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**SINO-RUSSIAN COOPERATION OVER THE
EURASIAN CHESSBOARD: LIMITS AND
CHALLENGES**

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Master's Thesis

Supervisor

Asst. Prof. Dr. Akif Bahadır KAYNAK

Istanbul, 2023

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ABSTRACT

SINO-RUSSIAN COOPERATION OVER THE EURASIAN CHESSBOARD: LIMITS AND CHALLENGES

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The current thesis aims at identifying the nature of the current Sino-Russian relations in terms of economic and political cooperation over the Eurasian region, as well as the extent to which the impact of USA can affect these relations; in order to highlight the most prominent limits and challenges that obstruct the development of these relations in the future. the study resorted to depending on qualitative research and document analysis as the main research methodology and research instrument respectively, using a plethora of studies, reports, and publications that can help achieve the research aim and objectives. The study findings indicated that both China and Russia are characterized by political and economic limitations, respectively, that make each one of them have an advantage over the other, which might cause future cooperation initiatives to be hindered.

Moreover, the study also indicated that USA's sanctions can challenge China's and Russia's leaders attempts to enhance Sino-Russian economic cooperation in the future, given the fact that USA looks forward to gaining a foothold in the Eurasian region by forming as many alliances as possible.

Eventually, the study recommends examining the nature of Sino-American and Russo-American relations and studying the impact of other global political and economic conglomerates; such as the EU and GCC on Sino-Russian relations along with the US's.

Keywords: Sino-Russian Relations, Cold War, Belt and Road Initiative, Eurasian Economic Union, Economic Sanctions.



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ABBREVIATIONS

AIIB	:	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
ASEAN	:	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRI	:	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	:	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CIIS	:	China Institute of International Studies
CIS	:	Commonwealth of Independent States
CNPC	:	China National Petroleum Corporation
CRI	:	China, Russia, India
CSTO	:	Collective Security Treaty Organization
CU	:	Custom Union
EEU	:	Eurasian Economic Union
EEC	:	Eurasian Economic Community
ESPO	:	East Siberia-Pacific Ocean
EU	:	European Union
FTA	:	Free Trade Agreement
MSR	:	Maritime Silk Road
NPC	:	National People's Congress
NS2	:	Nord Stream 2
PFD	:	Power Formation and Distribution
PPCC	:	People's Political Consultative Conference

PRC : People's Republic of China

RCEP : Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership

SCO : Shanghai Cooperation Organization

TSP : Tiananmen Square Protest

USSR : Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

SCS : South China Sea



1. INTRODUCTION

Eurasian integration in all its contexts is currently driven by China and Russia. Common interests in the region are resulting in cooperation between China and Russia, in almost all aspects that are significant for determining relations. Russia has its preferences that are essentially driven by its need to build its Asian region along with expanding up to the Asian Pacific region while pursuing its “pivot to Asia” policy. This emphasis on building trust and cooperation is also driven by the worsened relationship between Russia and China with the west. For Russia, relations worsened in the aftermath of the Crimean Annexation. Like Russia, China has its interests that are not only Eurasian-specific but beyond that as well. Using Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to reach out to the European markets and to obtain raw materials, Eurasian cooperation is inevitable for China. These geopolitical and economic interests have compelled China towards cooperation. American efforts to halt their expansion to these markets are being countered by their individual and collective interaction to extend their sphere of influence.

The cooperation between Russia and China is not only driven by their economic, regional, strategic, political, and historical interests but also by the compulsion coming from the US and its allies. In the strategy policy of 2017 and then in recent Indo-Pacific Policy, China and Russia are pivoted as the major global challenge and adversary for the US rather than Terrorism around the world. This was not only a change in documents but practically witnessed in policies and alliances as well. The fear of sanctions and bloc politics have been bringing China and Russia closer to each other rather than being reliant on west-controlled organizations and systems are devising such policies that can provide some sort of necessary buffer in case of the American effort to their presence and role in the international banking system is somehow shifted to other means other than the SWIFT banking system. The open trade war launched against China has made it compulsory to devise diverse and multidimensional strategies. All these policies lead to the point that American politics are drawing distinct lines between Asia and Russia. This political apartheid is compelling China and Russia to converge their interests, not only for the regional interest but their global ambitions too. This is the reason that Putin stated that there is "no limit" to the partnership between Russia and China (Lukin, 2020).

Russia has a historical relationship with the Eurasian states, while China is building up trust and confidence by offering cordial and amicable relations. This combination of Russia and China has made them a formidable alliance in Eurasia. Both these states have their flagship economic and infrastructural projects which include the Chinese Silk Road (Belt and Road initiative) and the Russian Eurasian Economic Union. These are some of the aspects that have compelled them to cooperate in the region, or it may be called as Sino-Russian Rapprochement, essentially in the context of the positive-sum game between them (China,22).

The cooperation between China and Russia is on a smooth rising trajectory, especially in the aftermath of the cold war. However, this cooperation has certain limits too, which can be considered a challenge. Despite all these aspects of cooperation, there is another side of the picture too which shows that cooperation in Eurasia has certain limitations which are fundamentally driven by economic, political, strategic, and realist approaches after which conflict or divergence of interests is somehow inevitable.

First and foremost is the American factor. US geopolitical thinking regarding the Eurasian region is essentially embedded in the idea of preventing the rise of any state in this region with an exponential advantage over other states. This notion coincides with John J Mearsheimer view when he stated that regional hegemony is the fundamental and necessary requirement to achieving global hegemony (Mearsheimer, 2006). The disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, delayed an imminent threat to the US, in the context of a single major threat to Asians. However, the fear of coalition remained in their strategic calculation and the same is happening with the partnership of China and Russia. American interests would be highly at stake if this cooperation continues. The US is not only focusing merely on breaking or halting their cooperation but by building trust and interdependence with other states of Eurasia. It might not be wrong to state that the containment that had been used by USA against Russia is now for China as well. Russia and China are viewed and strategized through the Eurasian policy, either collectively or separately in European and Asian policies. The nature of resistance that Russia and China are facing is not linear, and it includes some economic and strategic challenges. Considering the multipronged policies and alliances, American interests are a major challenge to Greater Eurasian cooperation. In strategic calculations, military bases that the US has in the region can pose a serious challenge to

China and Russia. This military presence is almost encircling these Asian big powers, even the former Soviet states are not immune to the presence of the essence of military presence. The Russian and Chinese policy of ensuring a buffer area between them and the aggressor is somehow at stake, and this is irking them (Berryman, 2007). Preserving the breach of territorial sovereignty of the allied states would remain a major challenge.

Other than challenges posed by outside factors, mutual history of mistrust can also hinder their prospects. China remained the Asian economic centre for centuries before the “Century of Humiliation”. On the other hand, Tsarist Russia used to be known for having a formidable force for a very long time. Considering their cherished past, the idea that Francis Fukuyama presented the idea of “Thymos” i.e., Recognition of dignity is the major driving force. Search of identity and then its preservation is the driving force along with economic interests (Fukuyama, 2018). Without considering this aspect of Thymos, future prospects cannot be assessed objectively. Cooperation has a certain limit too between states, as economic and political convergence has a certain saturation point. That saturation point can only be avoided when tenets of identity are identical. In the use of China and Russia, this identical aspect of identity is not quite encouraging. Chinese Rise at a greater pace can be a serious point of concern for the Russians. Cooperation between the states and every state wants to have its maximum share in the redistribution of power and this quest can be an element of mistrust and rivalry (Karaganov, 2018). Maximization of interest is the core concern of every state and this is the base for the divergence of interests and an imminent threat to the idea of the greater Eurasian Community.

Eurasian cooperation will not be like a conveyer-belt mechanism; rather projection is that their relations would be quite irregular. This tug-of-war is multidimensional and cannot be managed effectively by simply looking at the brighter side of the picture and undermining these flaws and potential mistrust-triggering factors. This is least required to believe in the idea of “all good” when such challenges and limitations are posed by regional and global competition. Rather than a mere focus on cooperation, it is imperative to understand and resolve their limits and challenges, otherwise, the vision of these two states in Eurasia might have to face some serious setbacks. Eurasia is going to the chessboard of international politics in the near future and hence this study is pertinent to understand the probable challenges and limitations. This event in this region would be like spill-over effect for other

regions of the world too. So, any event that unfolds in this region needs to be evaluated and assessed with a lens of its international implications.

1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The current thesis attempts to provide a comprehensive elucidation regarding the Sino-Russian relations, by utilizing the scope of prominent international relations theories. However, some theories prove to be less effective than others, and can be even rendered obsolete, due to the fact that their principles and propositions do not apply to the Sino-Russian relations.

For instance, Eder (2014) argues that liberalism cannot be used as an effective theory of international relations that can help explain the complex Sino-Russian relations. He elaborates on this notion by outlining this complex relationship by stating a few decisive examples that reflect a few points of misunderstanding between the two countries; including China's expansionary ambitions and investment activities within Central Asia and the Caspian region respectively, and Putin's decision to postpone the building of the Russia-China pipeline. This proves a lack of full cohesive convergence between Russia and China and indicates the fact that liberalism cannot be used as an effective theory to explaining-Russian relations.

This was confirmed by Mustafić & Preljević (2017, P. 61-62) who stated that liberalism is not considered an appropriate theory that can be used to explain the dynamic and complex; because both Russia and China can support one another but still consider each other competitors with regard about. In other words, certain regions in the world can bring them together, whereas other spots can spur a conflict between them. Therefore, liberalism does not apply to the Sino-Russian relations that are still characterized by a considerable level of competition and conflict, which curtails the chances of a compromise to commence between them Moreover, Lubina (2017) further elaborates on the idea that liberalism does not apply to Sino-Russian relations by indicating that although both Russia's and China's policymakers might use certain liberally-driven phrases within their political discourse; such as "mutual benefits" and/or "win-win situations", they still tend to refrain from integrating the liberal doctrine into the national political approach, as they refuse to adopt the ideas of democratization and globalization. As a result, liberalism does not have the opportunity to

explain the manner through which they construct their political approaches and relations with each other. Lubina also proposes the possibility to use realism as a replacement for liberalism.

