. p. 127.

that borders Tajikistan.¹⁴⁰ One Tajik border guard told the BBC that the fighting came so close to the border that he could hear shooting at night.¹⁴¹ The US, acknowledging the threat of conflict spillover into Central Asia, sent Secretary of State John Kerry on a diplomatic trip to the region in an effort to reassure its governments that the US shares its concerns on the matter and would be maintaining a supporting military presence as it continues its drawdown.¹⁴² China views the security of the Tajik-Afghan border as vital for its own national security, as China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region borders Tajikistan's Gorno Badakhshan, an autonomous region that borders Badakhshan province Afghanistan. Chinese expert Sheng Xiyu explained to *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* that 'the activation in Afghan territory of the terrorist group "Islamic Movement of East Turkestan," which has close working relations with the Uyghur diaspora in Tajikistan, is a threat that Beijing takes extremely seriously and reacts to quite sharply'.¹⁴³ Sheng Xiyu as well as other experts, including Russian experts, view Tajikistan's Gorno Badakhshan as 'a direct road' to the Chinese Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region with significant consequences for China's national security.¹⁴⁴

There has been little response from Russian officials regarding China's increasing security presence in Central Asia aside from Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov who, according to Frolova, 'assessed the creation of

¹⁴⁰ TASS. 'Taliby Vplotnuŭ Priblizilis' k Granitsam Tadjikistana (Taliban Close to Borders of Tajikistan)'. 15/05/2015. Available at <https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/1971370>. Accessed 31/12/2020.

¹⁴¹ BBC. 'Tajikistan Fears Instability as Afghan Conflict Rages on'. 31/10/2015. Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-34659530>. Accessed 31/12/2020.

¹⁴² Weitz, Richard. 'Building on Kerry's Central Asian Tour'. *The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*. 22/12/2015. Available at <https://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13315-building-on-kerrys-central-asian-tour.html>. Accessed 31/12/2020.

¹⁴³ Panfilova. 'The Chinese Came out to Guard the Tajik-Afghan Border'. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. 30/07/2019.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.; and see for example Central Asian Analytical Network. Interview with Ivette Frolova. 'Kitaŭ i Ego Rol' v Bezopasnosti v Tsentral'noi Azii (China and its Role in Security in Central Asia)'. 21/04/2020. Available at <https://caa-network.org/archives/19621>. Accessed 02/01/2021.

the [QCCM] in a positive way'.¹⁴⁵ According to Kabulov, the primary purpose of the QCCM is 'border control and suppression of the infiltration of terrorists' and it is not necessary for Russia to be involved for two main reasons: first, Russia has 'its own plans within the CSTO'; and second, relevant issues are being discussed between Russia and China within the framework of the SCO.¹⁴⁶

A perceived shortage of a clear narrative from Moscow has encouraged claims from some analysts that China is acting against Russia's interest in remaining the dominant security provider in Central Asia. The results of the content analysis reported above show that the dominant perceptions among Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military with regard to security interaction with China in the region include the view that there either are no conflicting interests or that the conflicts of interests that do exist are manageable and non-threatening due to the good state of the countries' bilateral relations and China's restraint out of a respect for Russia's 'privileged interests' in Central Asia. Regarding the specific issue of China's increased security presence in the region in recent years, Russian experts tend not to express the view that the development threatens Russia's interests.

For example, in an interview with the Central Asian Analytical Network, Frolova concludes that China was 'forced to intensify counter-terrorism cooperation with its neighbors' by establishing the QCCM because of the threat emanating from Afghanistan.¹⁴⁷ According to the expert, China is primarily interested in ensuring stability in Xinjiang and security along its western border, and points out that 'China needs a favorable external environment to implement its internal

¹⁴⁵ Central Asian Analytical Network. Interview with Ivette Frolova. 'China and its Role in Security in Central Asia'. 21/04/2020.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

development programs'.¹⁴⁸ In Frolova's view, Beijing acts with consideration in the region, as it 'seeks to find a way to participate in the life of the region that would meet both the country's own interests and the interests of its neighbors'.¹⁴⁹ When asked whether the establishment of the QCCM was evidence that China wishes to expand its military-political influence in Central Asia, the expert first differentiates the external build-up of military-political influence as an end in itself from extraterritorial actions to meet internal needs by contributing to international efforts to ensure regional security.¹⁵⁰ Frolova then explains that China is engaged in the latter, contributing to regional security alongside the SCO and the CSTO.¹⁵¹

Frolova shares the view of Tajik Gorno Badakhshan as 'a direct road to Chinese Xinjiang', which makes Tajikistan 'one of the key points in ensuring the national security of the PRC'.¹⁵² Regarding the Chinese military 'base' reported by the Washington Post in 2019, the expert claims that the author of the article 'mistook one of the border outposts built by the PRC in the Murghab region of GBAO'.¹⁵³ In Frolova's view, the strategic interests of Russia and China in Central Asia continue to coincide, and "'horror stories" about the rivalry between the Russian Federation and the PRC in Central Asia have already lost their relevance'.¹⁵⁴

Regarding China's security cooperation with Tajikistan, Litovkin explains that, while Tajikistan as a sovereign country may conclude military alliances with other countries, including China, 'as a member of the CSTO, Tajikistan must coordinate the conclusion of military alliances with the

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

countries of this organization'.¹⁵⁵ The retired colonel then points out that Russia shares the interest of Tajikistan and China in fighting terrorism and extremism but its means are not unlimited: 'Russia cannot be present everywhere in the form of its troops'.¹⁵⁶ Litovkin claims that 'if there is an opportunity [for Tajikistan], together with China, to confront the threat of terrorism, then Moscow supports and approves such cooperation' and stresses that 'China's policy does not contradict Russian interests'.¹⁵⁷

Popov holds a similar view, writing that 'cooperation between Russia and China in Tajikistan is non-confrontational'.¹⁵⁸ According to the expert, Russia and China 'demonstrate their ability to resolve controversial issues on the basis of mutual respect and dialogue, and not to succumb to attempts by Western diplomacy and the press to bring tension to Russian-Chinese cooperation in Central Asia'.¹⁵⁹

Addressing the establishment of the QCCM and the question of whether China 'does not believe in the effectiveness of the SCO' or is 'trying to propose its own rules of the game in the field of regional security', Ivanov (ed.) et al. write that 'given that China has common borders with Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan, and all three countries share borders with Afghanistan, and given the similar security challenges these states face due to their geographic proximity, consultations in a quadripartite format are absolutely logical'.¹⁶⁰ The experts add that 'there is no

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Panfilova. 'The Chinese Came out to Guard the Tajik-Afghan Border'. *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. 30/07/2019.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Popov, Dmitri. 'Tadzhiksko-Kitaïskie Otnosheniia na Sovremennom Etape: Problemy i Perspektivy (Tajik-Chinese Relations at the Present Stage: Problems and Prospects)'. Russian Institute of Strategic Studies. *Problems of National Strategy* 4, no. 55 (2019): 101. Available at <https://riss.ru/documents/808/9603ec99b5c4492e905a108e7f597f46.pdf>. Accessed 20/01/2021.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ivanov, Igor (ed.), et al. 'Rossiïsko-Kitaïskii Dialog: Model' 2017 (Russian-Chinese Dialogue: Model 2017)'. Russian International Affairs Council. 28/05/2017. p. 69. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/activity/publications/rossiysko-kitayskiy-dialog-model-2017/>. Accessed 21/01/2021.

need to try to look for a different, hidden meaning in this process'.¹⁶¹ Ivanov (ed.) et al. argue that 'the plurality of institutions and mechanisms in the field of security is not a negative factor' but note that coordination between them in ensuring regional security should be strengthened.¹⁶²

The analysis of the work of Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military reveals that the dominant view on this issue does not include a perception of threat from China's security activity in Tajikistan in recent years. This is not to say that in Russia the view that such activity threatens Russia's interests does not exist, but rather that it is marginal and less likely to contribute to the formation of the dispositional factors (perceptions and values) on which Russia's foreign policy is based. This inference is supported by the absence of any Russian policy in Tajikistan since 2016 that could be construed as balancing against China's expanding security presence in the country.

The 'Dispositional factors' section in chapter 2 outlines a framework for analysis that has been followed in this chapter.¹⁶³ Based on the finding that the dominant expert view on Russia's security policies in Central Asia relevant to China is held by experts with a high level of potential influence on average, the chapter concludes that it is likely that the view has been successfully communicated directly or indirectly to foreign policy decisionmakers. This is case 1 in the framework. Given case 1, scenarios 1 or 2 are more likely than scenarios 3 and 4.¹⁶⁴ This means that it is likely that once the dominant view was successfully communicated to the officials, the dispositional factors of the officials either changed to become more aligned with, or

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ pp. 80-86.

¹⁶⁴ Scenario 3 would be considered most likely if the dominant expert views were held by those with a high level of potential influence on average and Russia's policies were not consistent with the views. Scenario 4 would be considered most likely if the dominant expert views were held by those with a low level of potential influence on average.

less contradictory to, the dominant view (scenario 1), or the officials' preexisting dispositional factors were reinforced by the dominant view (scenario 2). In both scenarios, dispositional factors that inform the dominant views are likely shared to the point that policy is consistent with the views (in scenario 1, they are shared after the communication, and in scenario 2, they are shared before and after the communication). Therefore, the dispositional factors inherent in the views would explain the policies. Such factors include the value of protecting Russia's security-related interests in Central Asia; the perception that there is no serious clash of security-related interests between Russia and China in the region; the perception that China will not act against its interests in Central Asia; and the perception that China practices restraint in the region, respecting Russia's 'special' or 'privileged' interests in order to ensure a 'reliable rear' for the contingency of conflict with the US.

Conclusion

This chapter contributes to the aim of the thesis to explain Russia's foreign policy towards China in the context of the drastic shift in the balance of power between the two as a result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the rise of China by addressing the issue of security in Central Asia, which is a key area of Russia-China relations. The results of the content analysis relevant to security interaction in this region are reported in sections which focus on dominant trends in Russian expert thought on the topic from 2000 to 2020.

The chapter identifies three main trends. The first is the view that conflicts of interest between Russia and China regarding security issues in Central Asia are either non-existent or minor. In this view, even when the interests of the two countries are not entirely aligned, the contradictions are not so serious as to be impossible to overcome through dialogue. The good state of relations between Russia and China, the realization on both sides that the security challenges posed by

Central Asia can and should be approached as a positive-sum game, and China's adherence to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states allow Russia and China to avoid a major clash in the region. The common interest in preventing the rise of a 'third force' in the region also has a unifying effect that motivates their efforts to avoid major conflict. Included in this dominant trend is the view that claims that a rivalry between Russia and China in Central Asia is already in progress or that a clash between the two in the region is inevitable are unsubstantiated, misinformed, or exaggerated. This finding supports hypothesis 3 in that it shows that conflicts of interest between Russia and China in the security sphere in Central Asia have not given rise to dominant perceptions of threat from China among Russian experts, and likely decisionmakers, because, as explained above, they are perceived as being either absent or minor.¹⁶⁵

The second trend reported by the chapter is the view among Russian experts that China sees Central Asia as a 'reliable rear' in the context of its rivalry with the US, i.e. a non-hostile area of operations as well as a source of energy with overland transit routes that are more secure than sea routes, which are vulnerable to disruption by the US Navy.

The third trend in Russian expert thought identified by the content analysis and reported in this chapter is the observation that China understands that Russia has 'special interests' in Central Asia and exercises restraint in the region so as not to damage relations with Moscow. In the views of these experts, this is because, for Beijing, the maintenance of good relations between Russia and China takes precedence over unilateral gains in Central Asia. Reasons for this prioritization are present at the regional and global level with regard to China's foreign policy.

¹⁶⁵ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider the compatibility or non-conflictual nature of the interests of Russia and China to be one of the main reasons why China's rise does not threaten Russia.

This finding supports hypothesis 1 in that it provides evidence of a dominant perception among Russian experts, and likely decisionmakers, that China does not intend to undermine Russia's security-related interests in Central Asia.¹⁶⁶ The finding also supports hypothesis 6 in that it shows that among Russian experts, and likely decisionmakers, there is a dominant perception that Beijing prioritizes long-term cooperation with Moscow in Central Asia over short-term gains, as evidenced by its restraint and respect for Russia's 'special interests' in the region.¹⁶⁷

The chapter also presents findings on Russian expert thought on China's soft power initiatives in Central Asia and their implications for Russia's interests. China's growing soft power in the region is not explicitly condemned, but there are concerns raised over the potential for soft power competition between Russia and China. Some experts point out that the strengthening of educational, cultural, and linguistic ties between China and Central Asia as a result of Chinese soft power initiatives could be beneficial not only for the region, but for Russia as well. This is because such ties may lead to quicker development in Central Asia, which will make it less likely that the countries of the region will blame Russia for its problems and turn to the West, as Ukraine did.

The chapter also shares some concerns that were found by the content analysis regarding China's security-related activity in Central Asia. They include perceptions that competition between the CSTO and the SCO may ultimately lead to the obsolescence of the former; that China's economic power may be used to reorient Central Asian countries' military cooperation priorities away from Russia and towards China; the destabilizing effects of China's river diversion projects

¹⁶⁶ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers do not perceive the rise of China as a threat because they believe China has harmless or benign intentions towards Russia.

¹⁶⁷ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers do not perceive the rise of China as a threat because they believe that China 'values the prospects of long-run cooperation between the two countries more than it values short-run gains that would accrue by exploiting its immediate power over [Russia]'.

in the region for the development of Xinjiang; and the potential for China's expansion in the energy sector of the economies of Central Asia to cause social upheaval in which case China may use force to protect its supply lines causing further destabilization.

Finally, the chapter discusses Russia's security-related policies in Central Asia, China's expanded security role in Tajikistan in recent years, Russia's response to China's increased security presence, and the implications of the development for Russia's interests in Central Asia in the views of Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military. There has been little response from Moscow in the form of official rhetoric, and there have not been any developments on Russia's end in Tajikistan since 2016 that indicate balancing behavior. Among Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military, the view that China's increased security role in Tajikistan is logical and non-threatening is apparently dominant. This view coupled with the passivity of Russia's policy on the matter leads the section to conclude that that scenarios 1 or 2 in the framework explained in the 'Dispositional factors' section in chapter 2 are most likely.

Western literature on security interaction between Russia and China in Central Asia consists of some claims that Moscow is put at ease by Beijing's respect for Russia's 'special interests' in Central Asia as demonstrated by its restraint, which are supported by the findings of the chapter.¹⁶⁸ Some contributors to Western literature have found no severe conflicts of interest

¹⁶⁸ See for example Marcin Kaczmarek. 'The Asymmetric Partnership? Russia's Turn to China'. *International Politics* 53, no. 3 (2016): 425-426, 431-432; Marcin Kaczmarek. *Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order*. Routledge. 2015. pp. 94, 100-101, 165-169.

between Russia and China in the region in the area of security,¹⁶⁹ while others have.¹⁷⁰ The work of the former is supported by another main conclusion of the chapter that among Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military, and likely among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers, there is a dominant perception that there are little or no significant conflicts of interest regarding security policies in Central Asia. One area that has apparently received little attention in the literature is the effect of Russian decisionmakers' perception of China's need for a 'reliable' strategic rear in Central Asia on Russia's security policy interaction with China in the region. The results of the content analysis indicate that this is a serious consideration when determining how Russia should interact with China in Central Asia in the security realm. It is arguable that Russia's continued dominance in the security realm provides comfort in the face of China's expanding security presence in the region, as Moscow maintains a considerable amount of influence that may be used to hinder Chinese access in the event of a conflict with the US.

