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China and Russia in Central Asia: „Friendly“ Great Powers in One Region

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Abstract

Much has been written about how Russia and China detest when another superpower gains strength in a region that is considered by the two as a "sphere of influence."

Central Asia represents a natural area of interest for both Moscow and Beijing. According to the above-mentioned logic, here these two superpowers should be competing, but we see the opposite - Central Asia has hosted an order, which the Chinese side called the "division of labor" between Russia and China. The principle implies cooperation/division of roles. China provides economic stability, and Russia has the role of security guarantor.

The paper explains the nature of the relations between China and Russia in Central Asia. First, it illustrates how Moscow and Beijing cooperate/co-exist here. This is done by separately exploring the roles of the two actors mentioned in the region. The second part of the article is devoted to finding the determining factors of the current order in Central Asia.

The research found that the above-mentioned roles of China and Russia in Central Asia are not rigid and they often intersect "in the dimension of each other." This is especially true of the People's Republic of China, whose rise makes Beijing's involvement in the region's security issues inevitable.

The reason for maintaining the harmonious order between the two superpowers in the region lies in the structure of the international system. Currently, China and Russia are united against the "US unipolar liberal international system" with a revisionist motive. Under this circumstance, it is irrational for Moscow and Beijing to break diplomatic, economic, and military partnerships over disagreements in Central Asia.

Key words: Russia; China; Central Asia; Great power.

აბსტრაქტი

ბევრი ინერგება იმაზე, თუ როგორ ღიზიანდებიან რუსეთი და ჩინეთი, როდესაც სხვა სუპერძალა ძლიერდება იმ რეგიონში, რომელიც ამ ქვეყნების მიერ „გავლენის სფეროდაა“ მიჩნეული.

ცენტრალურ აზიას მოსკოვიცა და პეკინიც ბუნებრივი ინტერესის სფეროდ მიიჩნევენ. ზემოთქმული ლოგიკით, ეს ორი სუპერძალა აქ ერთმანეთის კონკურენტები უნდა იყვნენ, თუმცა ვხედავთ საპირისპიროს - წლებია ცენტრალურ აზიაში არსებობს მდგომარეობა, რომელსაც ჩინურმა მხარემ რუსეთსა და ჩინეთს შორის „შრომის დანაწილება“ უწოდა. პრინციპი თანამშრომლობას/როლებს დაყოფას გულისხმობს. ჩინეთს ეკონომიკური სტაბილურობის, ხოლო რუსეთს უსაფრთხოების გარანტორის როლი აქვს მორგებული.

ნაშრომი ხსნის ცენტრალურ აზიაში ჩინეთისა და რუსეთის ურთიერთობის ბუნებას. პირველ რიგში, იგი ასახავს თუ როგორ თანამშრომლობენ/თანაარსებობენ მოსკოვი და პეკინი ცენტრალურ აზიაში. ეს ხდება რეგიონში აღნიშნული ორი აქტორის როლების ცალ-ცალკე წარმოჩენით. სტატიის მეორე ნაწილი კი ეთმობა ცენტრალური აზიის ამჟამინდელი წესრიგის განმსაზღვრელი ფაქტორების მოძიებას.

კვლევამ გამოავლინა, რომ ცენტრალურ აზიაში ჩინეთისა და რუსეთის ზემოხსენებული როლები მყარი არ არის და ისინი ხშირად იკვეთებიან „ერთმანეთის განზომილებაში.“ ეს განსაკუთრებით უნდა ითქვას ჩინეთის სახალხო რესპუბლიკაზე, რომლის აღმასვლაც პეკინის უსაფრთხოების საკითხებში ჩაბმას გარდაუვალს ქმნის.

რეგიონში ორ სუპერძალას შორის ჩამოყალიბებული ჰარმონიული წესრიგის შენარჩუნების მიზნით საერთაშორისო სისტემის სტრუქტურაში იმალება. ამჟამად ჩინეთი და რუსეთი რევიზიონისტული მოტივით არიან გაერთიანებული „აშშ-ს უნიპოლარული ლიბერალური საერთაშორისო სისტემის“ წინააღმდეგ. არსებული ვითარებით, მოსკოვისა და პეკინისთვის ცენტრალურ აზიაში უთანხმოებების გამო დიპლომატიური, ეკონომიკური და სამხედრო პარტნიორობის მოშლა არარაციონალურია.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: რუსეთი; ჩინეთი; ცენტრალური აზია; სუპერ ძალა.