Yoder (2020, P. 752) points out that proponents of liberalism fail to offer an elucidation of the conflicting relationship between Russia and China. On the one hand, the economic convergence by which Sino-Russian relations are characterized is considered meagre at best, whereas on the other hand, they still cooperate in increasing their bilateral institutionalization initiatives and refrain from merging into the West, given the fact that this merger and less solidified Sino-Russian bilateral relations were sort of expected by liberals to occur in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union. However, this has not been the case at all for both Russia and China. This sense of contradiction makes liberals a bit puzzled and unable to find a clear explanation for it.

These shortcomings allow other international relations theories, such as realism, to be utilized to offer an explanation for Sino-Russian relations. Nevertheless, liberalism can still be implemented, to some extent, to define Sino-Russian relations only when they overlap with the interests of another country, the US. From a liberal standpoint, the USA's attempts to disseminate democracy and establish the ideas of liberalism amongst various nations after the collapse of the Soviet Union slowly but surely prompted both Russia and China to raise the levels of their political cooperation to withstand the US. Prevalence in the East and deter its democratic ideologies that threaten their national identities (Wenzhao & Shengwei, 2020, P. 19).

Thus, it can be indicated that USA serves as a catalyst that accelerated the limited Sino-Russian convergence on political levels, and this is the only situation where liberalism can, partially, come into play. This indicates that realism alone cannot be used to explain Sino-Russian relations and it still depends on the perspective of liberalism to identify the external factors that influence these relations between Russia and China (Wenzhao & Shengwei, 2020, P. 19).

This is where neo-realism comes into play, and the reason why it can be utilized for the current thesis is that it emphasizes both Russia's and China's national interests, and the Western influence, including the US's in particular, that prompts Russia and China to become

more cooperative against the liberal ideology driven by the West and USA that can easily abolish their expansionary aspirations into becoming a leading super-power in the world.

Consequently, the viability of neo-realism was confirmed by those who indicated that neo-realism highlights external environmental factors as influential sets of factors that should be taken into consideration along with the domestic factors, given the fact that these external aspects perform a significant role in shaping and determining the state's foreign policy toward other nations (Toktosunova, 2017, P. 5).

These external factors are referred to as systemic factors that are defined by neo-realism as pressures that prompt a certain country to formulate alliances to deter a series of threats imposed by another state. This is exactly the case with Sino-Russian relations, in the sense that the U.S. policies that neither coincides with its Russian nor Chinese counterparts have eventually encouraged them to solidify their bilateral relations (Kaczmariski, 2022, P. 59). In that case, USA has been considered by both Russia and China as an external factor that made them able to set some of their differences aside to focus on a bigger threat; which is the possibility for their national identity and political structure to be eradicated by the U.S-led Western influence. Furthermore, Both Rashid and Tahir (2021, P. 285) also stated that Russia and China know how to get along and unify their perspectives regarding Central Asia once they start perceiving their relations from domestic, regional, and global perspectives, which can be explained using neo-realism. Additionally, Muzaffar and Khan (2016, P. 154) also resorted to using neo-realism as a theory that can determine the extent to which external political and strategic factors can play a role in the re-shaping of Sino-Russian relations in accordance with their perceptions toward these external factors that affect their objectives and interests.

Nevertheless, neo-realism has been criticized for its negligence of social norms and historical factors by which states are characterized, claiming that the theory did not place enough emphasis on the social aspect of states' perspectives in their attempt to build international relations and maintain their security and survival within the international system. However, neo-realism is still considered a dominating international relations theory, because other theories that addressed these social norms, such as constructivism, were not perfect either in terms of their theoretical capabilities to address international relations (Turgut, 2022, P. 27-28).

Therefore, and based on the aforementioned, that inadequacy of both liberalism and realism to offer a comprehensive explanation for Sino-Russian relations is considered the main problem around which the current research revolves. Accordingly, a compendious international relations theory that maintains the realist theoretical structure while drawing upon liberalism and places enough emphasis on social and historical factors to a certain extent to consider external and strategic factors along with domestic and national interests is required. This requirement reflects the research problem that revolves around the inadequacy of liberalism, and the fact that both neo-realism can be used as an alternative to explain Sino-Russian relations in the Eurasian region.

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Neo-realism has been identified as the theory that is used in the current thesis thanks to its comprehensive insight that provides an understanding of Sino-Russian relations while emphasizing the role of external factors that affect these relations, such as the USA's influence in particular. By applying neo-realism, as the international relations theory of choice, Sino-Russian relations can be analyzed by giving an alternate and comparably more realistic picture of Russian and Chinese cooperation and competition in the Eurasian region (Oatley, 2019).

The founder of neo-realism, Kenneth N. Waltz, maintains that governments are unitary entities that, at the very least, would want to sustain their existence and, at the very worst, would seek to dominate. Those who choose not to help themselves will fail in the international system. The system requires states to exercise all of their power. The states might become more powerful at home and abroad. To balance a stronger state (or perceived danger), they can, for example, domestically develop their military forces while internationally forging partnerships with other countries (Korolev, 2016).

Kenneth N. Waltz is the founder and a most well-known proponent of the neorealist theory. In his key work, "Theory of International Politics," which was published in 1979, he explained its core concepts. Waltz chose to follow an entirely different path than the one by which classical realism is identified. Accordingly, neo-realism directed its attention toward describing international politics in accordance with how states adapt to political environment where several factors influence their relations with other countries. This is because Waltz's

approach was non-ideological in nature as he provided a framework that did not explain foreign policies in terms of authoritative choices made by statesmen, but rather by the adaptive mechanism to changes and influencing factors that arise within the global political sphere (Bessner & Guilhot, 2015, P. 87-88).

This is because using neo-realism as a foundational theory for the current thesis allows the researcher to study the manner through which states interact and build their relations on an international scale, in addition to the strategies they tend to implement to ensure their survival and achieve their political objectives in the long term. Moreover, neo-realism elaborates on the reasons these states choose to adopt certain approaches when they deal with external and domestic factors that influence their relations with other countries (Valléz, 2021, P. 145).

Aside from Waltz, another theorist was responsible for elaborating on the theory of neo-realism by adding a different aspect of it; John Mearsheimer. Consequently, this different aspect formulated by Mearsheimer was called "Offensive Realism", which makes neo-realism a comprehensive theoretical approach that includes both defensive realisms adopted by Waltz, and offensive realism adopted by Mearsheimer (Dirzauskaite & Ilinca, 2017, P. 20). Therefore, it can be indicated that neo-realism is divided into defensive and offensive sub-approaches, which can be outlined as follows:

Defensive Realism Waltz's defensive realism is considered the foundational approach of neo-realism, and it emphasizes the state-centric approach of countries that manage to build international relations within the global political sphere, given the fact that these relations are based on how the international system is structured and the capabilities amongst states are distributed. Defensive realism also considers the balance of power, which can be multi-polar or bipolar, as the central focus around which the international system revolves (Pashakhanlou, 2014, P. 303).

Moreover, defensive realism attempts to study the decisions and actions made and taken by different states to ensure their security, safety, and survival amid an anarchic system. It is worth noting, however, that defensive realism does not consider states as power-seeking political agents who attempt to extend their political hegemony or maximize their dominance over other states, and that is because the theory argues that states' relations always seem to

gravitate toward maintaining balance of power given the fact that each state's efforts that are exerted to achieve this objective are dictated and influenced by several external influences that arise within the anarchic international system (Chen, 2013, P. 45).

Offensive Realism: Unlike defensive realism, offensive realism addresses the manner through which states are eager to maintain their regional dominance and global status by using their political and military strength to maximize their powers and hegemony over other states. Therefore, offensive realism can be considered proactive rather than reactive, as states act first to dictate and shape the political environment, instead of being in a defensive position where they only react to the factors that might be threatening their security (Weisko, 2019, P. 204).

To take it a step further, not only does offensive realism ensure the security and survival of countries by allowing them to direct their political powers to maximize their hegemony, but it is also concerned with the eagerness to dominate the whole international system and become the sole dictating agent of how politics and foreign relations are formulated within in. This is because, unlike defensive realism, offensive realism's main objective is to reflect states' ambitions to become a dominating super-power at the end of the conflict arising against other states within the international system (Yazid, 2021, P. 936).

According to the information provided above, it seems that, despite the criticism, neo-realism is still the most viable theory that can be used to study the central issue at hand in the current thesis; thanks to the fact that it involves domestic and international aspects of foreign policies, and explains the manner through which states use either defensive or offensive measures to maintain their security or maximize their hegemony.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

The current thesis revolves around one central research question that reflects the main aim of the research- "What is the reality of Sino-Russian relations within the Eurasian region?" This question will be answered by using the theoretical and methodological aspects of the current study as tools that further address three secondary questions that can in turn be outlined as follow:

- a. What are the major limitations and challenges that China and Russia would face in their Eurasian cooperation?
- b. How American interests are halted by Sino-Russian Cooperation in Eurasian Region which compels the US to act to limit their influence?
- c. Will the Chinese rise in the Eurasian and Greater Eurasian region trigger Russia's regional sensitivities?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The current study aims to identify the extent to which Sino-Russian relations are formulated within the Eurasian region, provided that this aim entails the following objectives:

- a. Pinpointing the major limitations and challenges that hinder the possibility to establish efficient cooperation between Russia and China in Eurasia.
- b. Determining the manner through which Sino-Russian relations compel the USA to act to limit their influence.
- c. Determining whether or not the rise of China as a regional power in the Eurasian and Greater Eurasian region will trigger Russia's regional sensitivities.