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¹⁶⁹ See for example Morena Skalamera. 'Russia's lasting influence in Central Asia'. *Survival* 59, no. 6 (2017): 124-126, 130; Thomas Ambrosio. 'The Architecture of Alignment: The Russia-China Relationship and International Agreements'. *Europe-Asia Studies* 69, no. 1 (2017): 137; and Marcin Kaczmarek. *Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order*. Routledge. 2015. pp. 87, 92-94, 99-101.

¹⁷⁰ See for example Paul Goble. 'Russian Military Seeking to Counter Growing Chinese Role in Central Asia'. The Jamestown Foundation. *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 17, no. 88 (2020). Available at <https://jamestown.org/program/russian-military-seeking-to-counter-growing-chinese-role-in-central-asia/>. Accessed 27/02/2021; Bobo Lo. *Russia and the New World Disorder*. Brookings Institution Press, Chatham House. 2015. pp. 149-150; and James Bellacqua, ed. *The Future of China-Russia Relations*. University Press of Kentucky. 2010. pp. 5-6.

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Chapter 8: Conclusion

This thesis contributes to the literature on Russia-China relations a rigorous and systematic analysis of the Russian Federation's foreign policy towards the People's Republic of China (PRC) from 2000 to 2020. Chapter 1 explains that the study seeks to provide an answer to the question of why Russia is not threatened by the rise of China.¹ This question stems from a realist outlook of international relations and the context of the relationship between the two states, which includes a drastic shift in the balance of power within a few decades that has the potential to result in balancing, confrontation, or conflict. Given the rapidity of China's rise, its proximity to Russia, the anarchic international environment, and that Moscow can never be certain of Beijing's intentions, current or future, Russia would be expected by many realists to perceive China as a threat. However, Russia has not endeavored to balance against China and the two have managed to avoid confrontation and conflict.

Throughout the period of interest, Russia has consistently pursued the development of cooperation with China and has largely been successful. Russian officials have repeatedly stated that Russia-China relations are in the best state in their history and that they, with their Chinese colleagues, operate in an atmosphere of trust, good neighborliness, friendship, and mutual respect. The focus on perceptions of an absence of threat from China to Russia among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers is foundational to the approach taken by this thesis to analyze Russian foreign policy towards China. Since the foreign policy of a state towards another is often

¹ 'Why is Russia not threatened by the rise of China?' is a simplified version of the research question of this thesis. As explained in chapter 1, the explanandum of the study is that there has been a dominant perception of an absence of threat from China to Russia among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers from 2000 to 2020.

determined to a large extent by whether the other state is considered a threat, much of the policy can be explained by the rationale behind the view of the other as threatening or non-threatening. The study does not claim to explain every element of Russia's foreign policy towards China from 2000 to 2020. However, it does offer an explanation of the policy during this period, specifically with regard to the way it has managed to avoid confrontation and conflict and continued to develop cooperation despite the shift in the bilateral balance of power.

Chapter 2 formulates six hypotheses based on prominent theories and concepts in the field of IR that have both the potential to explain why Russia is not threatened by the rise of China and are sufficiently testable. Such theories and concepts include balance of threat theory, offense-defense balance theory, balance of interests theory, neoliberal institutionalism, a constructivist and psychological understanding of the interaction between shared identity and threat perception, and a politico-psychological notion of trust between states.

The thesis provides a multilevel multicausal explanation of Russia's foreign policy towards China under Putin by employing an analytical framework that integrates agency and structure. First, the intentions of foreign policy decisionmakers are identified. This is done with an analysis of Russian official rhetoric in the Appendix, the results of which are summarized in the 'Intentional factors' section of chapter 2. Second, dispositional factors (perceptions and values) of the decisionmakers are identified. In accordance with the framework, dispositional factors do most of the causal work in the explanation of a foreign policy. Therefore, most of the empirical work is focused on the identification of dispositional factors. This is done in chapters 3-7. The analysis allows the study to draw conclusions based on the likelihood that direct or indirect communication of the dominant views of the experts to foreign policy decisionmakers has been successful, and the likelihood that the dispositional factors inherent in the dominant expert views

are shared by decisionmakers to a significant extent. This part of the framework is explained in the ‘Dispositional factors’ section of chapter 2.² Third, structural constraints on foreign policy behavior are identified and used to elaborate the explanations that are based on the dispositional factors identified by the content analysis here in the concluding chapter.

The method chosen to identify the dispositional factors of Russian foreign policy decisionmakers is a crowdsourced content analysis of Russian expert texts. Expert texts as a source of dispositional factors were chosen for three main reasons. First, Russian decisionmakers are difficult to access for interviews, and even if interviews were granted, the answers to questions would likely resemble official rhetoric. Second, as explained in chapter 3, the connections between knowledge production in Russia on international affairs, foreign policy, and security and the Russian government, while not absolute, are nevertheless strong. Several of the publishing institutions themselves are directly or indirectly connected to, or even legally owned and operated by, the government. Many of the experts who wrote the texts analyzed have held or currently hold positions in the government or military or are in close proximity to high-ranking officials. And third, experts provide more detailed analysis in their work than officials do in their rhetoric, which can lead to deeper insight into the reasons behind Russia’s behavior towards China over the period of interest.

As explained in chapter 2, the texts of 19 publishing institutions on international affairs, foreign policy, and security were selected for analysis. 42,445 paragraphs, all of which mention China at least once and were published by the institutions from 2000 to 2018 were gathered from various sources, including the databases Integrum and East View and from the websites of the

² pp. 80-86.

institutions. The paragraphs were uploaded to the crowdsourcing platform Appen (formerly Crowdfunder and Figure-8) for them to be analyzed by coders. For each of the paragraphs, coders answered questions about the text designed to test the hypotheses. Each paragraph received at least five codes (sets of answers to the questions), which resulted in over 210,000 trusted codes used to identify trends in Russian expert thought on China. The results of the analysis also provided a guide for the qualitative aspect of the content analysis, which targeted texts that contained paragraphs that received certain codes and includes texts published from 2000 to early 2020. This qualitative aspect allowed for more detailed insights into Russian expert thought on China that the quantitative aspect could not provide.

Finally, chapter 3 reports five main findings of the quantitative aspect of the content analysis.

First, when coders identified a perception of threat or absence of threat from China to Russia in the texts analyzed, ‘non-conflicting interests’ and ‘lack of harmful intentions’ were by far the most frequently selected reasons why, according to the texts, there was such a perception.

Second, ‘economy/trade’ and ‘military’ are by far the most frequently addressed topics in the texts analyzed. Third, ‘economic/trade’ and ‘military’ are the types of perceptions of threat and absence of threat identified most in the texts analyzed. Fourth, direct discussions on the question of whether China poses a threat to Russia are rare. And fifth, the correlation coefficients calculated for 20 pairs of variables of shared identity and threat perception (overall and specific types) do not offer support for hypothesis 5, which is based on a social constructivist and psychological understanding of the interaction between shared identity and threat perception. Out of the 20 correlation coefficients calculated, none met theoretically based expectations.

Moreover, two coefficients indicate a strong positive correlation when a negative correlation was expected.

Chapter 4 contributes to the explanation of Russia's foreign policy towards China offered by this thesis by analyzing the policy through the prism of Russia's efforts to develop its easternmost territories so that it may be acknowledged as a great power in the Asia-Pacific region (APR) and reap the benefits of maintaining such a status. The first section of the chapter provides regional and ideational context to Russia's interaction with China in the Russian Far East (RFE). One of the main features of Russia's foreign policy is the pursuit or maintenance of great power status. An analysis of the idea of great power-ness in Russia among experts and officials reveals that its meaning consists of more than economic and military power: a country must also be attributed the status by others. The center of global wealth and power has been shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific. In order to maintain recognition as a great power globally, Russia must develop the RFE so that it may serve as a base from which it can project power and influence and be acknowledged by other states as occupying an important role in regional processes of the APR, including economic integration and security dynamics. China inevitably becomes a major factor in this undertaking.

The second section reports the results of the qualitative aspect of the content analysis that was performed for this thesis, specifically those relevant to the economic relations of the RFE and China. The section concludes that the dominant view among Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military is that, while there are problems with the structure of the RFE's trade relations with China that make the region's exports dependent on raw materials, economic relations between the RFE and China are mutually beneficial, and there are ways that Russia and China can address the problems so that the development of economic cooperation with China and the development of the RFE can be facilitated. Included in this dominant view is that the actual or potential status of the RFE as a 'raw materials appendage' of China is not attributed to

external actors, including the PRC, but rather to domestic factors. This finding supports hypothesis 1 in that, in this view, Beijing does not intend to harm Russia or its interests by ensuring that the economy of the RFE becomes or remains a ‘raw materials appendage’ of China.³

The final section discusses Russia’s policy regarding economic relations between the RFE and China in an effort to determine the extent to which such policy is consistent with the dominant expert view identified in the second section of the chapter. There are two main policies that demonstrate a lack of a perception of a serious threat from the rise of China to the RFE: the policy of authorizing Chinese investments in projects in the RFE in which the PRC controls large if not majority stakes; and the policy of selling or leasing land in the RFE to China for agricultural purposes. If the dominant perception among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers included the view that by allowing China to make large investments with controlling stakes and by leasing or selling land to China Russia risks losing effective sovereignty over parts of the RFE, then it is unlikely that such policies would be adopted. Therefore, the section argues that Russia’s policies have a high degree of consistency with the dominant view held by potentially influential experts identified in the second section. Based on this argument, the chapter concludes that scenarios 1 or 2 in the framework explained in the ‘Dispositional factors’ section in chapter 2 are most likely.

Structural constraints on Russia’s foreign policy towards China regarding the economic relationship between the RFE and the PRC include China’s great economic power, the dependence of the population of the RFE on Chinese finished goods, the absence of viable

³ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers do not perceive the rise of China as a threat because they believe China has harmless or benign intentions towards Russia.

alternative import markets for such goods, the RFE's dependence on raw materials exports to China, and the lack of strong economic ties between the RFE with the European core of Russia. Given these circumstances, Russia is constrained by the need to ensure that the demands of the population of the RFE are met in terms of access to affordable finished goods and employment, a large portion of which is in the raw materials sector. In this view, Russia has few options other than to continue the status quo and gradually undertake efforts for the diversification of the exports of the RFE and development of the economy of the region in a direction that will eventually allow it to become one based on innovation, services, and high technology, which is what Russia has been attempting to do. Despite these structural constraints, as explained above, the dominant view among Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military, and likely among foreign policy decisionmakers, is that economic relations between the RFE and China throughout the period of interest have been mutually beneficial and that China does not have harmful intentions towards the region.

The findings of chapter 4 are at odds with those contributors to Western literature on Russia-China relations who identify Russian decisionmakers' fear of the rise of China as a significant variable affecting the pace (often considered slow) at which economic relations between the RFE and China are being developed and Chinese investments and projects are being accepted and implemented in the RFE.⁴ As the chapter shows, concerns are not entirely absent, however they

⁴ See for example Bobo Lo. *Russia and the New World Disorder*. Brookings Institution Press, Chatham House. 2015. p. 139; Niklas Swanström. 'Sino-Russian Relations at the Start of the New Millennium in Central Asia and Beyond'. *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 87 (2014): 483-484; Gilbert Rozman. 'The Russian Pivot to Asia'. *The Asian Forum*. Special Forum 2, no. 6 (2014); James Bellacqua ed. *The Future of China-Russia Relations*. University Press of Kentucky. 2010. pp. 7-8; and Gilbert Rozman. 'The Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership: How Close? Where To?' In Bellacqua, ed. *The Future of China-Russia Relations*. 2010. p. 22. Some have argued that both the economic unattractiveness of the RFE and apprehension are significant factors. See for example Stephen Blank. 'Russian Writers on the Decline of Russia in the Far East and the Rise of China'. In Enders S. Wimbush and Elizabeth M. Portale, eds. *Russia in Decline*. Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation. 2017. pp. 259, 266.

are marginal relative to the view that economic relations between the RFE and China are essential, mutually beneficial, and should be continued in their current state while solutions to problems are pursued. Included in the dominant view are concerns about several domestic factors hindering the development of cooperation, such as complicated licensing procedures in Russia; high tariffs on Russia's side; a weak business and investment climate that fails to attract investment to sectors of the economy outside of raw materials; the inability to create standard living conditions in the RFE; the poor state of cross-border infrastructure; a lack of accessible information for Russian exporters and importers; an inadequate number of border checkpoints and the inefficiency of those that exist; an inadequate promotion of tourism; and a stifling legislative framework for bilateral cooperation which has consisted of administrative and legal barriers impeding foreign entrepreneurial and investment activity in Russia. Rather than apprehension on the Russian side, hinderance caused by domestic factors is argued to be the main variable affecting the pace of the development of economic relations.

Chapter 5 approaches the research question of the thesis with an examination of the perceptions of Russian experts on the demographic and military security of the RFE *vis-à-vis* China. The first section begins by examining expert texts that focus on the demographic imbalance between the RFE and neighboring Chinese provinces and include discussions on the implications of such imbalance from a security perspective. The section reveals that the dominant view among Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military throughout the period of interest is that there is no threat of mass immigration from China. For reasons that remain unclear, the experts rarely explain why there is an absence of such a threat. This may be because they view the lack of an immigration threat from China as self-evident. This explanation seems more likely than the alternative that they have no reasons for their beliefs. Larin, in a rare instance of

presenting an argument supporting the view that there is no threat of mass immigration from China to the RFE, explains that there is no such threat because there is a lack of economic incentives for the Chinese to move to the region, and that it is not uncommon for those who do to experience harassment and beatings.⁵ Kamynin offers similar reasoning.⁶ The question of which hypothesis this finding supports depends on the nature of the threat of mass immigration from China to the RFE. If the threat of mass immigration to the RFE is thought to be due to incentives created by Beijing, then the findings support hypothesis 1 because the perception of an absence of threat stems from China's lack of harmful intentions towards Russia.⁷ If the threat of mass immigration is thought to be due to the interests of Chinese immigrants without an incentive created by Beijing, and the interests of the immigrants are included in the definition of 'China's interests', then the finding supports hypothesis 3 because the perception of an absence of threat stems from the non-conflictual nature of the interests of Russia and China.⁸

The second section analyzes texts that address the question of whether China poses a military threat to the RFE. The content analysis finds that the dominant view among Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military is that, although there is significant disparity in conventional military power in favor of China in northeast Asia, there is no direct military threat. Reasons for this conclusion hinge on four themes identified in the experts' arguments: (1) the socio-economic fragility or vulnerability of the PRC, (2) China's interests, (3) the cost of aggression against Russia (which is strongly related to the first two themes), and (4) the idea that

⁵ Larin, Viktor. 'KNR Glazami Dal'nevostocknika (The PRC Through the Eyes of the Far East)'. *International Processes* 8, no. 1 (2010): 127. Available at <http://intertrends.ru/system/Doc/ArticlePdf/849/Larin-22.pdf>. Accessed 10/07/2020.