Introduction

Russia and China detest when another superpower gains strength in a region they consider as their "sphere of influence." Russian policymakers have repeatedly justified aggression against Ukraine and Georgia on the grounds of preventing NATO and EU expansion. At the same time, the People's Republic of China cannot hide its indignation when, for example, the US deploys the THAAD anti-missile system in South Korea. (Mullany & Buckley, 2017)

Central Asia, a region comprised of 5 post-soviet republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, is considered as a sphere of influence by both Great Powers, Russia and China. That gives us the expectation that the region must be a ground of competition between Moscow and Beijing. Nonetheless, the reality is different. In 2019 the news spread that China would open a military base in former member-state of the USSR - Tajikistan. (moderndiplomacy, 2019) In 2022 Russia, by the name of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), deployed 2500 troops on the territory of Kazakhstan. (REUTERS, 2022) The two sides haven't shown any sign of resentment about each other's actions. This is because for more than two decades China and Russia have been cooperating/co-existing in this region under the framework of what the Chinese side called "the Central Asian Division of Labor". This entails Russia being the region's security provider, while Beijing is an economic one. (Christoffersen, 2022)

The paper aims to explain the nature of China's and Russia's relations in Central Asia. Therefore, it primarily will portray how are Russia and China cooperating/co-existing in Central Asia. This will be done by separately showing Russia's and China's roles in the region. The second part of the article will be dedicated to finding the determining factors of the current Central Asian order and answering the main research question - „Why are China and Russia cooperating in Central Asia when according to existing practices they should be competing with each other ?"

It is a rare case when two big and belligerent states in the international arena make a significant compromise with each other and create a common order. The analysis of this order will be interesting, for the decision-makers of the actors operating in the region, as well as for the studies related to the politics of the great powers, regional studies, policy studies of China, Russia or the Central Asian Republics. Although the academic literature about China's and Russia's relations in Central Asia exists, it is mostly descriptive. Hence, examining the determining factors of the nature of these relations will contribute to a better understanding of this particular case of international relations.

Methodology

The paper is based on qualitative research methods. Various academic articles, documentary-analytical material, speeches of officials, official state documents, documents of international organizations and news articles have been analyzed. The first part of the work is devoted to separately portraying the influence of China and Russia in Central Asia. By showing Beijing's role as the region's economic dominator and Moscow's role as a security provider, the nature of the Central Asian is drawn. The

second part of the article explores the factors that lead to this order and the harmonious coexistence of China and Russia in the region. The analysis is done on the third level by focusing on the distribution of power between global actors in the international system and the norms of the relations between them.

China's role in Central Asian Republics

In the „division of labor between Russia and China, Beijing has the role of ensuring an economic order in the region. Its attention towards Central Asia dates from the beginning of the independence of five central Asian republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. China's main goal was and to this day remains to secure its border and avoid the spillover of the Central Asian instability in the Chinese western regions, especially in Xinjiang. (YAU, 2022, p. 4)

Since the late 1980s, China had already been interested in economic circles from Xinjiang through Central Asia to the Middle East. In 2010 PLA general Liu Yazhou described the region as „the thickest piece of cake given to Chinese by the heavens,“ symbolizing the country's special interest in the region's economic field. (Christoffersen, 2022) In 2000s Beijing starts investing in Central Asian countries. Both parties benefited from the cooperation. After the fall of the USSR Central Asian Republics suffered economically. The political system of each republic did not attract an abundance of western investment. Under the necessity of reducing a historical dependence on Russia, the five needed an investor who would assist despite their attitude towards democracy and human rights. This created an excellent climate for cooperation with Beijing. The People's Republic of China specializes in providing easier financial assistance to authoritarian states and as a result gaining influence over them. Moreover, in the 2000s because of the fast-growing economy, China's energy demand was increasing at a high rate. Central Asia is one of the richest regions in mineral and energy resources, therefore Beijing's interest towards its neighbouring region naturally grew.