1.5 HYPOTHESIS

Sino-Russian cooperation in the Eurasian region would continue to grow in future as well but it would not be a smooth sailing, since their collaboration would also be impacted by historical events and global political agendas. Therefore, the current thesis hypothesizes that although Sino-Russian relations are determined by historical and domestic events and factors, they are still influenced by external factors within the international system; such as USA in particular. These factors must be highlighted in order to determine their cooperation against these factors, and each country's defensive or offensive stance to deal with them.

1.6 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Sino-Russian cooperation in Eurasian region has increased immensely in the aftermath of cold war. Both sides seek to preserve their interest in the region and hence this nature of

interaction has resulted in ample available literature on this topic. Below-mentioned is the literature review that would help in understanding major themes and ideas on this topic, which include diverse interpretations.

Andrew Kuchin has emphasized in his work titled as “*The Emerging Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership and Eurasian Security*” that the cooperation between China and Russia in late 1990s was taken sceptically because apparently there were limited points of convergence between them. Russia and the US already established a strategic cooperation pact in 1992. However, the author has accentuated on the point that the convergence of interests, especially in context of national interest drove them towards this cooperation. At the same time, hostile strategic policies of the US and its European allies compelled rather helped to expedite their strategic partnership along with Eurasian security, despite the state of standoff between Russia and China in 1980s (Kuchin & Memo, 1997). The fundamental clause that brought them into close partnership was the anti-hegemony clause which argues for collective gains of regional powers rather than the primacy of interest of western powers. In the first place, their cooperation was more of a political nature than strategic, but with time and evolving regional and global dynamics, this equation has altered significantly.

According to a research by Wang Li, Zhou Dongchen, and Anna Kolotova, the strategic alliance between China and Russia has apparently achieved its pinnacle in recent years (Wang Li, 2020). The comprehensive strategic partnership of collaboration between China and Russia has progressed, the two presidents of state said in a joint statement. Every country has worked hard to create its own since 1992, when the globe entered the post-Soviet period with all of its many uncertainties and issues. China and Russia are hardly the only exceptions. Following consultation, they resolved to cooperate in order to create a multi-polar international order as well as regional peace and stability (Wang Li, 2020).

No one or any force, according to the Russian side, can erode the strategic trust between Moscow and Beijing as long as the two Eurasian heavyweights are free to keep improving their collaboration inside the multilateral framework. Their mutual trust has grown, and as a result, their relationships are stronger than ever. Now that they are remerging as significant economic and military forces, Russia and China are anticipated to become more active in global affairs. China and Russia's collaboration under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is one such example.

Serafettin Yilmaz and Liu Changming have primarily relied on the Eurasian partnership between these two Asian regional powers from the lens of Belt and Road Initiative of China, in their work “Remaking Eurasia: the Belt and Road Initiative and China-Russia strategic partnership”. China and Russia's partnership is sparked by the BRI. Along with China and Russia, this also pulls together the strategic alliance and the nearby countries (Changming, 2020).

There are multiple challenges and opportunities, linked to BRI and for them rational strategies and impact should be assessed with long term implications. The authors have taken a stance that although BRI is essentially an economic flagship project but the outcomes are diverse, as it encompasses economic and political aspects. For instance, in economic terms, it would help to ensure improved infrastructure and better connectivity and eventually it would assist in strengthened amicable interaction with cultural ties. On the political side, institutionalized and harmonious regional coexistence would be ensured. The combination of these two major paradigms would help to mitigate the threats of transcontinental extremism and terrorism too (Changming, 2020). This combination will have synergic effect that would have positive-sum game effect on the entire Eurasian region too.

“Sino-Russian cooperation as the basis for Greater Eurasia” by Alexander Lukin primarily discussed how these two states have become major forces of Asia, as they both believe in the idea of “pivot to Asia”. Pivot to Asia is manifested by Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. Lukin is of the view that they have common interests in the region which has led to their increased cooperation. Their cooperation has lesser impediments and this smooth sailing would lead to greater plans for the region (Lukin, 2020). Level of interaction would be further intensified; as regional states have their interest in the growing economic interaction.

According to a study, "Sino-Russian reconciliation and Greater Eurasia: From geopolitical pole to world society?" It was said that China and Russia were the main forces behind this expansion. One of China and Russia's most significant recent projects to strengthen institutional, logistical, and economic linkages across various areas of the continent is the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). China and Russia have made significant attempts in recent years to coordinate their regional agendas, despite accusations made by certain experts that these two countries have divergent perspectives on regionalism and the formation of a regional order (Boorman, 1957).

A variety of initiatives aimed at supporting and coordinating the regional projects of the two countries were sparked by a joint declaration made by the presidents of China and Russia on cooperation in coordinating the expansion of the EEU and the Silk Road Economic Belt. The creation of a Greater Eurasian community may very well be the most ambitious step in this process. A unified geo-economic and institutional zone that covers the majority, if not the whole continent, would be created in 2017 according to this proposal and its underlying premise.

Alexander Lukin wrote his paper, titled “Russia, China, and the Emerging Greater Eurasia”. This paper was essentially on those aspects that have resulted in increased cooperation of these two states. The author has pointed out to those aspects that are further intensifying their nature of interaction. Five major variables are outlined by the author that has provided common ground to these states. In the first place, both these states are opposed to the idea of unipolar world that was led by the US (Lukin, 2018).

These states resent to the idea that the global order is led and dictated by the West. Both these states believe that sovereignty must be preserved for the states in the region and the role of outsiders in determining the relationship should be minimized. By hindering the role of outsiders, these two powers of Asia want to ensure that regional conflicts are avoided and resolved amicably. Another important aspect that provides a common ground to both these states is the belief that western values are not universal and not a compulsion for the rest of the world to comply with. This is the reason that Crimean annexation and interventions of Ukraine by Russia are not resented by china.

Paul J.Bolt has argued in this paper, titled “Sino-Russian Relations in a Changing World Order” that the US is now worried about China and Russia working together. China and Russia reject the US-led system of global politics at the same moment (Bolt, 2014). Both these Asian powers have practical considerations that somehow compel them to cooperate. The strategic partnership of these states is sort of reactionary rather than being pro-active. To cater to these challenges in the Eurasian Region, US foreign policy has some serious challenges.

“A China–Russia Condominium over Eurasia” by Nadège Rolland has taken the alternative approach to point out towards the challenges that Russia and China face in their mutual

relations. The author is of the view that their relationship is convenient in façade hiding, as these states have mistrust and suspicious about their future prospects (Rolland, 2019). They have geographical imbalance along with the Russian Bitterness of losing their glorious past. For Russia, to accept the secondary role in Eurasian region would not be an easy pill to swallow. These historically driven fears and limitations would halt their interaction in the future.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research study adopts a qualitative approach; nevertheless, the research will be predominantly qualitative to gain significance from the phenomena and to explain them. Investigative in nature, qualitative research is a process of discovery. To comprehend the political phenomenon, it tries to create broad ideas to grasp the inner workings, causes, reasons, and motives. In order to arrange the growing ideas and thinking processes into a logical whole, it uses both deductive and inductive approaches.

The basis for the investigation of Sino-Russian Cooperation in Eurasia is based on secondary data, books, research journals, policy documents, and news stories. Projections, fears, possibilities the historical aspects are equally important, and they fall effectively under the ambit of qualitative research. Theories, interpretations, and multiple vantage points are taken from the experts and renowned voices of the field. Published materials and academic literature is taken from those publication houses that have expertise along with rigorous research and reviews. The data source is constituted from those sources that are well-reputed on this research area.

1.8 DATA SOURCES

Secondary sources are used mostly for the investigation and information of this thesis. Other than these secondary sources, Russian and Chinese financial offices and their reports would also be used to reiterate the ideas that are emphasized. Research material would not only be taken from Russian and Chinese sources, but as Western sources will also be consulted, so that an alternate perspective, other than Asian interpretation can be used for rigorous research. In the meanwhile, newspaper articles would also be used so that the updated and recent unfolding events can also be incorporated.

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THESIS

The research study comprises multiple chapters. The first chapter give comprehensive background of the problem together with its theoretical explanations, Research methodology, data sources. Moreover, detailed literature review has been discussed in the introductory chapter so that alternative interpretations can also be used.

Chapter one of research study provides a detailed Theoretical background with relevancy to the study. Moreover, it provides the main research methodology and questions that shall be addressed throughout the study.

Chapter two provides the review of literature a genesis of relationship between Sino-soviet in detail. The Sino-Soviet schism was the dissolution of political ties between the Sino-Russia a result of doctrinal differences resulting from their various interpretations and applications of Marxism-Leninism during the Cold War, as well as their respective geopolitical influences. This chapter goes into great depth about these events. It also looks at the energy nexus of Sino-Russia and current developments among relations of both states, and focuses on the contemporary challenges.

Chapter three provides an analytical insight by which the data is collated and evaluated in accordance with the defensive and offensive aspects of neo-realism, so that the research question can be answered. Chapter four is meant to demonstrate and discuss the findings, and verify the viability of the research hypothesis that has been posed in Chapter one, and it also includes the final conclusion that summarizes the approach and findings of the entire study, along with the recommendations and prospects for future researchers.