⁶ Kamynin. 'Foreign Policy Results of 2007 and Prospects of 2008'. 2008.

⁷ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers do not perceive the rise of China as a threat because they believe China has harmless or benign intentions towards Russia.

⁸ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider the compatibility or non-conflictual nature of the interests of Russia and China to be one of the main reasons why China's rise does not threaten Russia.

a military threat may exist from China, but it is only hypothetical or potential, not direct. This finding supports hypothesis 1 in that, in this view, Beijing does not intend to harm Russia by means of military aggression.⁹ The finding supports hypothesis 2 in that it consists of the notion that China would not risk military aggression against the RFE because of its socio-economic vulnerability in the form of its concentrated urban centers driving nearly all of the country's development progress.¹⁰ Finally, the finding supports hypothesis 3 in that, as it is not in China's interest to forcefully expand into the RFE, the interests of the countries in this sense are non-conflictual.¹¹

The final section examines Russia's policies relevant to the security of the RFE *vis-à-vis* China with the aim of determining the extent to which they are consistent with the dominant views of experts identified by the content analysis. Three main policies indicate a lack of a perception of threat from the rise of China among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers. First, Russian forces on the Chinese border have remained at a minimum level and the Chinese have been allowed to inspect such forces annually in accordance with the 1996-1997 agreements on the demilitarization of the border. Second, despite the PLA's conventional superiority over the Russian military in northeast Asia since the 1990s, Russia has not built up its forces in the region in response. Third, Russia has been making improvements to cross-border transit infrastructure that allow for quicker and easier access to the RFE in the form of bridges over the Amur River (Nizheleninskoye-Tongjiang and Blagoveshchensk-Heihe), the addition of 1435mm railway gauges (Grodekovo-Suifenhe and Makhhalino-Hunchun), and the installation of a new narrow-

⁹ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers do not perceive the rise of China as a threat because they believe China has harmless or benign intentions towards Russia.

¹⁰ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider nuclear deterrence to be one of the main reasons why the rise of China does not threaten Russia.

¹¹ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider the compatibility or non-conflictual nature of the interests of Russia and China to be one of the main reasons why China's rise does not threaten Russia.

gauge sorting system that will allow for quicker transition from the 1435mm gauge to the Russian 1520mm gauge (Zabaikalsk-Manzhouli). It is unlikely that such policies would be authorized and implemented if there were a dominant perception among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers of a military threat from a rising China. Given that the dominant views held by potentially influential experts identified in the chapter are consistent with the policies, the chapter concludes that scenarios 1 or 2 in the framework explained in the ‘Dispositional factors’ section in chapter 2 are most likely.

In relation to other arguments in Western literature on Russia-China relations, the findings of this chapter are partly contradictory and partly supportive. It has become less common in recent years to argue or imply that fear of mass immigration from China to the RFE significantly influences Russian foreign policy towards China, but such work is found throughout most of the period of interest.¹² The results of the analysis presented in this chapter do not provide evidence that perceptions of a demographic threat in the form of mass immigration from China to the RFE are prevalent among Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military or Russian foreign policy decisionmakers.

Literature that refers to various Chinese interests and the way they would be negatively affected by an aggressive policy towards Russia in arguments that China does not pose a direct military threat to the RFE is supported by the findings of this chapter.¹³ One main finding of the chapter

¹² For relatively recent examples, see Ilan I. Berman. ‘Russia’s Fraught Demographic Future’. In Enders S. Wimbush, and Elizabeth M. Portale, eds. *Russia in Decline*. Washington, DC: Jamestown Foundation. 2017. p. 43; Bobo Lo. *Russia and the New World Disorder*. Brookings Institution Press, Chatham House. 2015. p. 149; and Niklas Swanström. ‘Sino–Russian Relations at the Start of the New Millennium in Central Asia and Beyond’. *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 87 (2014): 484-485.

¹³ See for example see Paul N. Schwartz. ‘The Military Dimension in Sino-Russian Relations. In Jo Bekkevold and Bobo Lo, eds. *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2019. p. 101; Stephen Blank. ‘Triangularism Old and New: China, Russia, and the United States’. In Jo Bekkevold and Bobo Lo, eds. *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*. 2019. pp. 220-221; and Gilbert Rozman. ‘Sino-Russian Relations: A New

that is not commonly found in Western literature on Russia-China relations is that Russia's security policy in the RFE is significantly affected by the perceived socio-economic vulnerability of China in the form of its concentrated urban centers driving nearly all of the country's development progress. The vulnerability contributes (along with a perceived lack of harmful intentions) to Moscow's confidence that it is highly unlikely that China would risk military aggression towards the RFE, and therefore frees Russia from the burden of balancing against China's superior conventional military power in northeast Asia.

Chapter 6 reports the results of the qualitative aspect of the content analysis of Russian expert views on China's economic activity in Central Asia from 2000 to 2020 and its implications for Russian interests. The first section identifies two main trends in Russian expert thought on China's general economic activity in Central Asia. The first is that China's economic interests in Central Asia are 'natural', 'logical', or 'understandable' because of certain global developments or processes, most of which are related to China's rivalry with the US. While uncommon, the claim that Russia mostly views China's economic expansion in Central Asia as a natural outgrowth of its power does exist in Western literature on the subject and is supported by the findings of this chapter.¹⁴

The second trend consists of an acknowledgement of economic competition between Russia and China in Central Asia along with an argument that such competition should not be perceived as being out of control and a threat to Russia-China relations. This is because the negative effects of the competition are mitigated by processes at both the bilateral level and multilateral level within

Era?' Asia Dialogue. 18/06/2019. Available at <https://theasiadialogue.com/2019/06/18/sino-russian-relations-a-new-era/>. Accessed 23/02/2021.

¹⁴ See for example Andrew Kuchins. 'Russian Perspectives on China: Strategic Ambivalence'. In James Bellacqua, ed. *The Future of China-Russia Relations*. University Press of Kentucky. 2010. p. 43.

the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). This finding contradicts much of what is found in Western literature on the subject. However, some in the West have recognized that these ‘relationship management efforts’, which include ‘mutual accommodation and compromise’ have allowed Russia and China to avoid significantly harmful discord in Central Asia.¹⁵

The second section identifies two main trends in Russian expert views of China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its linking with the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). First, the BRI is beneficial for both Russia and the rest of the EAEU members for various reasons. Second, the BRI and the EAEU are complementary and have a synergetic effect on one another. The section also reports the results of the qualitative aspect of the content analysis relevant to perceptions of China’s establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The analysis finds a dominant view of benefits and an absence of loss for Russia, which are indicative of positive-sum thinking among Russian experts with connections to the Russian government or military and likely among foreign policy decisionmakers. It also finds that the AIIB is widely viewed as a challenge to ‘traditional’ Western-led international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The bank’s establishment is also viewed as considerably divisive for the West, as it prompted a US campaign to dissuade its allies from joining the AIIB, which largely failed as such countries as the UK, France, and Germany became shareholders in the bank. These findings support hypothesis 3 in that they provide evidence of dominant perceptions among Russian experts, and likely decisionmakers, that the interests that

¹⁵ See for example Samuel Charap et al. ‘Russia and China: A New Model of Great-Power Relations’. *Survival* 59, no. 1 (2017): 25-26.

drive China's BRI and AIIB do not conflict with Russia's interests to the point of causing perceptions of threat.¹⁶

The final section discusses Russia's policies in Central Asia relevant to its economic interaction with China in the region. For some Western analysts, Russia's policy of hindering the development of multilateral economic cooperation under the auspices of the SCO and its hesitation to lower or remove tariffs or trade barriers for goods imported from China to the countries of the EAEU are signs that Russia is threatened by China's economic expansion in Central Asia.¹⁷ The section argues that this is not necessarily the case and proposes considering such policies in the context of Russia and China's mutual interest in stability in the region.

The main structural constraint on Russia's foreign policy regarding its economic interaction with China in Central Asia is China's economic power. While Russia may prefer to be the primary driver of economic development in the region, it is simply not capable of doing so. From the perspective of both sides, economic development in Central Asia serves a stabilizing function, and this has primarily been driven by China over the period of interest. In this sense, China's economic expansion serves not so much as a loss as a gain for Russia in the form of more stability on its southern border. Russia's policy of hindering the development of multilateral economic cooperation in the SCO and its hesitation to lower or remove EAEU tariffs on imported Chinese goods may also be viewed as serving a stabilizing function by protecting

¹⁶ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider the compatibility or non-conflictual nature of the interests of Russia and China to be one of the main reasons why China's rise does not threaten Russia.

¹⁷ See for example Alexander Cooley. 'Tending the Eurasian Garden: Russia, China and the Dynamics of Regional Integration and Order'. In Jo Bekkevold, and Bobo Lo, eds. *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*. Palgrave Macmillan. 2019. pp. 113-139; Stephen Blank. 'Triangularism Old and New: China, Russia, and the United States'. In Bekkevold, and Lo, eds. *Sino-Russian Relations in the 21st Century*. 2019. p. 222; Morena Skalamera. 'Russia's lasting influence in Central Asia'. *Survival* 59, no. 6 (2017): 134; and Bobo Lo. *Russia and the New World Disorder*. Brookings Institution Press, Chatham House. 2015. pp. 126, 149.

domestic industry in Central Asia. As shown by the content analysis, economic competition between Russia and China in Central Asia is acknowledged by experts but is also viewed as being not so severe as to be unmanageable through processes developed at the bilateral level and multilateral level within the SCO. In this context, Russia's policies have a balancing effect that serves the interests of both Russia and China in regional stability and are not as much a response to a direct threat from China as they are a response to a potential threat in the form of socio-economic upheaval in Central Asia prompted by the failure of domestic businesses due to an influx of inexpensive Chinese consumer goods and the growth of anti-Chinese sentiments. This perspective of Russia's economic balancing policies combined with two other main policies—the linking of the EAEU and BRI beginning in 2015 and the 2018 EAEU-China trade agreement—creates a picture of economic interaction between Russia and China in Central Asia characterized less by confrontation and rivalry moving towards conflict and more by manageable competition moving with caution towards a higher degree of cooperation and coordination in the mutual interest of regional stability. Given that the dominant views of potentially influential experts identified in the chapter are consistent with Russia's policies, the chapter concludes that scenarios 1 or 2 in the framework explained in the 'Dispositional factors' section in chapter 2 are most likely.

It is generally not acknowledged in Western literature on Russia-China relations that an understanding of China's interests in Central Asia as 'natural', 'logical', or 'understandable' exists in Moscow and that the understanding is important for explaining Russia's economic interaction with China in the region.¹⁸ Explanations of such interaction that include a dominant

¹⁸ For a notable exception see Andrew Kuchins. 'Russian Perspectives on China: Strategic Ambivalence'. In James Bellacqua, ed. *The Future of China-Russia Relations*. University Press of Kentucky. 2010. p. 43.

perception among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers that Russia benefits from the BRI and that the initiative and the EAEU are mutually complementary, producing a synergistic effect, are uncommon in Western literature. The chapter offers support for arguments that the negative effects of economic competition between Russia and China in Central Asia are mitigated by diplomatic efforts on both sides consisting of mutual accommodation and compromise and restraint on China's side.¹⁹

Chapter 7 identifies three main trends in Russian expert thought on Russia and China's security interaction in Central Asia. The first is the view that conflicts of interest between the countries regarding security issues in the region are either non-existent or minor. In this view, even when the interests of Russia and China are not entirely aligned, the contradictions are not so serious as to be impossible to overcome through dialogue. The good state of Russia-China relations, the realization on both sides that the security challenges posed by Central Asia can and should be approached as a positive-sum game, and China's adherence to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states allow Russia and China to avoid a major clash in the region. The common interest in preventing the rise of a 'third force' in the region also has a unifying effect that motivates their efforts to avoid major conflict. Included in this dominant trend is the view that claims that a rivalry between Russia and China in Central Asia is already in progress or that a clash between the two in the region is inevitable are unsubstantiated, misinformed, or exaggerated. This finding supports hypothesis 3 in that it shows that conflicts of interest between Russia and China in the security sphere in Central Asia have not given rise to dominant

¹⁹ See for example Maximilian Hess. 'Russia and Central Asia: Putin's Most Stable Region?' *Orbis* 64, no. 3 (2020): 421-433; Samuel Charap et al. 'Russia and China: A New Model of Great-Power Relations'. *Survival* 59, no. 1 (2017): 25-27, 33-34; Marcin Kaczmarek. 'The Asymmetric Partnership? Russia's Turn to China'. *International Politics* 53, no. 3 (2016): 415-434; and Marcin Kaczmarek. *Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order*. Routledge. 2015. pp. 100-101.

perceptions of threat from China among Russian experts, and likely decisionmakers, because, as explained above, they are perceived as being either absent or minor.²⁰

The second trend reported by the chapter is the view among Russian experts that China sees Central Asia as a ‘reliable rear’ in the context of its rivalry with the US, i.e. a non-hostile area of operations as well as a source of energy with overland transit routes that are more secure than sea routes, which are vulnerable to disruption by the US Navy.

The third trend in Russian expert thought identified by the content analysis and reported in chapter 7 is the observation that China understands that Russia has ‘special interests’ in Central Asia and exercises restraint in the region so as not to damage relations with Moscow. In the views of these experts, this is because, for Beijing, the maintenance of good relations between Russia and China takes precedence over unilateral gains in Central Asia. Reasons for this prioritization are present at the regional and global level with regard to China’s foreign policy. This finding supports hypothesis 1 in that it provides evidence of a dominant perception among Russian experts, and likely decisionmakers, that China does not intend to undermine Russia’s security-related interests in Central Asia.²¹ The finding also supports hypothesis 6 in that it shows that among Russian experts, and likely decisionmakers, there is a dominant perception that Beijing prioritizes long-term cooperation with Moscow in Central Asia over short-term gains, as evidenced by its restraint and respect for Russia’s ‘special interests’ in the region.²²

²⁰ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider the compatibility or non-conflictual nature of the interests of Russia and China to be one of the main reasons why China’s rise does not threaten Russia.

²¹ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers do not perceive the rise of China as a threat because they believe China has harmless or benign intentions towards Russia.

²² The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers do not perceive the rise of China as a threat because they believe that China ‘values the prospects of long-run cooperation between the two countries more than it values short-run gains that would accrue by exploiting its immediate power over [Russia]’.

The main structural constraint Russia experiences in its foreign policy in the region in the security sphere is the US' military presence. Russian security policy in Central Asia does not experience significant constraints that are directly related to China, this is because Russia's security presence is much greater in the region than that of the PRC, and China has been mostly content with Russia being the main security provider of Central Asia while it focuses more on economic well-being and development. The constraint of the US' military presence on Russia's security policy in the region provides an incentive to engage in security cooperation with China. The content analysis revealed that a significant number of Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military explicitly claim that Russia and China share an interest in preventing the strengthening of the presence of a third power in Central Asia.