One of the most important means for China to increase its economic influence in the region became the Belt and Road initiative. It was in Astana, the capital of Kazakhstan where Xi Jinping first time publicly talked about the massive project. Precisely under the BRI, massive amounts of investments and loans have been issued. China is financing all kinds of infrastructure: roads, highways, railways, etc. (Christoffersen, 2022)

Consequently, today China is the region's main investor and creditor. For 2020 it had allocated 40 billion dollars in investment in Central Asia. (Kumenov, 2022). Moreover, Chinese debt amounts to 30.5% of Kyrgyzstan's GDP, 16,1% of Tajikistan's, and 7.5% of Uzbekistan's GDP. (Sidana, 2022)

China has significantly benefited from engaging in Central Asia. Currently, 42% of China's total gas import, which amounts to 15% of its total demand, comes from Central Asia. (eurasianet, 2021) Turkmenistan is selling its natural gas below the market price. Kazakhstan is having a low-profile regarding China's increased repressive actions against people in Xinjiang, a region which, a part of Turkic-speaking Uighurs, is home to 1.6 million ethnic Kazakhs. (Svoboda, 2021)

China is gaining the right to exploit natural resources in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, as those two countries are the two poorest in the region and the most dependent on Chinese debt. Today approximately 80% of Tajik gold deposits are under the control of Chinese enterprises. (Altynbayev, Citizens, environment suffer from Chinese gold mining in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, 2022) According to Kasybek Jolchuyev, a Bishkek-based security analyst Tajikistan's reluctance to join the Russian-led Eurasian Economic Union must also be explained by Chinese influence. (Altynbayev, 2021) Furthermore, in 2011 Tajik parliament ratified a new protocol on border delimitation handing over to China more than 1000 square kilometres in Pamir Mountains range. (Dzamukashvili, 2022)

Besides economics, China is working on its soft power in Central Asia. It is financing schools and Confucius institutes to teach the Chinese language. Beijing also funds exchange students from the region to Chinese Universities, which gained more popularity among locals, compared to Russian educational institutions. In 2013 Xi Jinping proposed a ten-year educational plan for Shanghai Cooperation Organisation member countries among which four are Central Asian republics. In 2016 more than 22,000 students from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were studying in China. (JIANG, 2021)

China's limited influence in the security sphere of Central Asia

China's growing economy and power has made the Asian Giant more involved in the security sphere in the region. But until today Chinese have been subtle, fearing spoiling the relations with Russia over this matter. Their every action concerning the military in the region is done in three ways - either with the cooperation with Moscow; solely for securing Chinese western borders; or touching just minor issues.

From the 1990s China's main instrument which was concerned with Central Asia's security was the Shanghai Five. It was established in 1996 by China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. Hence, Beijing and Moscow cooperated within this organization. Moreover, the organization didn't pose significant importance for Central Asia's security, as the Shanghai Five aims for military and economic cooperation; intelligence sharing and joint infrastructure projects among member states. The organization is nowhere close to a military alliance like Russia's CSTO. the Shanghai Five turned into the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the loose body of 8 different including rival states like India on the one hand and China and Pakistan on the other. Due to the inclusion of such different actors the functionality and the importance of the organization are questionable. (the SCO, n.d.)

In the military and security sphere, Beijing has always shown cautiousness. It has limited the number of military bases in the world, but one of them was recently opened in Central Asia, Tajikistan. That information was confirmed in 2019. The base at first was used by joint forces of both countries, yet some reports are indicating that after the secret talks, Tajikistan agreed to hand the military base to the Chinese. In late 2021 it became known that Asian Giant would finance the building of another military facility in the Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous province, Tajikistan. Badakhshan's base will have the

personnel of Tajikistan's Rapid Reaction Group (Special Forces). But, as it was in the first case, Beijing thanks to Tajikistan's dependence on its debt, can obtain control of the second military facility as well.