2. A COMPENDIOUS INSIGHT INTO SINO-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

Both China and Russia are considered two of the most integral nations that are situated within the Eurasian region on political, economic, commercial, and even cultural levels. China is currently expanding its Belt and Road Initiative in that region while Russia maintains its "pivot to Asia." Russia and China's interests conflict in Eurasia, where close relations have resulted in a number of collaborative ventures. The links between the Eurasian Economic Union, the Silk Road Economic Belt Initiative, and the plan to grow or widen the Eurasian Economic Partnership are the most important ones.

To begin, maintaining the independence of other nations in the system is another power balance is attained by combining each state's resources and alliances formed from the pooled state resources. Potential balance eventually arises from this formation against the potential hegemony. This argument may theoretically be used to China and Russia. Both countries should have taken part in a dialogue regarding the current state of hegemony, which is the United States comparing the former to the latter this has not yet happened. On the other side, none have emerged after the end of the Cold War, when the United States became the only superpower. The other countries have legally established counterbalanced alliances with the dominating party, largely because America never shown a strong commitment to them.

One may argue that empirically, countries merely take part in balancing actions against people they see as threats, which is a key tenet of the Stephen Walt presented a threat-balance concept in his work titled "Alliance." Power Formation and Distribution (PFD) Instead than seeing alliances as just a way to achieve power balance in an International system holds that alliances are a result of threats. This would suggest that a state's behaviour in an alliance is determined less by its capacity to employ force and more by how much threat it feels from other nations. When deciding whether another state constitutes a danger, states take into account four elements, which Walt lists: its general strength (size, population, and economic prowess), geographical position its proximity, attacking capabilities, and offensive objectives (Ackerman, 2003).

In a world where economic and environmental elements are increasingly influencing state power in addition to military force, the concept of balance of power should also be

understood more broadly. This section examines the relationship between Russia and China in Eurasia through the prism of the balance of power.

States rapidly realise that maintaining their position of power within the system is the only way to assure their survival. This realisation drives China and Russia to pursue their strategic objectives, increase their political influence, and eventually emerge as the only hegemons in the area (Portyakov, 2018). A key ally and former global power, Russia used to behave more like China's "big brother."

Because of its expanding impact on the international arena, China is now expected to surpass Russia as the top superpower. This position was formerly held by Russia. China, like Russia, depends on its economic ties to Eurasia, but unlike Russia, it also wants to control the region rather than working with it to achieve shared objectives.

An alternate, less utopian (or pessimistic) viewpoint is that the Greater Eurasia concept is an attempt to officially express the unofficial alliance between China and Russia. Since about the 1990s, strategic analyses and realistic evaluations have taken into account the possibility of a Russian-Chinese alliance developing as a counterweight to the United States. The initiatives linked to the Greater Eurasia idea are viewed from a similar perspective. This theory holds that Moscow wants to strengthen its position through a union with China, while Beijing sees the expansion of Eurasian initiatives and layouts as creating a positive political and theoretical framework that empowers it to diversify its economic presence over essentially the entire continent. It was an "axis of convenience," not a long-term fix (Ambrosio, 2017).

Furthermore, political and geopolitical factors supported the development of the policies that gave birth to Greater Eurasia, despite developing economic ties between the European and Asian portions of the Eurasian continent. This is evident from the fact that the concept of Greater Eurasia and some of the underlying policies were created in 2014 and 2015, concurrently with the emergence of the Russian-Western conflict and the escalation of tensions between Beijing and Washington. That so, the absence of a solid political and economic foundation does not imply that the Sino-Russian alliance is insecure or that a Greater Eurasian Community cannot be built (Bedeski, 2012).

It may be argued that the idea that Beijing and Moscow have fundamental differences is fallacious. Even while their interests may differ in certain ways, they are ultimately not at odds. Additionally, they have been increasingly aligned in recent years not just in terms of strategic and foreign policy, but also in terms of similar ideology and political system traits (Lukin, 2018). This has not, however, prevented Beijing's authority from clearly tilting in that way. Think about the possibility that there are also significant political and economic imbalances among Western allies, but that these differences are kept from resulting in significant political conflicts that could jeopardise their unity by their strong sense of mutual trust and shared fundamental principles. This illustrates that, contrary to what is usually assumed, especially by Western observers, the Russian-Chinese reconciliation is more lasting (Brenton, 2013).

The geopolitical and political climate that non-European Eurasia is now experiencing is strikingly similar to that which prevailed in the 1940s and 1950s before the creation of the Euro-Atlantic Union. Eurasia is being forced to make the same adjustments to a far stronger China, just as post-World War II Europe had to do with expanding American supremacy. Such a reaction may, under normal circumstances, act as a check on the local government's expanding power. China, Russia, and other Eurasian nations are looking for innovative methods to align their interests in a more complicated political structure as a consequence of Western pressure on Eurasia. In the conflict between the United Governments and its Western allies and a number of non-Western states, some observers believe that resistance to Western policies has already resulted in the development of a Eurasian "block." If this conflict persists and Greater Eurasia's institutional framework develops, a community in Eurasia like to the Euro-Atlantic one that emerged after the Cold War may emerge (Buckley, 2016).

2.1 GENESIS OF SINO-RUSSIAN COOPERATION OVER EURASIA

China and Russia are driving Eurasian integration at the moment. Russia's "pivot to Asia" strategy is being followed in part owing to a clear need to link with the emerging global economic centre in the Asia Pacific, despite pressure from the West, with whom ties have deteriorated significantly since the onset of the Ukrainian conflict in 2014. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China is aimed towards the West. This policy was motivated by a desire to obtain access to Europe's rising enterprises and to buy goods from Eurasia, as well

as to exert control over China's ascent and worldwide impact (Lukin, 2020). This latter strategy has been most visible during Donald Trump's presidency, which has seen him engage in an open trade war with China. Russia and China's interests span Eurasia, and their close connections have resulted in a host of joint enterprises. The most essential goals are to link the Eurasian Economic Union with Silk Road Economic Belt Initiative and to form a Greater Eurasia Eurasian Economic Partnership (Denisov, 2019).

The nature of China's and Russia's relationship is a fundamental factor of Eurasia's stability. In recent years, a dramatic shift has happened that has the potential to change the whole framework of international relations. In general, it is the transition from bipolarity to multipolarity. The creation of alternative international governance systems, particularly at the regional level, is an essential part of this process. This provides an opportunity for some academics to investigate the phenomena of developing non-Western regionalism, that has the potential to impact and contend with European and European regional cooperation and institution-building processes (Lukin A. , 2015).

2.1.1 Cold War Era

Cold war started officially in 1947, and it broke out as a result of the concerns and fears that the west exhibited toward the USSR's ambitions to impose its global hegemony over the entire world by disseminating its communist doctrine, starting with Eastern Europe, that does not coincide with the west and USA in particular. These concerns quickly escalated into political tensions between the USSR and USA due to their conflicting ideological stances, political approaches toward the global political system, and the inability to reach a point of mutual understanding or a compromise over their dominance over Germany (Hartley, 2020, P. 2).

The day following the founding of the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union became the first country to establish diplomatic relations with China. During this time, China "leaned to one side" in terms of diplomacy, economic growth, and system design, following the Stalin-led Soviet Union as the "older brother." This approach was informed by the objective environment of the time, as well as the previously noted shared political philosophy and bipartisan past between China and the USSR. In the Korean War, China fought with the

Soviet Union against US-led UN forces, leaving Beijing with the difficult job of forging diplomatic ties with the Western camp (Kaczmarek, 2018).

During the cold war period War, communism was the linchpin that held the PRC and the USSR together. The People's Republic of China collaborated with the Soviet Union after its founding in 1949. As the global capitalist system grew, the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union were recognised as adversaries. This connection, particularly in Asia, was a very bad sign for the world's developing capitalism. This connection was seen as a severe threat by Washington. In 1950, China became a member of the communist bloc to express its support for the Soviet Union. The USSR's imperialist aims in Asia avoided a confrontation between the PRC and the USSR in 1969. As a consequence of the Clash, the Eastern Communist bloc was weakened. This destabilising scenario was fully exploited by the United States. The US and China became mutual rivals of the Soviet Union as the US got closer to China. This once-in-a-lifetime chance provided the US with a number of alternatives for promoting capitalism and containing communist in Asia. China and the US continued to dispute on a variety of subjects up until the end of the Cold War, despite their close collaboration on numerous fronts throughout that time (China, 1997).

When Nikita Khrushchev took over as leader of the Soviet Union, policy changes caused a schism between the two countries. According to Jeanne Wilson, the Soviet Union's decision to renounce its agreement with China and its potential to provide China with nuclear technology, as well as Nikita Khrushchev's speech at the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's Twentieth Party Congress criticising Stalin, Chinese criticism of Khrushchev for his excessively slavish obeisance to the West, all contributed to the relationship's decline (Wishnick, 2002).

At the start of this time, there was an ideological battle going on between the two countries. Mao Zedong criticised the Soviet Union for reneging on socialism and being revisionist, while Nikita Khrushchev criticised the Chinese Communist Party for just restating what Lenin had stated decades before. These schisms also manifested themselves in differing viewpoints on a variety of international issues. The 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia to put an end to the Prague Spring was referred to by the Chinese Communist Party as "Soviet revisionist social-imperialism."