Finally, the chapter discusses Russia's security-related policies in Central Asia, China's expanded security role in Tajikistan in recent years, Russia's response to China's increased security presence, and the implications of the development for Russia's interests in Central Asia in the views of Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military. There has been little response from Moscow in the form of official rhetoric, and there have not been any developments on Russia's end in Tajikistan since 2016 that indicate balancing behavior. Among Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military, the view that China's increased security role in Tajikistan is logical and non-threatening is apparently dominant. This view coupled with the passivity of Russia's policy on the matter leads the section to conclude that that scenarios 1 or 2 in the framework explained in the 'Dispositional factors' section in chapter 2 are most likely.

Western literature on security interaction between Russia and China in Central Asia consists of some claims that Moscow is put at ease by Beijing's respect for Russia's 'special interests' in

Central Asia as demonstrated by its restraint, which are supported by the findings of the chapter.²³ Some contributors to Western literature have found no severe conflicts of interest between Russia and China in the region in the area of security,²⁴ while others have.²⁵ The work of the former is supported by another main conclusion of the chapter that among Russian experts with ties to the Russian government or military, and likely among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers, there is a dominant perception that there are little or no significant conflicts of interest regarding security policies in Central Asia. One area that has apparently received little attention in the literature is the effect of Russian decisionmakers' perception of China's need for a 'reliable' strategic rear in Central Asia on Russia's security policy interaction with China in the region. The results of the content analysis indicate that this is a serious consideration when determining how Russia should interact with China in Central Asia in the security realm. It is arguable that Russia's continued dominance in the security realm provides comfort in the face of China's expanding security presence in the region, as Moscow maintains a considerable amount of influence that may be used to hinder Chinese access in the event of a conflict with the US.

In sum, the results of the content analysis offer the most support to hypotheses 1 and 3, which are based on balance of threat theory and balance of interests theory, respectively.²⁶ In only one

²³ See for example Marcin Kaczmarek. 'The Asymmetric Partnership? Russia's Turn to China'. *International Politics* 53, no. 3 (2016): 425-426, 431-432; Marcin Kaczmarek. *Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order*. Routledge. 2015. pp. 94, 100-101, 165-169.

²⁴ See for example Morena Skalamera. 'Russia's lasting influence in Central Asia'. *Survival* 59, no. 6 (2017): 124-126, 130; Thomas Ambrosio. 'The Architecture of Alignment: The Russia-China Relationship and International Agreements'. *Europe-Asia Studies* 69, no. 1 (2017): 137; and Marcin Kaczmarek. *Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order*. Routledge. 2015. p. 87, 92-94, 99-101.

²⁵ See for example Paul Goble. 'Russian Military Seeking to Counter Growing Chinese Role in Central Asia'. *The Jamestown Foundation. Eurasia Daily Monitor* 17, no. 88 (2020). Available at <https://jamestown.org/program/russian-military-seeking-to-counter-growing-chinese-role-in-central-asia/>. Accessed 27/02/2021; Bobo Lo. *Russia and the New World Disorder*. Brookings Institution Press, Chatham House. 2015. pp. 149-150; and James Bellacqua, ed. *The Future of China-Russia Relations*. University Press of Kentucky. 2010. pp. 5-6.

²⁶ Hypothesis 1 states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers do not perceive the rise of China as a threat because they believe China has harmless or benign intentions towards Russia. Hypothesis 3 states that states that

instance each, evidence in support of hypotheses 2 and 6 was found.²⁷ The hypotheses are based on offense-defense balance theory and a politico-psychological notion of trust between states, respectively. Regarding hypothesis 2, it should be kept in mind that direct discussions among Russian experts on the question of whether China threatens Russia in any way are rare, and direct discussions on whether China threatens Russia with military aggression are especially rare. The content analysis did not find evidence in support of hypothesis 4, which is based on neoliberal institutionalism.²⁸ The correlation coefficients calculated for 20 pairs of variables of shared identity and threat perception do not offer support for hypothesis 5, which is based on a social constructivist and psychological understanding of the interaction between shared identity and threat perception.²⁹

Currently, there is a great deal of focus in Western literature on whether a Sino-Russian alliance is forming or already exists. As explained in the literature review, the alliance literature offers valuable insight into the quality of the relationship but falls short of providing an answer to the question of why Russia is not threatened by the rise of China. Even allied relations do not provide a guarantee that China may at some point take advantage of its superior position at the expense of Russia's interests, at least from a realist perspective. Therefore, this thesis lies outside of this debate. This is not to say that the conclusions of the study have no implications for this

Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider the compatibility or non-conflictual nature of the interests of Russia and China to be one of the main reasons why China's rise does not threaten Russia.

²⁷ Hypothesis 2 states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider nuclear deterrence to be one of the main reasons why the rise of China does not threaten Russia. Hypothesis 6 states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers do not perceive the rise of China as a threat because they believe that China 'values the prospects of long-run cooperation between the two countries more than it values short-run gains that would accrue by exploiting its immediate power over [Russia]'.

²⁸ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers consider the establishment and maintenance of regimes and institutions between Russia and China to be one of the main reasons why China's rise does not threaten Russia.

²⁹ The hypothesis states that Russian foreign policy decisionmakers believe that for reasons of shared identity the rise of China does not threaten Russia.

area of the literature. The absence of perceptions of threat may facilitate Sino-Russian alliance formation or maintenance. But the presence of a dominant perception of an absence of threat from China among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers should not be considered a sufficient condition for the formation or maintenance of an alliance: the fact that a state does not perceive another as a threat does not necessarily mean they will become or remain allies.

Based on the analysis performed, the explanation of Russia's foreign policy towards China from 2000 to 2020 offered by the thesis is as follows. The dominant perception of an absence of threat from China to Russia among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers can be explained by the view that Russia's and China's interests have been at most mutual or complementary and at least not in severe or unmanageable conflict. The perception is also attributed to the view that China has not had harmful intentions towards Russia and that a good state of relations between the two countries is being maintained and continues to develop.

Regarding its relations with China, the main constraint that Russia's policy faces in the RFE and Central Asia (the two areas of focus in the thesis) is China's economic power. Throughout the period of interest, the trade structure of the RFE and China has been unbalanced in favor of the PRC: the RFE exports mostly raw materials and China exports mostly finished goods. Despite the unfavorability of the trade structure, China's economy provides vital import and export markets for the RFE. The economic dependence of the RFE on China constrains Russia's foreign policy in a way that makes actions that might severely disrupt the current economic relationship between the RFE and China at least unattractive and at most nonoptional. This constraint, however, has not given rise to a dominant perception among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers that China poses a threat to the RFE primarily because the unfavorable trade

structure is generally not attributed to external actors, including the PRC, but rather to domestic factors.

China's economic power has also constrained Russia's foreign policy in Central Asia throughout the period of interest. Both Russia and China consider economic development linked to stability, and both are interested in a stable Central Asia. While Russia may prefer to be the primary driver of economic development in the region, it is simply not capable of doing so. Despite this limitation, China's economic activity in Central Asia is not considered particularly threatening by Russian foreign policy decisionmakers. There is a dominant perception that China's economic interests in Central Asia are 'natural', 'logical', or 'understandable', and that the competition that exists between Russia and China in the region is successfully managed through diplomacy, allowing the countries to avoid confrontation and conflict. China's BRI is generally considered beneficial to Russia, complementary to the EAEU, and a development that furthers the countries' shared interest in socio-economic stability in Central Asia.

In this view, China's economic expansion serves not so much as a loss as a gain for Russia in the form of more stability on its southern border. Russia's policy of hindering the development of multilateral economic cooperation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and its hesitation to lower or remove EAEU tariffs on imported Chinese goods may also be viewed as serving a stabilizing function by protecting domestic industry in Central Asia. Russia's policies have a balancing effect that serves the interests of both Russia and China in regional stability and are not as much a response to a direct threat from China as they are a response to a potential threat in the form of socio-economic upheaval in Central Asia prompted by the failure of domestic businesses due to an influx of inexpensive Chinese consumer goods and the growth of anti-Chinese sentiments. This perspective of Russia's economic balancing policies combined

with two other main policies—the linking of the EAEU and BRI beginning in 2015 and the 2018 EAEU-China trade agreement—creates a picture of economic interaction between Russia and China in Central Asia characterized less by confrontation and rivalry moving towards conflict and more by manageable competition moving with caution towards a higher degree of cooperation and coordination in the mutual interest of regional stability.

In the context of Russia managing its relative decline *vis-à-vis* China, four factors are considered to have likely contributed to the dominant perception among Russian foreign policy decisionmakers that the rise of China does not pose a threat to Russia. First, despite China's conventional military superiority over Russia in northeast Asia and the countries' military expenditures gap, Russian officials do not perceive China as a challenger to its status as a great military power. This is mainly due to Russia's stable military power relative to that of China in Central Asia, China's recognition of Russia's 'privileged' interests and role as the primary security provider in the region, and Russia's maintenance of a massive nuclear arsenal.

Second, ideational convergence has contributed to the perception that the rise of China does not pose a threat to Russia. The countries have ideationally converged around the fight against the 'three evils' of terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism and the 'Shanghai Spirit', which includes mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for cultural diversity, and the pursuit of common development. Russia and China have also ideationally converged around the rejection of unipolarity in favor of multipolarity, the foreign policy principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, and the de-ideologization of their relations in favor of a more pragmatic basis.

Third, Russia, regarding its relations with China, may be seen as engaging in strategic retrenchment in the interest of solvency.³⁰ Russian foreign policy decisionmakers likely realize that confronting a rising China is beyond Russia's means, and by retrenching it has an opportunity to strengthen in an environment in which it does not have to sacrifice tremendous resources for the sake of confrontation or conflict with China.

And fourth, Russia has managed its decline relative to China by participating in the institutions and projects of the PRC, including the SCO, the AIIB, and the BRI for the sake of information access. In addition to the leverage Russia gains as a participant in the institutions and projects, its participation allows Moscow to better understand China's activities, particularly in Central Asia, and this information strengthens Russia's ability to protect its interests. This final factor is an inductive finding of the content analysis performed for this study that has prompted the proposition of a contribution to the literature on managing decline. The thesis offers theoretical insight into the management of decline of great powers consisting of the notion that a power in decline is motivated to participate in the institutions and projects of a rising power in order to gain access to information that allows the declining power to more easily defend its interests.

Avenues for Further Research

The analytical framework used by this thesis, which consists of the identification of intentions through an analysis of official rhetoric, the identification of dispositional factors by means of a crowdsourced content analysis of texts addressing issues of interest and produced by experts and institutions with ties to the state of interest, and the identification of structural constraints and their use in elaborating the explanation based on the findings of the analysis of dispositional

³⁰ MacDonald, Paul K., and Joseph M. Parent. *Twilight of the Titans: Great Power Decline and Retrenchment*. Cornell University Press. 2018. p. 26.

factors can be used to analyze the foreign policy of any state if the data required for the analysis are plentiful and accessible. The model may also be used to research Russia's interaction with China in other areas not covered by the thesis to further contribute to the literature on Russia-China relations, such as the Arctic, South America, Africa, or space.

This study has confronted the 'Other Minds' problem in its pursuit of an explanation of Russia's foreign policy towards China.³¹ It is not possible to directly observe the dispositional factors of high-ranking officials: the factors on which foreign policy decisions are based. Even if a researcher manages to arrange interviews with the likes of Vladimir Putin or Sergei Lavrov, there would be uncertainty over whether the dispositional factors the officials conveyed in the interviews were truly held by the interviewees and formed the basis of their decisions. This thesis, for reasons explained above and in chapter 2, chose expert texts as the source of dispositional factors held by Russian foreign policy decisionmakers. Uncertainty over the contribution of certain expert views to those dispositional factors forces the study to conclude in terms of likelihood with a reasonable level of confidence based on the proximity of the experts and publishing institutions to the Russian government or military and the qualifications of the experts. This confidence may be strengthened with further research aiming to determine what information is directly or indirectly communicated to Russian foreign policy decisionmakers. Parts of the present research have reached high levels of confidence regarding the sources of such information. For example, given that Foreign Minister Lavrov is Chief of the Editorial Board of the journal *International Life*, that the Editorial Board consists of several other high-ranking government officials, and that the journal is legally a Federal State Budgetary Institution,

³¹ For a discussion of the problem in the context of international relations research, please see Martin Hollis and Steve Smith. *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*. Oxford University Press. 1990. pp. 171-176.

it is reasonable to be confident that material written by highly qualified and well-connected experts published by the journal has a fairly high level of potential to be communicated to the officials either directly or indirectly.

Confidence in the success of communication of certain information to Russian foreign policy decisionmakers can nevertheless be strengthened with further investigation. Such research has obvious limitations, as it can be assumed that high-ranking government officials regularly receive information communicated by intelligence services. However, it would be useful for research into dispositional factors for the purpose of foreign policy analysis to determine what unclassified information is directly or indirectly communicated to foreign policy decisionmakers, i.e. do they or their advisors read expert work or consume media that feature credible experts, and if so, how often. Such research could be done by a series of interviews, not necessarily with the high-ranking officials themselves, but rather with lower-ranking and more accessible officials in relatively close proximity to the high-ranking officials.

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Appendix

Russia's Official Rhetoric on China from 2000 to 2020

One fundamental official document that mentions China in this period is the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation adopted in 2000.¹ The Foreign Policy Concept places Russia's relationship with China in the context of a 'dynamically developing' Asia and describes the relationship as one of economic opportunity and of great importance for regional and global stability. Developing friendly relations with China is defined as 'one of the crucial directions in Russian foreign policy'.² The document states that 'the main task is ... bringing the scale of economic interaction in conformity with the level of political relations'.³

President Vladimir Putin's rhetoric on China through the early 2000s is consistent with the Foreign Policy Concept, revolving around the major themes of economic opportunity and regional and global stability. For example, during a speech in Moscow Putin explained that 'the Asia-Pacific region [APR] is becoming the most dynamic center of world economic development, and it is necessary to closely link the foreign policy line to deepening relations with the APR with the solution of internal tasks, with the development of potential Russian interests in the direction of using these ties to boost the economy of Siberia and the Far East. Great opportunities exist here in relations, of course, with India and China'.⁴ A good example of

¹ It is noteworthy that the National Security Concept adopted that same year does not mention China.

² Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. 28/06/2000. Available at <https://fas.org/nuke/guide/russia/doctrine/econcept.htm>. Accessed 06/07/2020.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Putin, Vladimir. 'Vystuplenie na Plenarnom Zasedanii Soveshchaniia Poslov i Postoiannykh Predstavitelei Rossii (Speech at the Plenary Session of the Meeting of Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives of Russia)'. Moscow. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 12/07/2004. Available at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22545>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

Putin's rhetoric regarding the role of Russia-China relations in global stability is found in a press statement given in 2001, in which he explains that 'international relations should be stable, predictable and ensure progressive development in solving the tasks that are set by states ... We are absolutely convinced that the special strategic relations between Russia and China will meet these challenges, will help solve the problems not only facing Russia and China but also create an atmosphere of stability in the world'.⁵ Putin also frequently claims that the quality of relations between Russia and China are at one of the highest levels in the history of their bilateral relations. For example, during a speech in Moscow in 2001 he asserted that 'the relations between Russia and China are experiencing one of the most fruitful and successful periods. That applies to the entire spectrum of political, economic, cultural and other ties between our countries'.⁶

The rhetoric of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tends to be consistent with Putin's rhetoric on China, and it reflects The Foreign Policy Concept of 2000. During a Q&A session in 2003, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov touches on the main themes of economic opportunity and regional and global stability.⁷ He explains that trade and economic cooperation between Russia and China are 'coming onto the road of sustainable and dynamic development, thus strengthening the material base of the entire range of bilateral relations and imparting to them a long-term and stable character'.⁸ Regarding Russia and China's role in regional and global stability, he notes

⁵ Putin, Vladimir. 'Zaiavlenie Dlia pressy i Otvet na Vopros Zhurnalista po Itogam Rossiisko-Kitaiskikh Peregovorov (A Statement to the Press and an Answer to a Journalist's Question after the Russian-Chinese Talks)'. Beijing. 02/12/2002. Available at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21796>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁶ Putin, Vladimir. 'Speech at the Presentation of Ambassadors' Credentials'. Moscow. 27/08/2001. Available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21309>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁷ Ivanov, Igor. 'Replies by the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Ivanov to Readers' Questions During an Online Conference on the Remin Ribao Website'. Beijing. 27/02/2003. Available at http://www.mid.ru/en/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/530662. Accessed 12/07/2020.

⁸ Ibid.

that ‘the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is becoming an important factor in the maintenance of peace, security and stability in the region’, and that ‘the coordinated stand of Russia and China on key international problems is an important factor of security and stability in the world’.⁹

Ivanov depicts Russia-China relations as harmonious and full of potential, and likens their relationship to ‘pine and bamboo growing together, which do not interfere with each other but help and support each other’.¹⁰

During a press conference in 2002, Ivanov directly addresses the potential of China to pose a threat to Russia in response to the following question: ‘In the Far East processes that are ruinous for Russia are taking place - illegal immigration of the Chinese. Shall we revise our relations with China? The weapons that we are selling to them now may be eventually used against us’.¹¹

Ivanov debunks these threats by arguing that ‘there is no Chinese expansion, there are no grounds for speaking about it’, citing official figures that state that only about 150,000 – 200,000 Chinese citizens live in Russia, compared to 6 million in the US, where no one is talking about Chinese expansion.¹² Regarding the weapons, Ivanov argues that ‘the arms that China buys it buys in order to strengthen its defenses’.¹³

Deputy Foreign Ministers and Official Representatives of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs generally follow this trend of positive and optimistic rhetoric on Russia’s relationship with China, much of which revolves around the major themes of economic opportunity and regional and global stability. For example, in an interview in 2003, Official Spokesman of the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ivanov, Igor. ‘Transcript of the Press Conference with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov’. Interfax News Agency. 18/10/2002. Available at http://www.mid.ru/en/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/542880. Accessed 07/07/2020.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Foreign Ministry Alexander Yakovenko said ‘there is hardly an area in which Russia and China do not have an intensive, equal and trusting dialogue’.¹⁴ Regarding the potential for the development of economic ties between Russia and China, the official said that ‘we see that a full-fledged relationship is emerging between two rapidly growing economies’, and that ‘there is no doubt that the economic trends of the new century influence Russian-Chinese economic relations. The task is to harness them to the economic interests of both countries’.¹⁵ Yakovenko also reports that ‘scientific-technical interaction is unfolding, and that includes the creation of joint techno parks, the development of cooperation in the field of communication and information technologies, space and civil aircraft building’.¹⁶ In line with the major theme of the role Russia-China relations plays in regional and global stability, the official states that ‘Russian-Chinese interaction within the [Shanghai Cooperation Organization] SCO plays a key role in strengthening this young regional organization, in developing cooperation in combating terrorism, separatism, extremism and the narco danger’, and that ‘the partnership between China and Russia is an important factor of maintaining international peace and security, strengthening strategic stability and effectively countering new challenges and threats’.¹⁷ These rhetorical themes are restated by Yakovenko at a press conference later that year.¹⁸

In an interview in 2003, Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov reiterates the positive and optimistic rhetoric on Russia’s relationship with China containing the major themes of economic

¹⁴ Yakovenko, Alexander. ‘Interview by the Russian Foreign Ministry Official Spokesman Alexander Yakovenko Granted to RIA Novosti News Agency and the Chinese Newspaper Renmin Ribao in Connection with the Forthcoming Visit to China by the Foreign Affairs Minister of Russia Igor Ivanov’. 25/02/2003. Available at http://www.mid.ru/en/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/530998. Accessed 07/07/2020.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Yakovenko, Alexander. ‘Answer of the Official Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation A. Yakovenko on the Questions of the Russian Media on Russian-Chinese Relations’. 23/05/2003. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/press_service/spokesman/answers/-/asset_publisher/OyrhusXGz9Lz/content/id/519550. Accessed 07/07/2020.

opportunity, regional and global stability, and shared interests. The official stated that ‘one of the main achievements of bilateral relations in recent years would have been the high degree of mutual trust and mutual understanding. The emergence of such a level of communication was facilitated by certain objective conditions and, above all, by the alignment of the basic national interests of Russia and China’.¹⁹ Regarding the major theme of economic opportunity Losyukov said that the ‘dynamically developing political relations between Russia and China are gaining an ever more solid and reliable trade and economic basis’, and that ‘in the past few years, trade between Russia and China is growing at a good pace’.²⁰ Although there is a positive trend in the development of economic relations between the two countries, Losyukov points out that such development has a long and laborious road ahead, somewhat counterbalancing the more idealistic rhetoric on Russian-Chinese economic relations: ‘the qualitative problems of Russian-Chinese economic relations are particularly clearly manifested. We are not satisfied with the fact that the structure of Russian exports is still dominated by commodities (oil, raw timber) and primary redistribution (ferrous and non-ferrous metals, chemical products). We are striving for a significant increase in our exports of machine-technical and high-tech products ... It is necessary to radically expand cooperation in the field of investment and production cooperation, where the number of projects to date, frankly, is scanty’.²¹ Related to the theme of Russia and China’s role in regional and global stability Losyukov said that ‘an important role is also played by Russian-Chinese cooperation in combating terrorism in multilateral forums, primarily within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization’, and that Russia is ‘satisfied with the

¹⁹ Losyukov, Alexander. ‘Interview of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia A.P. Losyukov to the Interfax Agency on Russia-China Relations’. 12/09/2003. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/press_service/deputy_ministers_speeches/-/asset_publisher/O3publba0Cjv/content/id/507314. Accessed 07/07/2020.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

level and dynamics of interaction with China in world affairs. The commonality of Russia's and China's approaches to the conceptual issues of world order and key international problems serves as a significant factor that has a positive impact on the development of the contemporary international situation'.²²

It is worth noting that in a separate interview Losyukov again counterbalances the more idealistic rhetoric on China, but this time regarding the harmony of Russia and China's national interests: 'Not implying the conclusion of a union, it [The Treaty on Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation of 2001] indicated the mutual desire of very close relations for a long term ... This does not mean that we have "merged" with China and there will never be contradictions between us. Of course, there will be different interests, but the spirit of the treaty itself implies that these contradictions must be resolved in a friendly manner'.²³

With Sergei Lavrov's assuming the office of Foreign Minister of Russia in March 2004, the Ministry's rhetoric remained consistent with that of the early 2000s. Official Representatives continued to report on the development of economic relations between Russia and China and declare Russia's determination to further their development, as well as claiming a common approach to major issues of international security.²⁴ Upon entering office, Foreign Minister Lavrov adopted this habit of reporting on the positive trends of development of the countries' economic relations, albeit not without acknowledging the sobering need 'to improve the quality

²² Ibid.

²³ Losyukov, Alexander. 'Interview Zamestitel'ia Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossiiskoi Federatsii A.P. Losyukova (Interview of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, AP Losyukov)'. 24/07/2003. Available at https://www.mid.ru/ru/press_service/deputy_ministers_speeches/-/asset_publisher/O3publba0Cjv/content/id/512562. Accessed 07/07/2020.

²⁴ For example, see Alexander Yakovenko. 'Otvety Ofitsial'nogo Predstavitel'ia MID Rossii A. Yakovenko na Voprosy Rossiiskikh SMI Otnositel'no Predstoiashchego Vizita v Rossiiu (Answer from the Official Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation A. Yakovanko to the Questions of Russian Media)'. 20/04/2004. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/476100. Accessed 07/07/2020.

of our trade and economic cooperation so that it has more industrial high-tech projects and joint ventures'.²⁵ The official also describes steps taken by Russia and China 'to strengthening the positions of Russia and China in the international arena in the interest of ensuring the security of our countries, mutually beneficial cooperation with other states, in order to form a truly collective system of international relations'.²⁶

In the latter half of his first year in office, Lavrov published an article on Russia's partnership with China. In the article, Lavrov describes Russia's relationship with China as one 'incorporating the best of the traditions of friendship and good neighborliness of previous generations' and asserts that 'Russian-Chinese relations reached a qualitatively new level - comprehensive partnership and strategic interaction'.²⁷ Lavrov explains that Russia and China's 'fruitful bilateral partnership in international affairs is based on the similarity of Russia's and China's national interests, the alignment of Moscow's and Beijing's approaches to core global problems - the future world order, strategic stability, the UN's dominant role, etc.'. ²⁸ In addition to the major themes of economic opportunity and regional and global stability, Lavrov touches on another major theme of Russia's official rhetoric on its relationship with China—denunciation of unilateralism and unipolarity and advocacy for multilateralism and multipolarity: 'In the context of attempts to use the processes of globalization to obtain unilateral economic and geopolitical advantages, the assertion by Russia and China of the principles of multilateralism in

²⁵ Lavrov, Sergei. 'Stenogramma Vystupleniia i Otvetov na Voprosy SMI Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova po Itogam Peregovorov s Ministrom Inostrannykh Del Kitaia Li Chzhosinom, Moskva (Transcript of Speech and Answers to Media Questions by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Sergey Lavrov on the Results of Negotiations with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of China Li Zhanosin)'. Moscow. 21/04/2004. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/475876. Accessed 07/07/2020.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Lavrov, Sergei. 'Kitaï: Partnerstvo, Otkryvaiushchee Budushee, Opublikovannaia Agenstvom "Sin'Xua" (Russia-China: Partnership Opening the Future. Publishing Agency "Sinhua")'. 12/10/2004. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/458018. Accessed 07/07/2020.

²⁸ Ibid.

international affairs, respect for the sovereignty of states, the right of peoples to choose their own way of development is of particular importance'.²⁹

In a session of the state Duma in 2005, Lavrov was asked about illegal Chinese immigration to the Russian Far East and Siberia, and the threat of a 'creeping quiet expansion' by China. The official responded by explaining that the Foreign Ministry as well as other ministries and departments are working on improving the regulation of labor migration and argues that 'the risk that additional territorial claims will be advanced is not serious' because the legal formalization of the Russia-China border 'reduces such risk to a minimum'.³⁰

Enthusiasm for the state of Russia-China relations and for the need for further efforts to develop the relationship continued to be frequently expressed. For example, in an interview in 2006, President Putin said that 'such a complex and multifaceted task as the strengthening of mutual understanding and friendship among peoples is far from being limited to the holding of events within the Year of Russia in China. We need constant work aimed at the full expansion of scientific, cultural, sports, youth, tourism, and other exchanges. We have experience of such interaction, and it is already yielding real results' and 'from our point of view, Russian-Chinese relations have the most favorable prospects in all areas. And we will continue to make every effort to ensure their consistent and progressive development'.³¹ Putin gave a positive report on the progress of Russia and China's development of economic relations and reasserted Russia and

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Lavrov, Sergei. 'Stenogramma Otvetov Ministra Inostrannykh Del S.V. Lavrova na Voprosy Deputatov v KHode Zasedaniia v Gosudarstvennoi Dume, Moskva (Transcript of Replies by Minister of Foreign Affairs S.V. Lavrov on questions of deputies during the Session in the State Duma)'. Moscow. 20/05/2005. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/438124. Accessed 07/07/2020.

³¹ Putin, Vladimir. 'Pis'mennoe Interv'iu Prezidenta Rossii V.V.Putina Kitaiskomu Informatsionnomu Agentstvu "Sin'khua"' (Written Interview of Russian President Vladimir Putin to the Chinese News Agency Xinhua)'. 03/03/2006. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/409574. Accessed 07/07/2020.

China's stabilizing role in global politics: 'With excellent dynamics, trade and economic relations are growing, investment cooperation, cooperation in the sphere of high technologies is gaining momentum', 'the experience of Russian-Chinese cooperation clearly shows that coordination and interaction between our countries serves as a stabilizing factor in world affairs'.³² Putin also reaffirms Russia's intention to work with China for a more equitable world order: 'Russia and China are firm supporters of building a genuinely democratic system of international relations based on equality of opportunity for both "big" and for "small" countries ... We seek to consolidate non-discriminatory principles as fundamental to world trade and finance'.³³

In 2007, the threat of Chinese expansion in the Russian Far East was again debunked, this time by Director of the First Asia Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia Konstantin Vnukov. Answering a question about the potential for such a threat in an interview, the official said 'to speak about the threat of Chinese expansion is wrong. According to the last census in Russia, there are only 35,000 Chinese ... I believe that the real range is from 150 to 200 thousand people. But Russia is not an attractive country for the Chinese - the climate, the way of life, the difference between cultures, food, the crime situation. So, according to the latest survey in major Chinese cities, only 1.7 percent of respondents expressed a desire to go to Russia for employment purposes'.³⁴

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Vnukov, Konstantin. 'Interview of the Director of the First Asia Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia K. V. Vnukov on the Problems of Russian-Chinese Relations'. 12/03/2007. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/379828. Accessed 07/07/2020.

Positive assessments by Russian government officials of the progress of development of Russia-China relations continue through the late 2000s along with expressions of a desire to continue strengthening ties. For example, in a press statement, President Putin claimed that Russia and China's 'cooperation in regional and international affairs has significantly increased',³⁵ and during a press conference, Foreign Minister Lavrov reported the following: 'I assess our strategic interaction very, very positively. It is developing dynamically, taking into account the two main principles. First, Russia and China have a common vision of the modern world, its development trends, a common vision of ways to solve global and regional problems on the basis of international law, strengthening the central role of the UN, and also through multilateral diplomacy. Secondly, Russia and China, within the framework of the above approaches, always support each other on specific issues that directly affect the national interests of Russia and China. Such comradely mutual assistance will only be strengthened, today we agreed on this'.³⁶

The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation adopted in 2008 states that 'Russia will build up the Russian-Chinese strategic partnership in all fields on the basis of common fundamental approaches to key issues of world politics as a basic constituent part of regional and global stability. Bringing the scope and quality of economic interaction in line with the high-level of political relations constitutes a major task in the field of bilateral ties'.³⁷ The document also states that 'Russia will make itself more fully engaged in such formats as the Group of Eight

³⁵ Putin, Vladimir. 'Press Statement Following Russian-Chinese Talks'. 26/03/2007. Available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24096>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

³⁶ Lavrov, Sergei. 'Stenogramma Vystupleniia i Otvetov na Voprosy SMI Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V.Lavrova po Itogam Peregovorov s Ministrom Inostrannykh Del Kitaia ĪAn ĪSzechi (Transcript of Remarks and Replies to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov Following Talks with Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi)'. Moscow. 27/04/2009. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/296530. Accessed 07/07/2020.