Thus, China's growing footprint in the security sphere of Central Asia is undeniable. However, Xi Jinping's government still tries to leave the impression to Moscow that it is only interested in ensuring the security of Chinese frontiers. Both military bases are at the border with Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Building the second facility is largely motivated by the Taliban's return to power and the threat of spilling over the chaos in Chinese territory. That region is momentous for Beijing as Turkmenistan-China natural gas pipeline goes by. (Avdaliani, 2022) So far, no denouncement or negative statement has been made by the Russian side about the Chinese military bases in Tajikistan.

The increase of Chinese armament in Central Asia is equally noteworthy. During the years 2010-2014, Beijing accounted for only 1,5% of the region's military equipment. Today, that figure has grown to 18%. (Avdaliani, 2022)

Russia's role in Central Asian Republics

Russia has historically dominated Central Asia. It conquered the whole region by the 19th century and managed to maintain it until the dissolution of the Soviet Union. However, this domination ended and currently, Russia is only holding the security provider role. Similarly, as in China's case, roles aren't rigid and sometimes Russia engages in the economic dimension. The main instrument for Moscow to play its part in the security sphere is the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), while on the economic field, the Eurasian Economic Union stands out.

Collective Security Treaty Organization and Central Asia

The Collective Security Treaty Organization is a military alliance, which alongside Russia, Armenia and Belarus, involves three Central Asian republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The organization's origins date to 1992 when Russia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan signed the Collective Security Treaty. It was an attempt of Moscow to establish a similar body to Warsaw Pact (WP). While the treaty's 4th article was consisting of mutual defense obligation, members' commitment was shaky, and it lacked the ideological cohesion that underpinned WP. (the CSTO, 2022)

In 2002 original members of the CSTO, minus Uzbekistan, plus Belarus, established the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Unlike its predecessor, it is a full-blown military organization. CSTO involves military cooperation and intelligence sharing, regular joint exercises and prohibits its members to join any other security alliance, making them interdependent on one another for security guarantees. No CSTO member can accept a military presence from a third country without the consent of all its members (primarily Russia). In 2007 the CSTO Created the Peace Keeping Force of 3600 troops. Two

years later Rapid Reaction Force was created, which according to the organization includes 20 000 elite personnel on high alert. (the CSTO, 2022)

The Collective Security Treaty Organization's and therefore Russia's role as a security provider in Central Asia has been downgraded due to the CSTO's inaction. It has twice refused its members' call for triggering article 4, firstly in 2010 during ethnic unrest in Kyrgyzstan and then in 2021 when Armenia accused Azerbaijan of attacking its territory a year after Baku's victory in the second Nagorno Karabakh War. (Reuters, 2010) (Mejlumyan, 2022) CSTO members didn't applaud Russia's aggression against Georgia and Ukraine either. Consequently, in recent years the future of CSTO's existence seemed to be under question.

Moscow's comeback in the region as a security provider took place in January 2022. After the huge unrest due to the 140% price rise of LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) chaos has engulfed large cities in Kazakhstan. President Tokayev triggered article 4 of the CSTO, seeing „foreign powers“ behind the protests. For the first time in its existence, the Russian-led CSTO acted and deployed 2500 troops in Kazakhstan's principal buildings. (REUTERS, 2022) Vladimir Putin claimed victory in defending Kazakhstan from what he described as a foreign-backed terrorist uprising. (REUTERS, 2022)

Central Asia - part of the great power politics

In an ideal case, both China and Russia would love to have a monopoly of influence over Central Asian republics. However, the distribution of power between global actors: China, Russia and the US, as well as existing norms of animosity and partnership between them, led to the current Central Asian order. Since the end of the cold war, the United States has emerged as by far the strongest state in the world, constructing a unipolar international order. Vladimir Putin's Russia and president Xi Jinping's China have shown intolerance to this order and the necessity of a Russo-Chinese partnership to reconstruct the norms of the system. It is exactly this global competition against the US, that forces Moscow and Beijing to close their eyes on Central Asian inconvenience.