Around the end of the 1960s, China and the Soviet Union had border conflicts. The Sino-Soviet divide had changed world politics by the end of the 1960s. Soviet officials chose the lesser of two evils at the turn of the decade out of fear of having to deal with conflict on both the Western and Eastern fronts. It was thought that the US constituted a less serious danger than the appearance of Soviet-style thinking the inadequacies of the United States in Vietnam and the .The US economic slowdown is one of Washington's crystal-clear indicators of approaching disaster. Meanwhile, a regular reminder came from China's military development and nuclear power displays. Moscow and Washington were able to agree on a number of crucial subjects despite their disagreements; for instance, significant progress was made in reached in discussions on managing strategic weapons. Chinese discussions showed China was more challenging; it was erratic and chaotic, insufficient development warned Soviet diplomats during the Sino-Soviet border discussions that China was not truly trying to reach a compromise currency reform in the Soviet Union Brezhnev's policies were supported by threats, first subtly and later overtly (radchenko, 2000). It's clear that people want to work with the United States as an ally or, at the very least, a fellow traveller the dispute between China.

The Chinese saw comparable changes internal studies in Beijing discovered that the dread of 1969's conflict, and the biggest external danger to China came from the USSR when Mao swiftly rose to aim for better ties with the US and rapprochement with Washington as a defence against what the countries see as Soviet expansionism. On Zhenbao Island in 1969, fierce fighting between Chinese and Soviet soldiers led the once-friends to mistakenly contemplate starting a war. At the time, China shifted its foreign policy and leaned more toward the United States since it saw the Soviet Union as the greatest danger to the PRC. The strategic pivot came to an end with Richard Nixon's historic trip to China in 1972. In an effort to combat socialism, the Soviet Union's leadership, under the direction of Leonid Brezhnev, targeted China as an imperial reserve force in 1976 (Jingjie, 2004).

Such crises were caused by the confrontation between the Soviet Union and China. Ironically, Moscow maintained its ties with the Soviet Union via alliance agreements while engaging in power politics with a former arms partner. Since then, national interests have taken precedence over China's revolutionary principles in its foreign policy. According to

Chen Jian, the end of the Cold War may have been foretold by the demise of a common ideology as a significant point of reference in Beijing and Moscow.

2.1.1.1 Sino-soviet split

To better understand this schism that occurred between Russia and China, it is important to understand how it started. The Sino-Soviet Friendship Alliance Mutual Assistance Treaty was signed in February 1950 in order to prevent an invasion by Japan and its allies. The Soviet Union was required to "transfer the Manchurian railway to China by 1952 to the Chinese administration of Dalian and recognise the definitive withdrawal of Soviet soldiers from Lüshun" under the terms of the agreement. The accord provided China with a \$300 million loan as well as the promise of sending Soviet expertise to help China create a modern industry. As a consequence, the Soviet Union supported China's expansion during this time, particularly during China's first "Five-Year Plan," and the two nations collaborated on a number of international problems. Mao Zedong often complimented the two nations' close friendship and alliance in public, implying that they enjoyed a positive bilateral relationship just at time (Kropatcheva, 2014).

Despite the Soviet Union's important contributions to China, Li Fenglin, a former Chinese ambassador to Russia and a Russian academic, believes Sino-Soviet ties and the Treaty of Amity are unequal. The USSR turned a blind eye to China's reasonable requests, foreshadowing future conflicts between the two nations. The fundamental reason for this is that China and the USSR have uneven status and power as a result of their different stages of development (Lavrov, 2000).

The Sino-Soviet Split was the disintegration of Chinese and Soviet relations in the 1950s. This split came about from a clash in ideologies. The PRC charged the soviets with "revisionism" of Marxist-Leninist theory, especially after Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and reconciliation movements with the west. China followed much closer to Leninist ideas, and Mao had a firm belief that the East and West could not live peacefully together unless the West became socialist, and that China would be the vanguard for all socialist revolutions in the world. The Sino-Soviet Split had a particularly complex effect on the development of Chinese relations with other Asian countries (Kempton, 2012, P. 7).

By the end of the 1950s, Mao Zedong broke with Moscow. He did so because of different aspects that caused him to dispart from the Soviet union. First, Khrushchev's failure to consult Beijing led Mao to conclude that Khrushchev would not take the interests of his Chinese colleagues into account in his future decisions. Also, Khrushchev introduced peaceful coexistence between the socialist and capitalist worlds (Nathan & Scobell, 2012, P. 102-103).

Consequently, Khrushchev's refusal to support Albanian's heavy industrialization as a threat to his personal rule and to Albania's national security. Therefore, during 1960 when Beijing's dissent with Moscow manifested, the Albanian Leader Enver Hoxha skilfully seized the opportunity to join Beijing in a united front against what Chinese and Albanian leaders called "Soviet Revisionism". For China's leader Mao Zedong, it was a chance to challenge Moscow's leadership of the communist camp (Marku, 2020, P. 1).

Moreover, Khrushchev's nuclear provocation and sudden retreat under U.S. pressure during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis provided Mao with an unexpected opportunity to attack the Soviet leadership publicly for ideological inconsistency and political unreliability, and the United States seized the opportunity to deepen the Sino-Soviet rift (Arnold & Wiener, 2012, P. 193).

Furthermore, multiple tensions led to the 1962 Sino-Indian War, as well as post-war border conflicts preceding the Bangladeshi Liberation War. Due to all of this, Indian relations with China, like Indian relations with the United States, were at an all-time low just before the South Asian Crisis erupted. With mutual ally in Pakistan and mutual enemies in India and the Soviet Union, China and the United States found themselves embracing similar strategic aims (Francis, 2020, P. 47).

A few years later, Soviet sympathizers were highly repressed in the city of Xinjiang, and their plot to receive outside militaristic support to prepare for a revolt against PRC was discovered (Zanardi, 2019). Furthermore, China decided to cut economic ties with Soviet countries in Central Asia by shutting down trading facilities in the city and banning the flow of trade to these countries (Li, 2016, P. 4). This further ignited more tension between Russia and China and severed the ties between them over Xinjiang that was considered a territory from which a potential war between the two nations could have been waged (Klimeš, 2021).

The struggle over Xinjiang reached an apex during the 1969 Sino-Soviet border conflict, when the seven months around two million Soviet and Chinese troops engaged in border skirmishes so intense that U.S. intelligence agencies believed they had 'explosive potential'; which meant that intelligence agencies believe that the dispute could turn into a full-fledged war between the two countries (Central Intelligence Agency, 1969, as cited in Freeman, 2017, P. 5).

This is when the two countries almost exchanged nuclear attacks at one another over the borders. This conflict is important for several reasons. First, this is a militarized dispute between two nuclear powers resulting in sustained clashes along a territorial border. Second, the conflict remained beneath the threshold of war in the traditional sense. Finally, both powers in the conflict intuitively understood the conflict must remain limited and used force as a means of signalling their intentions and will to the other (Evans, 2021, P. 32).

Due to the Sino-Soviet split that turned into an armed conflict which could have resulted in a nuclear war, USA wished to seize the opportunity of the schism that was created between Russia and China, in order to win China over and integrate its substantial political force into the Western bloc. Although this was not the case exactly, China still decided to open ties with USA to a certain extent, and it also still perceived USA, along with USSR, as enemies of the developing world; according to Mao's "Three Worlds" theory and formulate alliances with several countries; such as Chile and the Philippines as an anti-Soviet alliance (Scalice, 2021, P. 3). This theory was the result of China's perception of the U.S.-Soviet convergence and political détente that started since Khrushchev as a way to re-organize the distribution of political power across the globe.

Therefore, USA began its efforts by sending a secret mission led by Henry Kissinger at the time to China in 1971, which allowed for a Sino-U.S. rapprochement to be achieved, and paved the way for future negotiations with the Chinese who have always refused the idea of working with Americans, even on a smaller scale (Suganuma, 2017, P. 85). This Sino-U.S. rapprochement was highlighted by Richard Nixon's sudden decision to delve into bilateral relations with China as he saw the Sino-Russian split as a chance that he can capitalize on in order to curb the hegemony of the Soviet Union, given the fact that USSR has become considered a common adversary for both USA and China (Seth, 2014, P. 165).

However, a realignment of forces and the Sino-Russian split was threatening to the Soviets, because it meant that USA was going to approach China and exert all efforts to turn China against Russia forever, which would have meant a total Soviet failure for the Russians at the time, especially after the U.S.-Soviet détente has fallen apart (Tagirova, 2022, P. 154).

Therefore, sooner or later, the Russians would have come to realize the significance of China and how important it is as a country that could assist them in maintaining the political hegemony of the Soviet Union in the East. As a result, Gorbachev decided to put an end to the Sino-Soviet split by officially visiting China in 1989, which marked the end of the Sino-Soviet split and conflict that lasted for almost 29 years (Armstrong, 2014, P. 804).

2.2 REHABILITATION PERIOD 1990S TO COLLAPSE OF SOVIET UNION

Early in the 1980s, the Soviet Union and China resumed their negotiations. Following Deng Xiaoping's ascension to power, China's government set out to establish diplomatic ties with a number of nations in order to develop a calm climate conducive to economic transformation. The allegation that the Soviet Union was a "revisionist" nation was discarded by China's leadership in 1980. In 1982, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev spoke in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, encouraging Sino-Soviet collaboration. Normalizing Sino-Soviet relations, according to Deng, needed three demands or barriers. First and foremost, the Soviet Union must withdraw its support for Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia. Furthermore, while removing its soldiers from Mongolia, the Soviet Union must restore the situation of Soviet forces on the Sino-Soviet border to what they were in 1964. Third, the Soviet Union's Afghan military should be dismantled. "Until Gorbachev's ascension to Soviet leadership," the three difficulties were resolved. At their meeting in Beijing in May 1989, while ties between China and the Soviet Union had been restored, according to Deng and Gorbachev, this was not done for the benefit of any other party (Mustafić, 2017).