³⁷ Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. 12/01/2008. Available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/supplement/4116>. Accessed 06/06/2020.

and its dialogue with its traditional partners, the Troika (Russia, India and China) and the BRIC Four (Brazil, Russia, India and China)'.³⁸ The main difference between this Foreign Policy Concept and the previous one adopted in 2000 regarding China is the stated intention to be more engaged in the 'Troika' and BRIC.

Despite the 2008 global financial crisis, which turned out to have more of a negative effect on Russia's economy than China's,³⁹ Russia's official rhetoric on its economic relations with China remained generally positive and optimistic with acknowledgments of the continuing need to improve the structure of trade.⁴⁰ Regarding economic relations in the context of the crisis, Lavrov said, 'under these conditions, the leaders of our two countries maintain close contacts and are constantly exchange views on the problems facing the world economy ... The approaches of Russia and China to the ways of overcoming the crisis are very close ... From the point of view of Russian-Chinese bilateral relations, we need to try to use the current crisis to find new opportunities that have not yet been taken to enhance bilateral economic cooperation and thereby turn it to benefit our countries in these difficult times'.⁴¹

In an interview in 2009, Russian Ambassador to China Sergei Razov responded to a question about a potential threat from China in the following way.

'It is difficult to challenge the fact that the PRC, unlike some other states, does not pursue a purposefully anti-Russian policy, does not make territorial claims against us, does not bring the infrastructure of military and political blocs closer to our borders, does not impose anti-Russian regimes along the perimeter of our borders, on the contrary: it supports us on a number of key

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Kaczmarek, Marcin. *Russia-China Relations in the Post-Crisis International Order*. Routledge. 2015. pp. 12-13.

⁴⁰ Lavrov, Sergei. 'Interview Ministera Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova Kitaiskoi Gazete «Kedzi Zhibao»' (Interview of Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov to Chinese Newspaper "Kedzi Jibao"). 27/03/2009. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/300138. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁴¹ Ibid.

issues of domestic and foreign policy ... A certain challenge for Russian interests is the growing gap in the economic potentials of Northeast China and the Russian Far East. Obviously, the backlog of this vast region of Russia from neighboring countries (this applies not only to China) is associated with certain risks and, in a certain sense, with threats. But you will agree, these risks and threats are rather our internal origin. The task of protecting national security interests in relations with China, in my opinion, is quite successfully being resolved by Russia ... History showed that social and economic disasters in China, due to geographical proximity, had a negative impact on our country. And, on the contrary, the peaceful rise of China, its steady progress creates additional opportunities for our mutually beneficial, primarily economic, cooperation'.⁴²

In a speech later that year at the anniversary conference '60 Years of Russian-Chinese Relations', Ambassador Razov shares some lessons of Russia's relations with the PRC from their 60-year history.⁴³ One important lesson is that the continued successful development of Russia-China relations was only possible with the de-ideologization of their relations beginning in the late 1980s. Another important lesson is that the rejection of mutual deterrence has been good for Russia-China relations. In detailing this lesson, Razov rejects the idea of a China threat.

'The idea of containing China's dynamic growth, countering the so-called "Chinese threat" is quite common now, especially in the West. It is expressed periodically and in some Russian mass media. Is there really a threat to our state interests in the Far East? Yes, if, by threat, we understand, unfortunately, the growing difference in the economic potentials of Northeast China and the Russian Far East. Such a progressive lagging of this vast region of Russia behind neighboring states (this applies not only to China), of course, is associated with certain risks, challenges and, in a sense, threats. No, if by the "Chinese threat", we understand a conscious, purposeful policy,

⁴² Razov, Sergei. 'Otnosheniia Vnushaiut Optimizm: Rossiia i Kitai Zainteresovany v Uspeshnom i Ustoichivom Razvitii Druga Druga (Relations are Encouraging: Russia and China are Interested in the Successful and Sustainable Development of Each Other)'. Rossiyskaya Gazeta. 13/10/2009. Available at <https://rg.ru/2009/10/13/razov-kitay.html>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁴³ Razov, Sergei. 'Vystuplenie Posla Rossii v KNR S.S.Razova na Konferentsii "60 Let Rossiisko-Kitaiskim Otnosheniiam" (Speech by Russian Ambassador to the People's Republic of China Sergei Razov at the conference "60 Years of Russian-Chinese Relations")'. Beijing. 30/09/2009. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/278530. Accessed 07/07/2020.

expressed in such actions, which allow themselves in relation to Russia some other states - the official declaration of territorial claims, the approach to our borders of the infrastructure of military-political blocs, the implantation and support of unfriendly Russia regimes along the perimeter of our borders, etc'.⁴⁴

The National Security Strategy until 2020 adopted in 2009 mentions China only briefly, stating that 'Russia will enhance cooperation in such multilateral formats as the G8, G20, RIC (Russia, India and China), and BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China)'.⁴⁵

Official rhetoric on the importance of healthy Russia-China relations for the reformation of world order continued into the 2010s. For example, in a press conference in 2010, Foreign Minister Lavrov said that 'deepening our partnership and strategic cooperation is one of the most important guarantees that the objective process of forming a multipolar, polycentric world order will not be artificially inhibited'.⁴⁶ In an interview, President Dmitri Medvedev claimed that 'relations with the People's Republic of China are one of the key priorities in Russian foreign policy ... I should note that never before have our relations had such a strong component of mutual trust'.⁴⁷

In late 2010, at a press conference, Lavrov responds to a question regarding Russian-Chinese military-technical cooperation and the perception in the West that China's relative share in

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ President of Russia. 'Strategiia Natsional'noi Bezopasnosti Rossiiskoi Federatsii do 2020 Goda (National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation until 2020)'. 13/05/2009. Available at <http://kremlin.ru/supplement/424>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁴⁶ Lavrov, Sergei. 'Stenogramma Vystupleniia i Otvetov Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V.Lavrova na Voprosy SMI v KNode Sovmestnoi Press-Konferentsii po Itogam Peregovorov s Ministrom Inostrannykh Del KNR Īn TŠzechi, Pekin (Transcript of Remarks and Replies to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Joint Press Conference Following Talks with Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China Yang Jiechi)'. Beijing. 04/06/2010. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/246846. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁴⁷ Medvedev, Dmitri. 'Interview to Renmin Ribao'. 26/09/2010. Available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/9020>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

Russia's arms exports has decreased in recent years due to Russia's decision to deliberately reduce China's share because of concerns about copying in the following way. 'I would not rely on the opinion of Western analysts here, they always have a desire to create the appearance of problems, and there are no problems in this area. In this area, there are very serious promising projects in which both sides are interested, today this was also discussed. I am confident that these results will be known in the near future. We have no doubt that military-technical cooperation is one of the most important spheres of our strategic cooperation and partnership'.⁴⁸

In an article published in February 2012, then Prime Minister Vladimir Putin directly addresses the question of how Russia should behave regarding China's rapid rise. In doing so, the official argues that China does not threaten Russia and touches on the major rhetorical themes of economic opportunity and the development of a more equitable world order.

'First of all, I am convinced that China's economic growth is by no means a threat, but a challenge that carries colossal potential for business cooperation – a chance to catch the Chinese wind in the sails of our economy. We should seek to more actively form new cooperative ties ... to develop the economy of Siberia and the Russian Far East. Second, China's conduct on the world stage gives no grounds to talk about its aspirations to dominance. The Chinese voice in the world is indeed growing ever more confident, and we welcome that, because Beijing shares our vision of the emerging equitable world order ... And third, we have settled all the major political issues in our relations with China, including the critical border issue ... There is an unprecedentedly high level of trust between the leaders of our two countries ... my main premise is that Russia needs a

⁴⁸ Lavrov, Sergei. 'Stenogramma Otvetov Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova na Voprosy Rossiiskikh SMI po Itogam Vstrech s Rukovodstvom KNR, Pekin (Transcript of Replies to Russian Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov Following Meeting with Chinese Leadership)'. Beijing. 27/09/2010. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/234542. Accessed 07/07/2020.

prosperous and stable China, and I am convinced that China needs a strong and successful Russia'.⁴⁹

Putin takes a moment in the article to rein in the optimism a bit by pointing out that Russia and China occasionally have conflicting commercial interests, and that their trade structure and level of mutual investment is still unsatisfactory.⁵⁰ The official also states that Russia 'will also closely monitor immigration from the People's Republic of China', but writes no more on the issue, having neither confirmed nor denied the existence of a problem in this area.⁵¹

Assessments of Russia's relations with China continued to be mostly positive and optimistic. In an article published just before his official visit to China, President Putin wrote that 'Russian-Chinese relations have been deservedly called an example of the new type of relations between states. Our relations are free from prejudices and stereotypes, and this makes them stable and not subject to short-term considerations, which is valuable indeed in today's world, where stability and mutual trust are so clearly lacking'.⁵² During a press conference in mid-2012, after Putin's visit to China, Lavrov reported that 'the visit recorded a new quality of Russian-Chinese strategic partnership and interaction. Both sides expressed the highest assessments of the achieved level in bilateral relations in all areas without exception'.⁵³ A few weeks later, Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Morgulov stated in an interview that 'the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to China really confirmed the strategic nature of our partnership. Negotiations in Beijing were successful,

⁴⁹ Putin, Vladimir. 'Russia and the Changing World'. RT. 27/02/2012. Available at <https://www.rt.com/politics/official-word/putin-russia-changing-world-263/>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Putin, Vladimir. 'Russia and China: New Horizons for Cooperation'. Renmin Ribao. 05/06/2012. Available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/15547>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁵³ Lavrov, Sergei. 'Otvety Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova na Voprosy SMI (Answers of Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov to Media Questions)'. Beijing. 06/06/2012. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/153950. Accessed 07/07/2020.

culminating in the achievement of agreements on the development of bilateral relations in all key areas'.⁵⁴ Positive reports on the development of economic relations with China also continued through 2012.⁵⁵

In early 2013, Ambassador Razov reaffirmed the priorities of developing economic relations with China, not least for the sake of developing the Russian Far East (RFE) and Siberia, and continuing to cooperate as much as possible in international affairs: 'I will allocate two priorities. In the article "Russia and the Changing World," Vladimir Putin noted that China's rapid economic growth is "a chance to catch the Chinese wind in the sails of our economy," and outlined the need ... to engage "Chinese potential for the economic recovery of Siberia and the Far East." Another priority is the cooperation of Russia and China in international affairs'.⁵⁶

After Xi Jinping's assumption of the highest offices of the PRC, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Morgulov confirmed that the development of the countries' bilateral relations will continue as before, once again claimed that Russia-China relations have reached an unprecedented level, and noted the significance of the Chinese leadership's choice to make its first foreign trip to Russia after the change of power.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Morgulov, Igor. 'Interv'iu Zamestitel'ia Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii I.V. Morgulova Agentstvu «Interfaks» (Interview of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia I.V. Morgulov to Interfax)'. 24/06/2012. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/151510. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁵⁵ See for example Ibid and Sergei Lavrov. 'Interv'iu Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova Tsentral'nomu Televideniiu Kitaia, Vladivostok (Interview of Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov to China Central Television)'. Vladivostok. 06/09/2012. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/144498. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁵⁶ Razov, Sergei. 'Interv'iu Chrezvychainogo i Polnomochnogo Posla Rossii v KNR S.S.Razova, Opublikovannoe v «Rossiiskoi gazete» (Interview of the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Russia to the PRC SS Razov, Published in the Rossiyskaya Gazeta)'. 01/02/2013. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/124698. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁵⁷ Morgulov, Igor. 'Interv'iu Zamestitel'ia Ministra Inostrannykh del Rossii I.V. Morgulova Agentstvu «Interfaks» (Interview of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Igor V.Morgulov to the Interfax agency)'. 03/04/2013. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/116074. Accessed 07/07/2020.

Positive rhetoric on the development of economic relations of Russia and China continued through 2013. For example, in June, Russian Ambassador to China Andrei Denisov reported that ‘in recent years, trade relations between Russia and China have experienced a period of rapid development. At the same time, the dynamics of our trade growth were very high against the backdrop of a moderate increase in China's trade with other countries. In some years, out of China's 20 largest trading partners, trade with Russia grew at the fastest pace’ and said that he is ‘convinced that the great potential of Russian-Chinese trade and economic cooperation has not yet been revealed’.⁵⁸

Officials of the Russian Foreign Ministry persisted in their claims of a significant alignment of interests between Russia and China. For example, in early 2014, Ambassador Denisov said in an interview that ‘the very wording “positions are close or coincide” gives diplomatic laxity. But in the case of China and Russia, this is actually the case. This closeness of positions is not artificially built, this is not the result, so to speak, of diplomatic shaping. The positions of our countries grow out of our own national interests, and conscious national interests. In other words, their coincidence or proximity has an objective character’.⁵⁹ However, the official also explained the reality of occasionally having conflicting interests: ‘Both China and Russia are major powers with their own, once again to emphasize, conscious national interests. And it is not at all a fact that these interests should always coincide. There is no such thing. It is quite natural that there may be gaps in our positions, maybe a different angle of vision of a particular problem’.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Denisov, Andrei. ‘Interv’iu Posla Rossii v Kitae A.I.Denisova agentstvu «Interfaks» (Interview of the Ambassador of Russia in China, AI Denisov to the Interfax News Agency)’. 08/06/2013. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/106338. Accessed 10/07/2020.