The USA's unipolarity

Since the US beat its main competitor the USSR, until middle the 2010s the world was unipolar, with the USA having no peer competitor. Even in 2021, Washington spent 801 USD on the military, more than China, India, the UK, Russia, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Japan and South Korea Combined. (SIPRI, 2022) Whereas, in terms of the size of the economy, by the year 2012, when Xi Jinping became the president of the PRC, the US's GDP was still twice bigger the second economy in the world – China. (The World Bank, 2023)

During the unipolar moment, the US and its allies managed to solidify liberal international order. They did so by fulfilling three main tasks. First, Expanding or creating the institutions that made up the

western international order. NATO and the European Union included former members of the communist USSR and Yugoslavia. The US even managed to incorporate China and Russia into the World Trade Organization (WTO), The World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The second task was promoting maximized free trade and fostering unfettered capital markets. China's and Russia's accession into the above-mentioned US-led financial institutions symbolizes America's success in fulfilling this objective. Third, Washington was dedicated to promoting liberal democracies around the world. According to Freedom House, by 1986 34% of countries in the world were democracies. In 2006 that figure had grown to 41%. However, the third task has on numerous occasions led to unsuccessful military interventions or state building, Iraq, Syria and Libya being the clearest examples. Hence, USA's liberal International Order didn't leave every actor satisfied. Along with other regional actors, Russia and China started opposing US's hegemony as soon as they (re)gained power. (Mearsheimer, 2019, pp. 21-30)

Russia and China as revisionists

Russia's perspective

Russian policymakers have never liked the USA's lead. By the 1990s, weakened Russia had already expressed its concerns about the Enlargement of NATO and the EU, as well as the West's intervention in Balkan conflicts. As Moscow slowly regained power and left the economic collapse behind, its rhetoric became more and more hostile towards the liberal international order and soon revisionist actions followed. (Clunan, 2018, pp. 49-51)

In 2007 during Munich Security Conference Vladimir Putin openly criticized unipolarity and emphasized that Russia was viewing it as a threat. He described unipolarity as the state when there's only „*one center of authority, one center of force, one center of decision making.*“ Referring to the US's intervention in Balkan conflicts and Iraq, Putin pointed out that this order leads to uncontained hyper use of military force, which makes unipolarity pernicious for everyone in the system. *“This is extremely dangerous. It results in the fact that no one feels safe. I want to emphasise this — no one feels safe!”*-declared the Russian president. Afterwards, he added how Russia was concerned about NATO's eastward enlargement. (Putin, 2007)

Putin's speech at the Munich Security Conference predicted and symbolized Russia's fight against the Liberal International Order for the following sixteen years. Kremlin: has tried to disrupt the rule-based International System; Promoted alternative, anti-western discourse; and imposed its own norms on the regions where it was feasible, Central Asia being one of the examples. Russia violated the territorial integrity of Georgia and Ukraine in 2008 and 2014. Putin promoted Russian TV Channels Russia Today and Sputnik around the world to portray the alternative view and established institutions like Eurasian Economic Union to solidify its influence over regions it considered as „near abroad.“ In February 2022 it invaded Ukraine and launched the biggest war on the European continent after World War Two. Those aggressions are revisionist acts by their nature, as Kremlin not only violated international law but also referred to those acts as means combat unipolarity by stopping NATO from „expanding. “

Still being significantly inferior to US's power, Moscow needed an ally to combat unipolarity. This ally turned out to be China, another global power, which rose largely thanks to integrating into the Liberal International Order, and which under the rule of President Xi Jinping became more and more assertive in the foreign policy field.

China's perspective

For a long time, Washington has aspired to integrate China into the globalized international order, hoping that economic interdependence would eventually lead to PRC's democratization. This did not happen. On the contrary, with huge demographic protentional and average economic growth of ten percent for decades, China's rise, disruption of unipolar power distribution and dispute with the US became just a matter of time.

In 2001 the year, when China joined WTO, the US's GDP was ten times bigger than China's. Twenty years later, in 2021, China's economy had approximately 80% of the size of the USA GDP. (The World Bank, 2023) This economic growth has been proportionally correlated to Chinese military expenditure. Currently Asian Giant spends 229 billion USD on defense, being the second in that figure, after the USA's 767 billion USD. (SIPRI, 2022)

The change in the distribution of power among global actors has led to the commencement of rivalry between the US and China. Chinese President Xi Jinping not only became the strongest leader of the PRC after Mao Zedong but also launched aggressive foreign policy against Washington and its Asian allies. China prematurely took over control of Hong Kong by passing new national security law. (Hernández, 2020) It bolstered its claims in the South China sea and on Japanese-controlled Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. (South China Morning Post, 2020) (The Japan times, 2020) Under Xi's governance China has had serious border clashes with another US ally in the Region – India. (Mishra, 2020) Perhaps, the watershed issue in the US-China relations is Taiwan. With more and more pressure from the Chinese side and US's commitment to defending the island, tensions between great power are the most likely to escalate on this matter.