According to Deng Xiaoping, the meeting's objective is to shut the door on the past and open the door to the future. A slew of domestic and international challenges stymied Sino-Soviet reconciliation (Cimek, 2021). Despite the fact that Deng handled the Tiananmen Square Protest and restored the CPC's power in government and ties with other nations, Gorbachev faced "economic collapse, Boris Yeltsin's rise in Russia, and the beginnings of separatist movements in other republics" domestically after the protests were put down. On a global

scale, the fall of communism in Eastern Europe prompted fear for the two countries. Gorbachev handled the protests at Tiananmen Square with tact and compassion, The Chinese government, however, blamed him for the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. Jiang Zemin called Gorbachev a "traitor to communism" when he revolted against the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1990 (Rumer, 2003)."

2.2.1 Yeltsin Era (1991-1999)

China confirmed a prior agreement and recognised Russia as the USSR's rightful successor at the end of December 1991. However, the two nations' collaboration had a bumpy start. The Yeltsin government increased its pro-Western diplomatic efforts after China was denounced by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights for breaching human rights in Tibet in 1992 (McFaul, 2000). When his West-centred agenda failed to provide the intended results, Yeltsin started to focus more on Sino-Russian relations. Sino-Russian ties changed when Boris Yeltsin, the country's first president, visited Beijing in December 1992. In the "Joint Statement on the Basis of Mutual Relations between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation," the two governments decided to work together more closely in the future and referred to one another as "friendly nations." In essence, this pact encourages practical bilateral relations. For instance, despite the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the fact that their respective political systems and outlooks are quite different, China and Russia continue to work to forge friendly relations based on international law (Rutland, 1997).

The Communists in China were startled by the Soviet Union's demise as the most powerful socialist nation. They expected their own communist regime to experience a catastrophe. After the fall of the Soviet Union, China experienced more than just a feeling of crisis due to concerns that it may repeat the errors of the Soviet Union or engage in confrontation with the United States. Additionally, it made China feel as if it had excelled other communist countries throughout the globe and that the danger from the North had passed. The Chinese saw this desirable situation as a chance for reform.

Deng Xiaoping delivered the "Southern Speech" at Shichen and Jiuxai in February 1992. He urged China to speed up the transition to a market economy in order to prevent a repetition of the country's previous era of economic stagnation. In the years after the Cold

War, it was China's brand-new "survival strategy." According to the 14th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, which took place in October 1992, the market economy must be essential to the communist system. At that time, China became the first country to formally embrace the term "socialist market economy," which has since come to refer more to the market economy than to socialist rule.

Despite having different ideologies and despite China being officially a "socialist" country while Russia is a "democrat," both countries accept the concept of a "market economy." Even while China seemed to be less centrally planned and had begun economic reforms decades earlier than Russia, the two social systems were really quite distinct from one another; Russia was a state that was more centrally planned, and its political reforms occurred sooner. Instead of a free market concept, they operate similarly to a centrally controlled "command" philosophy. Despite China's official devotion to the term "Socialism," we may classify the US and China as being in (or advancing toward) the "post-Socialist" epoch. As long as the theories adhere to the non-interference condition, the formal differences between them are meaningless. Instead, since they have a similar economic foundation, the two nations may work together to achieve the same objective of a "market economy".

International developments facilitated closer ties between the two nations. Russia developed a chilly attitude toward the West due to a variety of factors in the second half of 1992, including the fact that it was receiving less financial aid than the West had on paper promised, that its economy was not expanding, and that the influx of western goods had exacerbated the Russian people's sense of inferiority. Russians believed that this was necessary for Russia to undertake in order to maintain its national status in relation to the West. Even the well-known "pro-Western" foreign minister Kozyrev changed to a "balanced" foreign policy after facing strong criticism from "Eurasian" supporters in the parliament and coming to the conclusion that other large nations (such as China, India, and others) were just as vital to the West. The Russian leadership lacked the courage to oppose the West since the West's ultimate goal was to make Russia into a big, market-based state that would have a substantial effect on the international community.

As the primary "post-socialist" nation, some Russian authorities started paying close attention to China's conversion to a market economy. According to them, China's transition

had been very well-managed, had prevented any internal unrest, and had enabled China to maintain its status abroad.

Since 1994, bilateral connections have increased, showing that Russian leadership has shifted from "pro-Western" to "leaning concurrently toward both the West and the East." Jiang Zemin made his first trip to Russia in September, signing the "Sino-Russian Joint Declaration," the "Sino-Russian Deal on the Western Boundary," and a "no-first-use of nuclear weapons against each other" deals with President Boris Yeltsin. China and Russia have developed a "constructive relationship based on nonalignment principles and not aimed at any third party," according to the joint statement. This manifesto called for a new world order based on multipolarity, while opposing "global expansionism, hegemony, power politics, and the development of hostile political, military, and economic blocs (McFaul, 2000)." Since 1994, China and Russia have had multiple high-level meetings, with greater collaboration in the political, economic, scientific, military, and cultural spheres. Senior officials from both countries decided in 1996 to upgrade their bilateral ties to a "strategic partnership of cooperation." The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Eurasia's most potent security organisation, has since been established as a result of the two nations' agreement to formalise and standardise meeting norms (Lavrov, 2000).

2.2.2 China Russia Relation From 1992 Onwards

China acknowledged Russia as the USSR's legitimate successor at the end of December 1991, and both nations reaffirmed an earlier agreement. The two countries' cooperation has, however, had a difficult beginning. The 1992 UN Commission on Human Rights' censure of China for violating human rights in Tibet led to an upsurge in pro-Western diplomatic activities on the part of the Yeltsin administration (Office, 2020). When his West-focused agenda failed to provide the intended results, Yeltsin started to lay a larger emphasis on Sino-Russian relations. When Boris Yeltsin, the country's first president, visited Beijing in December 1992, Sino-Russian ties entered a new phase. The two governments signed a "Joint Statement on the Foundations of Mutual Relations between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation," wherein they referred to one other as "friendly countries" and promised to cooperate more closely in the future. This accord, in essence, promotes pragmatism in bilateral relations. In instance, despite the fall of the Soviet Union and the differences between Russia and China's political systems and philosophies, the two countries

continue to strive to establish friendly neighbourly relations in terms of international relations (Hansen, 2012)

Since 1994, bilateral connections have increased, showing that Russian leadership has shifted from "pro-Western" to "leaning concurrently toward both the West and the East." Jiang Zemin made his first trip to Russia in September, signing the "Sino-Russian Joint Declaration," the "Sino-Russian Deal on the Western Boundary," and a "no-first-use of nuclear weapons together against" deal with President Boris Yeltsin. China and Russia have developed a "constructive relationship based on nonalignment principles and not aimed at any third party," according to the joint statement. This manifesto called for a new world order based on multipolarity, while opposing "global expansionism, hegemony, power politics, and the development of hostile political, military, and economic blocs." Since 1994, China and Russia have had multiple high-level meetings, with greater collaboration in the political, economic, and scientific, armed services, and cultural spheres. Senior government officials from both countries decided to change their bilateral ties into a "strategic partnership of cooperation" in 1996. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Eurasia's most potent security organisation, would be founded as a result of the two nations' agreement to outline and standardise satisfactory norms (Jingjie, 2004).

With the end of the Cold War, relations between China and Russia were repaired. China and Russia have had a long history of relations, which has lately grown in importance. In a joint statement on a multipolar world and a new global order that was released in April 1997, Beijing and Moscow described the types of strategic cooperation enterprises that would profit from a catastrophic future. They also identified the most probable reasons why these alliances might develop between nations with harsh recent ties.

Despite tight ties between China and the UN during the Cold War, problems like the Taiwan conflict and China's cooperation with despotic governments have not yet been resolved (Iwashita, 1996). In an attempt to repair ancient relations, China has emerged as a dominant force in the East, and it has begun to build close ties with Russia. After 1992, Russia and China's post-Cold War ties grew stronger by the day. China allegedly broke from its de facto alliance with the United States after the demise of the Soviet Union and reportedly improved ties with Russia in an effort to engage in "constructive collaboration."

2.2.3 International Cooperation

For both countries, creating cooperative groups was of utmost importance. They founded the Shanghai Five in 1996, which subsequently became the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). A strategic alliance was formed between China and Russia in 1996, strengthening relations between the two countries during the Cold War (Shtraks, 2017). The next year, a new, multipolar global order that both China and Russia claimed was already taking form was publicly accepted. Due to their improved ties with the US and their divergent views on a number of global problems, cooperation between the two countries was restricted in 1997 and 1998. However, the 1999 events deepened connections between China and Russia and brought their attention back to the US foe. The Kosovo War and American plans to establish regional and national missile defence systems were prominent topics of conversation (Dresen, 2000).

China and Russia decided to fortify their partnership and, at the very least, publicly oppose American "power politics" and "hegemony" as a result of a variety of issues. As a consequence of these efforts, the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation were signed in July 2001. A political-military alliance was hindered by this treaty's lack of a mutual defence clause. China and Russia did, however, agree to forbid other nations from conducting military operations against each other on their territory, to refrain from joining coalitions that are hostile to one another, and to consult one another if either nation felt threatened. As a result, the treaty laid the groundwork for future development, completing ten years of advancement in the bilateral relations, and created the legal underpinning for such linkages (Guan, 2022).

The foundation of the international system remained unipolar during this time, despite the fact that China and Russia began to worry about its implications in the wake of the events of 1999–2001. They were more cooperative because of their fears. Russia continued to provide China with weapons, but a new alliance between the two nations was avoided. By restricting their collaboration to joint pronouncements and other rhetorical efforts, they emphasised their expectation that a developing multipolar system would someday provide them more independence. The two nations' national identities were blended in this debate, which was notable because it demonstrated their willingness to create standards that would help them accomplish their respective national objectives. (Dikarev, 2021)

China has long wanted to strengthen its ties with the other nation. As tensions in Russia's relations with the West increased, Boris Yeltsin became more amenable to China's demands, but he never gave up trying to strengthen relationships with the United States and its allies. Vladimir Putin retained an interest in China after taking office at the end of 1999, but he first put this relationship on hold in favour of forging closer ties with the West.