⁵⁹ Denisov, Andrei. ‘Interv’iu Posla Rossii v KNR A.I. Denisova «RIA Novosti» (Interview of Russian Ambassador to the PRC A.I. Denisov)’. RIA Novosti. 09/02/2014. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/735964. Accessed 10/07/2020.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Despite China's non-recognition of the referendum in Crimea in March 2014 and the peninsula's integration with the Russian Federation, and China's abstention on two UN resolutions that month (one on the invalidation of the results of the referendum, and another urging states not to recognize any change in Crimea's status), Russian officials continued to regard the development of their country's relations with China positively and optimistically. For example, in April 2014, Foreign Minister Lavrov stated that 'in recent years, the relations of comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation between Russia and the PRC have reached an unprecedentedly high level, which meets the interests of the internal development of our states and contributes to the strengthening of their positions in the international arena. A firm basis for further progress in all areas without exception is the highest level of trust, primarily in the political sphere, which is reflected in regular contacts at the highest levels'.⁶¹ Contrary to entertaining the idea that China abandoned or betrayed Russia with regard to the events in Crimea and international backlash, officials expressed understanding and even appreciation for China's position on the Crimea issue. For example, in that same interview Lavrov said 'we appreciate the balanced and objective position of Beijing on the Ukrainian crisis, the fact that China demonstrates an understanding of the whole set of relevant factors, including historical ones'.⁶² Later that year, Ambassador Denisov, regarding China's position on the Crimea issue, said that 'the Chinese position on this issue is very clear and on the whole very positive. China does not say whether it supports or does not support Russia's actions in Ukraine, including, among other things, the return of the Crimea. Our Chinese partners at all levels have repeatedly stressed that in the development of the crisis in Ukraine there are historical roots that in relations with them we have the right to expect an

⁶¹ Lavrov, Sergei. 'Interview of Minister of Foreign Affairs S.V. Lavrov to the China Daily' (Interview of Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov to the China Daily). 15/04/2014. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/65422. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁶² Ibid.

understanding of the motives and actions of our side. Well, China's official position boils down to the need to end the bloodshed as soon as possible, to find ways to solve the problem peacefully, diplomatically, using, if necessary, international opportunities. That is, in this case it is no different from our position'.⁶³

In late 2014, President Putin stated that 'strengthening ties with the PRC is a foreign policy priority of Russia. Today, our relations have reached the highest level of comprehensive equitable trust-based partnership and strategic interaction in their entire history'.⁶⁴ In an interview in December 2014, after speaking at length about many aspects of Russia-China relations, Ambassador Denisov concluded confidently that 'in the past year "on all fronts and directions" we managed not only to prevent the reduction of the turnover in Russian-Chinese cooperation, but also to increase it, and in some cases very significantly'.⁶⁵

In the context of a fallout of Russia-Western relations as a result of the Ukraine crisis, the fall of the ruble, and resulting economic difficulties for Russia, 2015 saw a continuation of positive and optimistic rhetoric on China from Russian officials. When asked in an interview whether China should help Russia in these difficult times, Ambassador Denisov said 'I would say not so much about help, but about support. China does indeed support Russia on such an important issue as countering Western sanctions. China, including at the level of senior management, sharply expressed a negative attitude regarding the pressure on the leadership of Russia and refused in

⁶³ Denisov, Andrei. 'Interv'iu Posla Rossii v KNR A.I. Denisova Agentstvu «Interfaks» (Interview of Russian Ambassador to China A. Denisov to Interfax News Agency)'. 17/11/2014. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/790826. Accessed 10/07/2020.

⁶⁴ Putin, Vladimir. 'Interview to China's Leading Media Companies'. 06/11/2014. Available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46972>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁶⁵ Denisov, Andrei. 'Interv'iu Posla Rossii v Kitae A.I. Denisova Informagentstvu TASS (Interview of the Ambassador of Russia to China A. I. Denisov to the TASS News Agency)'. 29/12/2014. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/871561. Accessed 12/07/2020.

any form to join any sanctions. For this support, we are very grateful to our Chinese partners and highly appreciate it'.⁶⁶ Concluding on the state of Russia's relations with China, the official stated, 'there is political interest, there is material interest, and there is interest purely human. In the case of Russian-Chinese relations at the current stage, all three interests coincide. This is the basis of our confidence that Russian-Chinese relations will continue to develop'.⁶⁷ Later that year, Foreign Minister Lavrov reaffirmed that 'expansion of foreign policy cooperation with the People's Republic of China is the most important priority of the Russian Federation and meets the interests of stability in the world'.⁶⁸

Russia's deteriorating relations with the West as a result of the Ukraine crisis and sanctions imposed on Russia coupled with a perceived reinvigoration of Russia's efforts to strengthen ties with China prompted a lot of discussion about a 'turn to the East'. In answering a question about Russia's 'turn to the East', Ambassador Denisov said in an interview in December 2015 that 'the turn to the East is, first of all, a strategic choice of Russia, which, in general, is not connected with the policy of sanctions. In any case, it began long before we were hit by a series of sanctions. Our government started talking seriously about turning to the East somewhere about three years ago, when no one threatened us with sanctions. But if you go deeper, then it started

⁶⁶ Denisov, Andrei. 'Interv'iu Posla Rossii v KNR A.I. Denisova Kitaïskoï Gazete «Global Taïms» (Interview of the Russian Ambassador to China A. Denisov to the Chinese Newspaper Global Times)'. 19/01/2015. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/899726. Accessed 10/07/2020.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Lavrov, Sergei. 'Vstupitel'noe Slovo Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova v KHode Peregovorov s Ministrom Inostrannykh Del Kitaïa Van I, Kuala-Lumpur (Opening Remarks by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov During Talks with Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi'. Kuala Lumpur)'. 05/08/2015. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/1633820. Accessed 07/07/2020.

even earlier, at least from the beginning of the 2000s ... it cannot be said that the sanctions had a decisive influence on the development of economic ties with the Chinese neighbor'.⁶⁹

In a speech following talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in March 2016, Foreign Minister Lavrov stated that they 'confirmed the high appreciation of the achieved level of Russian-Chinese cooperation, which, according to the general assessment, is the best in the history of our relations'.⁷⁰ The official began a speech in May of that year by saying that 'comprehensive promotion of relations with the People's Republic of China is Russia's unconditional foreign policy priority'.⁷¹ Lavrov went on to claim that in the context of a 'fundamentally new historical stage associated with the formation of a polycentric system of world order ... it is difficult to overestimate the important role of the Russian-Chinese partnership, which has acquired a truly strategic character, in maintaining global and regional security and stability'.⁷² In the speech, Lavrov also shared an optimistic view on Russia's economic relations with China, and near the end of the speech the official describes the potential of the strategic partnership of Russia and China as 'truly inexhaustible'.⁷³

⁶⁹ Denisov, Andrei. 'Interv'iu Posla Rossii v KNR A.I. Denisova Informagentstvu «Rossiia Segodnia» (Interview of the Russian Ambassador to the People's Republic of China A. Denisov to the "Russia Today" News Agency)'. 08/12/2015. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/1967190. Accessed 10/07/2020.

⁷⁰ Lavrov, Sergei. 'Vystuplenie i Otvet na Voprosy SMI Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V.Lavrova v KHode Sovmestnoi Press-Konferentsii po Itogam Peregovorov s Ministrom Inostrannykh Del KNR Van I, Moskva (Speech and Answers to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at Joint Press Conference Following Talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi)'. Moscow. 11/03/2016. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/2138588. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁷¹ Lavrov, Sergei. 'Vystuplenie Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V.Lavrova na Vtoroi Mezhdunarodnoi Konferentsii «Rossiia i Kitai: k Novomu Kachestvu Dvustoronnikh Otnoshenii» (Speech by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at the Second International Conference "Russia and China: Towards a New Quality of Bilateral Relations")'. Moscow. 31/05/2016. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/2297742. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

In an interview in June 2016, Ambassador Denisov reiterated that the state of Russia-China relations is a “comprehensive strategic partnership,” the level of which is the best in the history of relations between our states’.⁷⁴ Denisov asserted that the high quality of Russia and China’s relations stems from an alignment of national interests.⁷⁵ Despite a significant downturn in trade between Russia and China over the previous year, Denisov remained optimistic, characterizing the slump as a natural occurrence in the context of global free market forces.⁷⁶ In another interview in June 2016, Denisov explains that, while Russia’s and China’s interests are not exactly the same, their ‘positions on various kinds of problems that overwhelm the modern system of world relations, are generally quite close, and in many respects they coincide’, and this allows for close cooperation in international organizations, which ‘has a sobering effect’ on other members of the organizations.⁷⁷ The official also claims that Russia-China relations ‘have a cooling, stabilizing effect on the overall turbulent international situation’.⁷⁸ In late 2016, Denisov again gave an optimistic report of Russia’s economic relations with China despite the downturn of 2015.⁷⁹

In an interview in December 2016, President Putin describes Russia’s special, complex relationship with China, characterized by a high degree of trust: ‘Now we characterize Russian-

⁷⁴ Denisov, Andrei. ‘Interviu Posla Rossii v KNR A.I. Denisova Informagentstvam «Rossiia Segodnia» i TASS (Interview of Russian Ambassador to China A. Denisov to the News Agencies Russia Today and TASS)’. 21/06/2016. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/2327002. Accessed 10/07/2020.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Denisov, Andrei. ‘Interviu Posla Rossii v Kitae A.I. Denisova Informagentstvu «Rossiia Segodnia», 30 Iunia 2016 Goda (Interview of the Ambassador of Russia in China A.I. Denisov to the Russia Today News Agency)’. 30/06/2016. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/nota-bene/-/asset_publisher/dx7DsH1WAM6w/content/id/2805871. Accessed 25/04/2020.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Denisov, Andrei. ‘Interviu Posla Rossii v Kitae A.I. Denisova Informagentstvu TASS (Interview of the Russian Ambassador to China A. I. Denisov to the TACC News Agency)’. 31/10/2016. Available at http://www.mid.ru/ru/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/2511670. Accessed 10/07/2020.

Chinese relations as a strategic partnership, even a special strategic partnership. We have never had such a level of trust with China before'.⁸⁰ Russia's official rhetoric frequently use of the words 'trust' and 'friend' and their variations when describing the interaction of Russian and Chinese officials.⁸¹ After describing many of the areas in which Russia and China are closely engaged, including joint projects, the UN, the SCO, and BRICS, the official described Russian-Chinese ties as 'diverse, multi-faceted and deep'.⁸²

In an interview in February 2017, Ambassador Denisov was asked about the unequal structure of Russia's trade with China, wherein Russia exports mostly raw materials and China exports mostly finished goods.⁸³ The official first claims that China is not imposing the trade structure on Russia, and that the trade between the countries represents 'a balance of interests' and 'a balance

⁸⁰ Putin, Vladimir. 'Interview by Vladimir Putin to Nippon TV and Yomiuri Newspaper'. 13/12/2016. Available at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53455>. Accessed 07/07/2020.

⁸¹ For recent examples see Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 'O Dvadtsat' Tret'eĭ Sessii Sovmestnoi Rossiĭsko-Kitaĭskoĭ Komissii po Granitse (On the Twenty-Third Session of the Joint Russian-Chinese Border Commission)'. 12/12/2018. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/3439909. Accessed 27/04/2020; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 'O Besede Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossiĭskoĭ Federatsii S.V. Lavrova s Chlenom Gosudarstvennogo Soveta, Ministrom Inostrannykh Del Kitaĭskoĭ Narodnoi Respubliki Van I (On the Conversation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov with a Member of the State Council, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China Wang Yi)'. 22/05/2019. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meropriyatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/3655975. Accessed 27/04/2020; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 'O Dvadtsat' Chetvertoĭ Sessii Sovmestnoi Rossiĭsko-Kitaĭskoĭ Komissii po Granitse (About the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Joint Russian-Chinese Border Commission)'. 24/06/2019. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/3699336. Accessed 27/04/2020; Denisov. 'Interview with Russian Ambassador to China A.I. Denisov to Interfax News Agency'. 2019; Lavrov. 'Speech and Answers to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at a Joint Press Conference Following Negotiations with a Member of the State Council, Foreign Minister Wang Yi'. 2019; and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 'O Vstreche Spetspredstavitelĭa Prezidenta Rossiĭskoĭ Federatsii po Blizhnemu Vostoku i Stranam Afriki, Zamestitelĭa Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii M.L. Bogdanova s Poslom Kitaĭskoĭ Narodnoi Respubliki v Moskve CHzhan Xan'khuem (On the Meeting of the Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for the Middle East and African Countries, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia ML Bogdanov with the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in Moscow Zhang Hanhui)'. 14/01/2020. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/3994354. Accessed 27/04/2020.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Denisov. 'Interview with Russian Ambassador to China A.I. Denisov to TASS News Agency'. 2017.

of opportunity'.⁸⁴ Denisov argues that there is no reason to worry about the trade structure and expresses optimism regarding trade relations with China. The official explains that, by exporting raw materials to China, Russia is simply using an advantage, and that this should not be feared.⁸⁵ Denisov then points out that Russia is building on other areas of its exports to China as well as finding new niches in the Chinese market.⁸⁶

In recent years, Russian officials continued to declare that Russia-China relations are in the best state of their history. In April 2017, at a meeting with the head of the Chancellery of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, Li Zhanshu, Putin said he thinks that China's efforts to develop regional and global economic cooperation 'will support the unprecedentedly high level of Russian-Chinese relations that has developed in recent years'.⁸⁷

During a press conference that followed a speech Lavrov gave in Moscow in January 2017, the official began an answer to a question from the press on security cooperation between Russia and China by saying that Russia has 'the best relations with China in the entire history of our countries', adding that 'bilateral strategic interaction, comprehensive partnership, and cooperation on regional and global affairs is on the rise'.⁸⁸ In a speech given at the Russian State Duma that same month, Lavrov said that 'the course on strengthening Russian-Chinese strategic partnership relations remains unchanged' and that such relations are 'exemplary for responsible

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Putin, Vladimir. 'Vstrecha s Rukovoditelem Kantseliarii TSK Kompartii Kitaia Li CHzhan'shu (Meeting with the head of the Chancellery of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Li Zhanshu)'. Moscow. 26/04/2017. Available at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54381>. Accessed 24/04/2020.

⁸⁸ Lavrov, Sergei. 'Vystuplenie i Otvety na Voprosy SMI Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova v KNode Press-Konferentsii po Itogam Deiatel'nosti Rossiiskoi Diplomatii v 2016 Godu, Moskva (Speech and Answers to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at A Press Conference on the Results of Russian Diplomacy in 2016'. Moscow). 17/01/2017. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meropriyatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/2599609. Accessed 24/04/2020.

major powers in the 21st century'.⁸⁹ During the Q&A that followed the speech, in an answer to a question asking what position Russia would take in the event of increased tensions between China and the US, Lavrov said that 'our relations with China are booming, flourishing, they are unprecedentedly rich, trusting, friendly and effective both in terms of bilateral cooperation in all areas and in terms of our interaction and coordination of our steps in the international arena'.⁹⁰

During an opening speech at a joint press conference with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang in May 2017, Lavrov said 'on both sides, we reaffirmed the high level of Russian-Chinese cooperation, which reached an unprecedented level in the history of bilateral relations'.⁹¹ At the same press conference, in an answer to a question about the state of business cooperation between Russia and China, Lavrov said that 'Russian-Chinese relations are in full bloom. They have reached an unprecedented level in the history of our relations and cover all conceivable areas of interaction between states and, possibly, interpersonal communication'.⁹² It was reported that 'a high assessment of the level of Russian-Chinese relations was confirmed' during conversations between Lavrov and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in February and June 2017.⁹³

⁸⁹ Lavrov, Sergei. 'Vystuplenie i Otvety na Voprosy Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova v KHode «Pravitel'stvennogo CHasa» v Gosudarstvennoĭ Dume Federal'nogo Sobraniĭa Rossiĭskoĭ Federatsii, Moskva (Speech and answers to the questions of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Sergey Lavrov during the "Government Hour" in the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation'. Moscow). 25/01/2017. Available at <https://russische-botschaft.ru/ru/2017/01/25/vystuplenie-i-otvety-na-voprosy-minis-5/>. Accessed 24/04/2020.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Lavrov, Sergei. 'Vystuplenie i Otvety na Voprosy SMI Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova v KHode Sovmestnoĭ Press-Konferentsii po Itogam Peregovorov s Ministrom Inostrannykh Del KNR Van I (Speech and Answers to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov During a Joint Press Conference Following Negotiations with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China Wang Yi)'. Moscow. 26/05/2017. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meropriyatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/2768031. Accessed 24/04/2020.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 'O Besede Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova s Ministrom Inostrannykh Del KNR Van I (On the Conversation of Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi)'. 16/02/2017. Available at

In an interview with TASS in February 2017, Ambassador Denisov said that ‘the level of relations that have now been reached between China and Russia is characterized as the highest in history. And this is not just a figure of speech, but a reflection of objective reality. We had allied relations in the 50s. They were then based on ideological identity and bloc solidarity. It did not lead to anything good. Our current alliance is de-ideologized. This means that it is entirely based on mutual interests’.⁹⁴

In an interview with the China Media Corporation in 2018, President Putin said that Russia and China have built a relationship in recent decades that could hardly be compared with any other at the time, noting that they are truly considerate of each other’s interests.⁹⁵ According to Putin, Russia-China relations continue to develop in a positive direction. The official explained that the Treaty on Friendship and Good Neighborhood in 2001 ‘is just the foundation, that foundation on which we built the current building of our relations, and every year it acquires more and more colors, new floors, it grows higher and higher, becomes stronger and stronger’.⁹⁶ At a meeting with Politburo member of the Communist Party of China Yang Jiechi in August 2018, Putin said that relations between Russia and China are developing according to plan.⁹⁷ In a meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang in May 2019, Putin reaffirmed that he believes that Russia-

https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/2646546. Accessed 24/04/2020; and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. ‘O Besede Ministrov Inostrannykh Del Rossii i Kitaia (About the Conversation of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Russia and China)’. 19/06/2017. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/2787094. Accessed 24/04/2020.