Washington, on the other hand, in the last two National Security Strategies, qualifies China (as well as Russia) as the revisionist power. (The White House, 2017) (The White House, 2022) On May 26, 2022, The Secretary of state Antony Blinken in a historic address to George Washington University called China the most serious long-term challenge to the international order. (Blinken, 2022) Besides, the Biden administration has continued Trump's non-friendly policy towards China, once again confirming that Beijing represents a huge threat to the US-led order.

Russia's and China's partnership – impact on Central Asia

Hence, as seen above China and Russia are fighting on one side. They are situational partners against the unipolar system and trying to reconstruct multipolar international order. Even though the relations are asymmetrical, and China has an upper hand over Russia, the two countries still provide an important

value to each other. If Beijing and Moscow were to spoil relations on the Central Asian matter, potential losses for both would outweigh the potential gains.

As mentioned, China and Russia are unequal partners. Moscow depends on China much more than vice versa. For example, in 2021, a year before the invasion of Ukraine, China was already the top trading partner for Russia after the EU. For China, on the other hand, Russia was the fourteenth. Economic dependence is expected to further grow in the face of western sanctions on Russia. However, the disparity is balanced by Russian energy supplies to enormous Chinese demand. In 2021 16 percent of Beijing's crude oil imports, 15 percent of its total coal imports and 10 percent of its natural gas imports came from Russia.

Other fields, where China and Russia are cooperating are diplomacy and military. Moscow and Beijing go hand in hand at the UN Security Council. Whereas on the military level, even though Russia no longer is major arms supplier for China, they frequently conduct joint military exercises. Those drills primarily are intended to showcase to the west Moscow's and Beijing's opposition towards liberal international order. Furthermore, the exercises provide additional value for the Chinese, as they lack real-life combat experience, something that Russians can share as they have an abundance of it. (Maizland, 2022)

Central Asia can be seen as an example of an alternative system of the liberal order, led by Russia and China. Common positioning against the west, and economic, military and diplomatic interdependence lead to Moscow's and Beijing's acceptance of peaceful coexistence in the region and cooperation in constructing an order of Central Asia. This, however, doesn't mean that the nature of those great powers has changed. The two, perhaps still dream of solely dominating the region, which can be the source of a dispute in case of change in the distribution of power in the world or in the existing norms between global actors: Russia, China and the US.

Conclusion

Five Central Asian Republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, host a regional order led by two great powers – China and Russia. Beijing ensures economic stability in the region by investing and providing loans. The Belt and Road Initiative has been the main framework of these operations. In exchange, China has access the Central Asian natural resources and secures its western borders from instability.

Russia, on the other hand, is responsible for the security of Central Asia. It leads a military alliance the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which unites three Central Asian republics: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan under the mutual defense obligation. Throughout the years, due to CSTO's inaction, Russia's role as a security provider has been downgraded, however, Moscow made its comeback in January 2022 by helping Kazakh president Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to disperse the anti-governmental protests.

Those roles are not strict, and two countries frequently cross the boundaries of other's areas of action. For instance, China has built two military facilities in Tajikistan and its share in arms supply to Central Asian republics has grown in recent years. Russia on the other hand through the Eurasian Economic Union tries to influence Kazakhstan's and Kyrgyzstan's economies.

Both Russia and China do not tolerate other powers growing influence in their neighboring regions. However, this doesn't create animosity between the two in Central Asia. At this moment of history Moscow and Beijing are allies in a common battle. They are revisionist states opposing the US-led international order, which has been established in a post-cold war unipolar world. Russia and China provide meaningful diplomatic, economic and military value to each other and even if the two sides are not happy by seeing each other's growing influence in Central Asia, worsening the relations on this matter is untimely.

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