A succession of occasions starting in 1999 brought China and Russia strategically closer together. The US pursuit of missile defence systems and the Kosovo War were at the top of the list. The strategic partnership between China and Russia, according to experts from both countries, underwent a pivotal period of growth in 1999. As demonstrated by a 1997 joint "Declaration on a Multipolar World," a "constructive cooperation" was formed in 1994, followed by a "strategic alliance" two years later. "Treaty of Good Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation." Was signed between Moscow and Beijing in 2001, Putin and Jiang agreed to work together to build a more equal and fair international order based on the principle of "friends for life, adversaries never." Rising tensions between Washington and Moscow, as well as Vladimir Putin's 2007 speech in Munich criticising unilateralism, were considered as fertile ground for cooperation at one point (Cimek, 2021). In 2009, they formed the Eurasian Union and the BRICS to collaborate economically. The West saw this growing alliance as a precursor to a new Cold War. The Central Asian Republics became a major source of concern for China and the People's Republic of China. They work together considerably more closely now than they did during the early Cold War. Because they are both communist states, they have a lot in common culturally and geographically. These countries have become closer due to cultural commonalities and proximity, as well as shared aspirations. The stronger ties between the two countries now suggest that they are at war with the US in a new Cold War (Chechevishnikov, 2014). Both of these countries share a multipolar worldview, posing a threat to America's global dominance. They are partnering with Asian countries like as Pakistan, India, Iran, and North Korea. Both of these communist nations want Asia to grow in strength. Both are bolstering the world's rogue nations. As a result, the PRC and Russia have reached a point of cooperation where they are about to react to a joint danger. These two nations have superior military and defence capabilities, as well as a larger military budget. It has evolved into a coalition to resist the United States' global dominance. They are unable to cope with any hegemonic force when a danger to their bloc's interests is recognised.

The two countries' ties improved to a "comprehensive strategic partnership for coordination" in 2011, with the foundations of equality, group unity, shared prosperity, and friendship (Bhadrakumar, 2018).

In order to achieve its goal of physically and economically connecting Eurasia with China at its heart, China has sponsored the "Belt and Road Initiative," also known as the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road Initiative. In many ways, the two programmes were diametrically opposed and even competed. The potential of launching a "new Big Game" in Central Asia, the above time amongst Russia and China, was discussed (Duchâtel, 2016).

And thus a new age starts, one that began with China's BRI Initiative in 2013 and concluded with the Maidan in Kiev in 2014. The Ukraine conflict has changed the geopolitical axis of Eurasia. It has had a direct influence on Russia, with China concluding that if Russia is deposed, the West would obtain control of all of the world's key natural resources; more importantly, pressure and sanctions may have altered Moscow's geopolitical vector to one that is anti-Chinese. As a consequence, Beijing decided to support Russia by committing to long-term gas and oil purchases (Bhadrakumar, 2018).

During the Shanghai summit in 2015, both countries declared the start of a new stage of strategic cooperation in light of changing geopolitical conditions. The objective was to link Russia's Eurasian integration policy to China's BRI. President Vladimir Putin declared "Bigger Eurasia" and a "larger Eurasian cooperation" interpretation of history in 2016, marking the beginning of a new era in relations (Karaganov, 2016). The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), and other Eurasian nations are among its members. It was established to keep national economies growing at a rapid pace and eliminate barriers to the free flow of commodities, money, personnel, and commodities, but it will also serve as a stable and secure foundation for the whole area, from Lisbon to Jakarta (Karaganov, 2016).

Recent suggestions to improve global technical, economic, and organisational linkages have emerged from the BRI of China and the Eurasian Commercial Union of Russia (EEU). Despite the fact that some scholars think China and Russia have different views on regionalism and the formation of a regional order, the two countries have lately made major

attempts to coordinate their regional programmes. The joint announcement of the EEU and the Silk Road Economic Belt by the heads of state of China and Russia in 2015 signalled the start of a series of initiatives to promote and synchronise the regional operations of the two countries (Medvedev, 2016).

Simultaneously, both sides retain restraint in the field of narrative, similar to Deng Xiaoping's approach. Rather than "alliance" or "allied ties," recent Russian and Chinese media allude to partnerships as "comprehensive, egalitarian, and trust-based partnership and strategic cooperation" and "thorough strategic partnership." Nothing in "According to the PRC White Papers, which were released in January 2017, China does not wish to form an alliance with Russia, preferring to focus on relations with the United States. Moreover, during the June 2019 visit of the Chinese president to Russia, the two countries inked a bilateral statement on strengthening their relationship and strategic cooperation in a new age. In this statement, it is made clear that the bilateral relationship would be founded on a number of principles, including the "rejection of creating allied connections, [and] problems emerging, [and] not being orientated against third parties" (Council, 2019).

The commencement of the US-China trade war in 2018 marks the beginning of a new era and a general qualitative moment. In contrast to the previous geopolitical trend of anti-Russian sentiment, former US President Donald Trump views China as the greatest threat to American hegemony. He also rejected the US's missionary concept of universal human rights in support of a superpower hegemonic struggle. After Trump's administration ended, Vice President Joe Biden reverted to his earlier position, arguing that the United States should continue to be a global leader promoting democracy (Zhang, 2018).

The development of a Greater Eurasian community is likely to be the most ambitious aspect of this process. This project, together with a companion idea, pushes for the establishment of a unified geo-economic and institutional zone that would include, if not the whole continent, at least the majority of it. President Xi Jinping of China said in 2019 that China embraces the Greater Eurasia concept and is prepared to invest in its development (Zhao, 2019).

This newly constituted governmental and economic organisation has extensive geographic limits. "It will embrace East, Southeast, and South Asian nations, Central Eurasia, Russia,

and evidently the larger part of the European peninsula, its countries, and their organisations to the degree that they can create constructive collaboration," Greater Eurasia theorists say (Li, 2018). The Greater Eurasia Partnership should be built on common institutions, unstructured cooperation channels, and shared ideas such as "geo-economic and socioeconomic convergence" as a means of establishing a new international community.

The emergence of a sustainable international society in this region would undoubtedly address a number of issues, including reducing tensions between Russians and Chinese, as well as between Chinese people and their government, simply trying to stabilise the global order in central Eurasia; and trying to raise living standards and ensuring regional stability (Karaganov, 2016).

Scholars and professionals dispute over whether such a big project can be sustained in the long run. "Optimists" think that strengthening ties between diverse. The emergence of Eurasian governments and territories is inevitable, and Russia and China should take the lead. It is centred on the European Union (EU) and China, two of Eurasia's most major economic growth centres, as well as desires to include additional nations in this dynamic process. As a consequence, trans-regionalism has emerged as a new phenomenon characterised by the combination and synergy of numerous regional activities within a wider, shared environment. Eurasia's growth and consolidation, according to this theory, is a natural historical pattern that would have happened independently of external geopolitical events (Denisov, 2019).

2.3 EVOLUTION OF GREAT EURASIA

In 2015, Russian research organisations created the idea of "Greater Eurasia" after coming to the conclusion that the crisis in the Ukraine would have permanently harmed ties with the United States (Bordachev, 2018). The Higher School of Economics and the Valdai International Debate Club worked together to provide a selection of papers and suggestions for policymakers. As a result, the phrase "Greater Eurasia" was coined in Russian academic circles in 2015. President Vladimir Putin stressed that the deterioration in Western ties during the war in Ukraine was irreversible. The Club and the Higher School of Economics collaborated on a number of works and suggestions for governmental action.

President Vladimir Putin acknowledged it as a consequence (Bordachev, 2018). The new pact has been dubbed "Eurasian cooperation" by Russian President Vladimir Putin. He expressed gratitude to Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev for the concept, which he had discussed with him on the Forum's first day. According to Putin, over 40 countries and international organisations have shown interest in joining the Eurasian Economic Union's free trade zone (EEU). He went on to imply that the EEU might be a focal point for a bigger emergent integration zone. He would look into "the prospects for a larger Eurasian alliance embracing the EEU and states with which we already have strong ties China, India, Pakistan, and Iran as well as our CIS colleagues, and other interested governments and organisations," based on this assumption (Buzan, 2018).

The Russian and Chinese presidents signed a detailed declaration during Putin's visit to Beijing in June 2016. This highlighted the need of executing the Russian-Chinese accord, which ties the EEU's formation to the SREB's implementation. The analysis also proposed, according to the documentation, the formation of "full Eurasian cooperation based on the values of transparency, openness, and shared interests, with possible involvement of EEU, SCO, and ASEAN member states." The two nations' governments were entrusted with developing plans for carrying out the programme (Entin, 2016).

In response to Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's journey to Russia in October 2016, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said that the Soviets and China are working together to develop a wide Eurasian network that includes EEU and SCO member nations. Soviet Union, and China according to Medvedev, worked on research that seems to be the foundation of the cooperation. He and Li Keqiang talked and agreed with the inquiry's findings, and he directed specialists from both countries to build the project's economic foundation (Entin, 2016).

Igor Shuvalov, Russia's first deputy prime minister, highlighted that China and Russia were in talks on Eurasian cooperation and alliances, supposedly as a first stage of the process toward Medvedev's Comprehensive Eurasian Partnership. China and EEU member states, according to Shuvalov, must deepen their collaboration first before asking additional nations to join (Barseghyan, 2017).