⁹⁴ Denisov, Andrei. ‘Interviu Posla Rossii v Kitae A.I. Denisova informagentstvu TASS (Interview with Russian Ambassador to China A.I. Denisov to TASS News Agency)’. 08/02/2017. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/about/professional_holiday/news/-/asset_publisher/I5UF6lkPfgKO/content/id/2631010. Accessed 24/04/2020.

⁹⁵ Putin, Vladimir. ‘Interview with the China Media Corporation’. Moscow. 06/06/2018. Available at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/57684>. Accessed 24/04/2020.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Putin, Vladimir. ‘Vstrecha s Chlenom Politbiuro TSK Kompartii Kitaia Ian TSzechi (Meeting with Politburo Member of the Communist Party of China Yang Jiechi)’. Sochi, Russia. 15/08/2018. Available at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/58313>. Accessed 24/04/2020.

China relations ‘are developing successfully in the very literal sense of the word’.⁹⁸ In June 2019, Putin expressed his view once again that ‘we can confidently say that Russian-Chinese relations are at an unprecedentedly high level’.⁹⁹

In two speeches and in the opening remarks of a meeting given by Lavrov in 2018, the official repeats the claim that Russia-China relations have reached an ‘unprecedentedly high level’.¹⁰⁰ In a speech and an interview in 2019, Lavrov once again describes Russia’s relationship with China as being in an unprecedentedly good state, and in the latter, the official elaborates with the description of the frequency of high-level interaction between the two states.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Putin, Vladimir. ‘Vstrecha s Ministrom Inostrannykh Del Kitaia Van I (Meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi)’. Sochi, Russia. 13/05/2019. Available at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60511>. Accessed 24/04/2020.

⁹⁹ Putin, Vladimir. ‘Vecher, Posviashchennyi 70-Letiui Ustanovleniia Diplomaticheskikh Otnoshenii Mezhu Rossiei i Kitaem (An Evening Dedicated to the 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Russia and China)’. Moscow. 05/05/2019. Available at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60674>. Accessed 24/04/2020.

¹⁰⁰ Lavrov, Sergei. ‘Vystuplenie Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova v KNode Sovmestnoi Press-Konferentsii po Itogam Peregovorov s CHlenom Gosudarstvennogo Soveta, Ministrom inostrannykh del KNR Van I (Speech by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at a Joint Press Conference Following Negotiations with Member of the State Council, Foreign Minister Wang Yi)’. Moscow. 05/04/2018. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meropriyatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/3154615. Accessed 24/04/2020; Sergei Lavrov. ‘Vystuplenie i Otvet na Vopros SMI Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova v KNode Sovmestnoi Press-Konferentsii po Itogam Peregovorov s CHlenom Gosudarstvennogo Soveta, Ministrom Inostrannykh Del KNR Van I (Speech and Answer to a Media Question by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov during a Joint Press Conference Following Negotiations with a Member of the State Council, Foreign Minister Wang Yi)’. Beijing. 23/04/2018. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meropriyatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/3186258. Accessed 24/04/2020; Sergei Lavrov. ‘Vstupitel’noe Slovo Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova v KNode Vstrechi s CHlenom Gosudarstvennogo Soveta, Ministrom Inostrannykh Del KNR Van I (Opening Remarks by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey V. Lavrov during a Meeting with Wang Yi, a Member of the State Council and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China)’. Beijing. 23/04/2018. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meropriyatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/3185872. Accessed 24/04/2020.

¹⁰¹ Lavrov, Sergei. ‘Vystuplenie Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossiiskoi Federatsii S.V. Lavrova na TSeremonii Otkrytiia Vystavki Fotografii i Dokumentov po Istorii Sovetsko- i Rossiisko-Kitaiskogo Vzaimodeistviia, Moskva (Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation S.V. Lavrov at the Opening Ceremony of an Exhibition of Photographs and Documents on the History of Soviet-Russian and Chinese-Chinese Cooperation)’. Moscow. 30/09/2019. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meropriyatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/3823463. Accessed 24/04/2020; and Sergei Lavrov. ‘Interv’iu «V’etnamskomu Televideniiu» i Kitaiskim Telekanalam (Interview with Vietnam Television and Chinese TV Channels). Moscow. 24/02/2019. Available at <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/intervyu-vetnamskomu-televideniyu-i-kitayskim-telekanalam/>. Accessed 10/07/2020.

‘The intensity of the political dialogue between Moscow and Beijing is at a record level. Last year, there were four meetings between President of Russia Vladimir Putin and President of China Xi Jinping. They exchanged state visits and met twice on the sidelines of the international BRICS and G20 events. Always, when our leaders participate in some kind of multilateral discussions, they find an opportunity to devote some time to a bilateral meeting. This allows us to constantly “check the clock”, as we say, to feel the nuances in each other’s positions. Thus, it becomes easier to develop collective approaches’.¹⁰²

In recent years, Russian government officials have also continued to claim that Russia and China have very similar interests. At a meeting with First Deputy Premier of the State Council of China Zhang Gaoli in April 2017, Putin said that ‘mutual interests’ are ‘at the heart’ of the ‘very good relations’ between Russia and China.¹⁰³

In an interview with TASS News Agency in February 2017 cited above, Ambassador Denisov said that Russia and China have ‘a common foreign policy interest, related to the fact that our attitude towards what is happening in the world, our assessments of various international events are largely close, and coincide in a number of areas’, and that, because of the similarity of the countries’ interests and attitudes towards external events, ‘Russian-Chinese relations are a self-valuable and self-sufficient sphere that is resistant to all kinds of external fluctuations’.¹⁰⁴

In an interview with the China Media Corporation in June 2018 cited earlier, President Putin explains that at the heart of all of Russia’s and China’s interests is the ‘desire to improve people’s lives’, and that, ‘based on this, [Russia and China] are thinking about how to build Russian-Chinese relations in order to achieve these goals both to ensure our external security and to add up efforts in building a new type of economy based on modern innovations, on a digital

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Putin, Vladimir. ‘Vstrecha s Pervym Zamestitelem Prem’era Gossoвета Kitaia CHzhan Gaoli (Meeting with First Deputy Premier of the State Council of China Zhang Gaoli)’. 13/04/2017. Available at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54284>. Accessed 25/04/2020.

¹⁰⁴ Denisov. ‘Interview with Russian Ambassador to China A.I. Denisov to TASS News Agency’. 2017.

economy, on the achievements of genetics, on modern, competent ways of managing society, the state and the economy itself'.¹⁰⁵ Regarding China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its implications for Russia's interests, Putin said that Russia has 'always supported this idea' and it is viewed as a 'useful, important, and promising initiative' that is 'complemented by [Russia's] efforts to build the Eurasian Economic Union'.¹⁰⁶

During a press conference in April 2019, in response to a question on whether the BRI benefits Russia, Putin explains that China is 'just like Russia, just like any country, [it] proceed[s] from [its] national interests. This is normal'.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the official continues, 'China is doing this in a fairly civilized, gentle manner and in such a way that the proposed solutions for common development are in the interests of the vast majority of participants in international communication, if not all'.¹⁰⁸ Putin also observes that 'in [its] practical activities, in politics, [China does] everything to take into account the interests of its partners'.¹⁰⁹ The official explains that the BRI is aligned with Russia's interests because it will allow Russia to increase the use of its transit routes, such as the Trans-Siberian Railway and the Baikal-Amur Mainline.

At a meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang in May 2019, President Putin said that the BRI 'fully fits' into Russia's continued integration efforts within the Eurasian Economic Community.¹¹⁰ At a gala celebrating the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties

¹⁰⁵ Putin. 'Interview of China Media Corporation'. 2018.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Putin, Vladimir. 'Press-Konferentsiia po Itogam Rabochego Vizita v Kitai (Press Conference Following a Working Visit to China)'. Beijing, 27/04/2019. Available at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60396>. Accessed 25/04/2020.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Putin, Vladimir. 'Meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi'. 2019.

between Russia and China in June 2019, Putin said that the countries are united by certain principles, including the ‘consideration of each other's interests’.¹¹¹

In two pieces of Russian Press Department commentary on visits between Foreign Minister Lavrov and Foreign Minister Wang in February and May 2019, it was stated that ‘Russia and China adhere to close or coinciding approaches to most international problems’ and that the linking of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and BRI serves as ‘the basis for promoting integration processes throughout Eurasia and building the Greater Eurasian Partnership as a common development space based on equality, openness, and mutual consideration of interests’.¹¹²

After negotiations between Foreign Minister Lavrov and Foreign Minister Wang in May 2019, Lavrov gave a speech in which he said that the combination of the EAEU and BRI as well as other Eurasian integration initiatives ‘will allow us to enter the formation of a Greater Eurasian Partnership based on the principles of openness, transparency, and taking into account each other's interests’.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Putin. ‘An Evening Dedicated to the 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Russia and China’. 2019.

¹¹² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. ‘Kommentarii Departamenta Informatsii i Pechati MID Rossii v Sviazi s Vizitom Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossiiskoi Federatsii S.V. Lavrova v Kitaiskuiu Narodnuu Respubliku (Russian MFA Information and Press Department Commentary Regarding a Visit by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov to the People's Republic of China)’. 25/02/2019. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/kommentarii_predstavatelya/-/asset_publisher/MCZ7HQuMdqBY/content/id/3540975. Accessed 26/04/2020; and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. ‘Kommentarii Departamenta Informatsii i Pechati MID Rossii v Sviazi s Vizitom v Rossiiskuiu Federatsiiu Chlena Gossoвета, Ministra Inostrannykh Del KNR Van I (Russian MFA Information and Press Department Commentary Regarding a Visit of a Member of the State Council, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China Wang Yi to the Russian Federation)’. 10/05/2019. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/UdAzvXr89FbD/content/id/3640069. Accessed 26/04/2020.

¹¹³ Lavrov, Sergei. ‘Vystuplenie i Otvety na Voprosy SMI Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova v KHode Sovmestnoi Press-Konferentsii po Itogam Peregovorov s CHlenom Gosudarstvennogo Soveta, Ministrom Inostrannykh Del KNR Van I, Sochi (Speech and Answers to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at a Joint Press Conference Following Negotiations with a Member of the State Council,

In recent years Russian officials have continued another trend in their rhetoric by claiming that relations between Russia and China are crucial for the maintenance of regional and global stability. In Lavrov's opening remarks at talks with Foreign Minister Wang in April 2017, the official used the example of the US' blocking of investigations by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons of a gas attack in Syria to demonstrate the need for Russia and China to continue to take responsibility in maintaining regional and global security.¹¹⁴ Lavrov reaffirmed several more times in 2018 and 2019 that Russia and China together play an important role in maintaining stability in the world.¹¹⁵ In an interview with Interfax News in

Foreign Minister Wang Yi'. Sochi. 13/05/2019. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meropriyatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/3643559. Accessed 26/04/2020.

¹¹⁴ Lavrov. 'Opening Remarks by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov during Talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi'. 2017; for other examples of rhetoric noting the importance of Russia-China relations for the maintenance of regional and global security, see Lavrov. 'Speech and Answers to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at A Press Conference on the Results of Russian Diplomacy in 2016'. 2017; Lavrov. Speech and answers to the questions of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Sergey Lavrov during the "Government Hour". 2017; Sergei Lavrov. 'Vstupitel'noe Slovo Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova v KNode Peregovorov s Ministrom inostrannykh Del KNR Van I (Opening Remarks by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov during Talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi)'. Astana. 21/04/2017. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meropriyatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/2734437. Accessed 26/04/2020.

¹¹⁵ For example, see Sergei Lavrov. 'Vstupitel'noe Slovo Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova v KNode Vstrechi s Ministrom Inostrannykh Del KNR Van I (Opening Remarks by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey V. Lavrov during a Meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi)'. Moscow. 05/04/2018. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meropriyatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/3154294. Accessed 26/04/2020; Lavrov. 'Opening Remarks by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey V. Lavrov during a Meeting with Wang Yi, a Member of the State Council and Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China'. 2018; Sergei Lavrov. 'Vstupitel'noe Slovo Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossii S.V. Lavrova v KNode Peregovorov s CHlenom Gosudarstvennogo Soveta, Ministrom Inostrannykh Del KNR Van I, Sochi (Opening Remarks by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey V. Lavrov during Talks with Member of the State Council, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China Wang Yi)'. Sochi. 13/05/2019. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meropriyatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/3643151. Accessed 26/04/2020; Sergei Lavrov. 'O Vstreche Ministra Inostrannykh Del Rossiiskoi Federatsii S.V. Lavrova s CHlenom Gosudarstvennogo Soveta, Ministrom inostrannykh Del Kitaiskoi Narodnoi Respubliki Van I (On the Meeting of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov with the Member of the State Council, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China Wang Yi)'. Nagoya. 23/11/2019. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/meropriyatiya_s_uchastiem_ministra/-/asset_publisher/xK1BhB2bUjd3/content/id/3911555. Accessed 26/04/2020; and Lavrov. 'Speech and Answers to Media Questions by Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov at a Joint Press Conference Following Negotiations with a Member of the State Council, Foreign Minister Wang Yi'. 2019

January 2019, Ambassador Denisov claimed this as well.¹¹⁶ In June 2019, President Putin explained that Russia and China ‘make a great contribution to solving acute global problems, countering new challenges and threats, and jointly advocate the formation of a new, fair world order based on multipolarity, strict observance of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, equality, and mutually beneficial cooperation’.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Denisov, Andrei. ‘Interview Posla Rossii v Kitae A.I. Denisova Informatsionnomu Agentstvu «Interfaks» (Interview with Russian Ambassador to China A.I. Denisov to Interfax News Agency)’. 09/01/2019. Available at https://www.mid.ru/web/guest/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/3470071. Accessed 26/04/2020.

¹¹⁷ Putin. ‘An Evening Dedicated to the 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Russia and China’. 2020.