In a November 2017, President Putin stated his desire to "build the Greater Eurasian Partnership," which again is based on the EEU and China's BRI. It's a "flexible contemporary project accessible to new participants."

The term is often used in the press and academics "Greater Eurasia" has acquired popularity. "Greater Eurasia" features the following primary traits, according to the concept's designers: The EEU and the SREB will be united as part of "Greater Eurasia," a global federation centred on Russian-Chinese reunification. Quasi organisations and institutions like the SCO, ASEAN, and the BRICS would be vital in this process (Trenin, 2017).

Great Eurasia is neither a person nor a community. It's a kind of collaboration based on non-Western countries' common interests. The nations involved have similar political and economic goals. Concerns about a single political entity wherein the US as well as its allies want to play dictator while neglecting the objectives and independence of other states inspire the former. "Greater Eurasia" will provide a radically new perspective to world geopolitics in this way, mainly grounded on post-World War II international law, the UN and its leadership role, ethno-cultural variety and the political ideologies that it engendered, as well as diversity and democratization in domestic as well as international matters. Furthermore, the goals together with the Shanghai Spirit of the SCO, are similar to the "peaceful coexistence" ideas initially stated by developing nations at the Bandung Conference in 1955 (Abbas, 2020).

Economic incentives might lead to widespread cooperation. Among these goals is the unification of the EEU and the SREB, as well as the development of the SCO's economic component by the admittance of India, Pakistan, and maybe Iran. It's conceivable that a significant free trade zone will emerge. Russia and China proposed forming a bilateral free trade agreement in 2016. A number of ASEAN countries, as well as one inside the EEU framework, have created such zones. As a consequence of the planned Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) among China and ASEAN, all of these FTAs may be extended or integrated. The extension of transportation linkages between Central Asia and Europe primarily portion of the SREB and MSR initiatives, another major economic worry seems to be the construction of a bridge between Eurasia and ASEAN nations (Blank, 2014).

Everyone, including Europe, will have access to the "Greater Eurasia" connection. Particular European nations and the EU itself would be happy to participate with "Greater Eurasia" if they agreed to protect the region's rich culture. This is shown by European participation in China's planned Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the SREB, including, most commonly, the EEU. While being centred in Europe and compelling all members to accept "European values," the new Eurasian organisation will be based on the ideals of plurality and multipolar world, and would be centred in Eurasia (Mishra, 2016).

The term "Greater Eurasia" Its precise bounds are unknown and vague. It is being filled out by experts from a range of countries, mainly Russian and Chinese experts. On the way to its development, they faced a variety of challenges, including the United States' damaging policies, international terrorism, and divergent interests and tensions among significant Eurasian individuals and organisations. Global dynamics, on the other hand, support the establishment of a "Greater Eurasia," implying that the development is unstoppable. The geopolitical convergence of China and Russia is among the most significant. The concept has the support of many nations, including China, Russia, and Central Asian nations (Brzezinski, 1997).

2.3.1 The Importance of Eurasia

China and Russia have both recently started regional integration programmes aimed at the Eurasian continent. The EEU now consists of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. It started out as a customs union in 2011 and expanded to include an economic union in 2015. The primary objective of the Eurasian Economic Union is to establish a single market for goods, resources, people, and labour on par with the European Union. The Eurasian Economic Commission, which combines a supranational organisation and a 2014 treaty, has supported the Eurasian Economic Union since 2012 (Hillman, 2017).

A group of Russian academics led by Sergei Karaganov convened at the Valdai Club as the EEU merger neared completion to discuss further options for Eurasia integration (perhaps on behalf of a Russian government committee). A Sino-Russian cooperative development zone has to be established in Eurasia, according to the "Towards the Great Ocean" research, which was released in April 2015. Karaganov said that he and Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed his "Greater Eurasia" idea when they were both students at the China

Institute of International Studies (CIIS). Putin advocated for the creation of a "Greater Eurasian Partnership" (GEP) with partners from the EEU and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), as well as China, India, Pakistan, and Iran, during the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2016 (Abbas, 2020).

That Russian political establishment's recognition that a politically driven EEU would be insufficient to secure the region's economic success reflects the new partnership's geographic reach outside the post-Soviet zone. The major economic engines of Asia must be enumerated. Nevertheless, competing view of Eurasia's prospects has emerged: The new Silk Road initiative from China, the GEP's debut aims to transmit the notion that Moscow remains the driving force behind the region's integration (Buzan, 2018).

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping unveiled the BRI. The two primary pillars of the BRI are the SREB, which links China to Western Europe, and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, which transports Chinese commodities from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea. The BRI is often thought of as a cross-border piece of infrastructure, but it also signifies Beijing's political elite's desire to reign over a wider, integrated Eurasian region. Policy coordination, infrastructural development, unrestricted commerce, financial integration, and individuals ties are the BRI's five vital linkages, all of which are aimed at building a "community of shared destiny for mankind," a term with an obvious revisionist overtone. The amount of money Beijing is willing to invest in various projects makes the BRI more alluring than the Russian EEU and GEP. The near neighbours of Russia have warmly welcomed the BRI, which is sometimes seen as enormous (Bordachev, 2018).

For several years, American geopolitical thought has centred on the risks that may develop if an anti-American alliance, combination of states, or state were to take control of the Eurasian continent. Helford Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman, two geopolitical pioneers, published on the subject. The following generation of American thinkers, influenced by these beliefs, did all they could to assure that no one state or combination of nations ruled the Eurasian continent. Simultaneously, pragmatic geopolitical objectives frequently prevailed over idealism. On the suggestion of his National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, US President Richard Nixon endeavoured to cultivate connections with communist China despite his right-wing anti-communist instincts. Jimmy Carter, a proponent of human rights, strengthened connections with Beijing on the suggestion of

Zbigniew Brzezinski, his own national security adviser. Since Mao Zedong's China had a weaker international reputation than the Soviet Union, strategic considerations required that the smaller communist state be maintained apart from its larger partner in order to prevent Eurasia from acquiring a dominant position (Li, 2018).

Today's modern strategic and philosophical thinking on US Eurasia strategy is informed by these geopolitical ideas. The primary goal of US and Western policy should be to avert the formation of single-phase state or alliance capable of uniting non-European Eurasia in opposition to the US. Kissinger and Brzezinski continued to write on the Soviet Union after it came apart in scholarly journals. A large alliance involving China, Russia, and maybe Iran would be the most perilous scenario; this "anti-hegemonic" union would be bonded not by common ideas but rather by overlapping grievances. It would be of comparable magnitude and scope to the previous Sino-Soviet danger, but China would virtually probably lead and Russia may follow. To eliminate this alternative, however distant, a simultaneous display of US geostrategic talent on Eurasia's western, eastern, and southern boundary lines will be necessary (Bremmer, 2003).

In 1997, Zbigniew Brzezinski issued a warning. Other realist intellectual traditions in the United States thought that the Sino-Russian reconciliation was detrimental to the United States. The demise of the Soviet Union, according to many US analysts, was once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the US to establish itself as Eurasia's global power. America's primary geopolitical goal, according to Brzezinski, is Eurasia. For half a century, Eurasian states and peoples dominated international politics, striving for regional dominance and aiming to global dominance. America's global supremacy is closely related to how long and successfully it can keep its hold on Eurasia. At the same time, geopolitical limits were imposed on Russia's regional expansion by US experts. Even a friendly Russia (or, say, China) becoming very powerful in Eurasia was inconceivable:

Any force other than the US had to be restrained. "Geographically, America is an island off the coast of Eurasia, a large continent with much more resources and people than the United States," Kissinger declared publicly. One nation's dominance in one of Eurasia's two major sectors, Europe or Asia, is still a reliable indicator of America's geopolitical peril, whether or not a Cold War exists. Because, in the end, such an alliance would be able to economically and militarily outperform the United States. Even if the dominating power's goals were

benign, America's capacity to wage effective protest and influence events would be gravely harmed. As a result, it became evident that the United Governments' greatest threat was not a certain political system, but rather all major, autonomous, and important countries (Blank, 2014).

Despite popular belief in the 1970s and 1980s, neither a unipolar world nor the emergence of non-Western centres of power was prevented by the fall of the Soviet Union. Non-Western nations created their own alliances and organisations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, to offset Washington's attempts to retain global dominance (SCO) and the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). On the other side, Washington's strategy expedited Russia's long-awaited reunion with China, who is now on the verge of happening. This connection has grown into a strategic partnership that Dmitri Trenin, Director of the Moscow Carnegie Centre, describes as "entente"—"a basic agreement on the fundamentals of international order underpinned by a robust body of shared interests." As a consequence, the US is actively fostering the same process that many generations of American strategists predicted: the loss of control over Eurasia as a result of Russia and China's increasing rapprochement (Panda, 2012).

2.3.2 Russian Foreign Policy Toward Asia

By no means has Russia's "Pivot to the East," which Putin proclaimed while running for president in 2012, been an effort to change its foreign policy to one that is more Asian-focused. The contradictions between Russia's ties to Europe and its efforts to counterbalance that orientation with new endeavours in Asia have historically defined its strategic culture. At the Pact of Nerchinsk in 1689, Russia became the first European country to enter into an agreement with China as the Russian Empire established new trade routes through Siberia. Between 1858 and 1864, the Tsarist Empire's expansion into Siberia, Central Asia, and the Far East had a detrimental effect on China's growth. The building of the Trans-Siberian railway in the 1890s further embroiled Russia in the geopolitics of East Asia while also facilitating military operations, commerce, and human settlement in the Russian Far East (Zoellner, 2017). However, this late Tsarist "pivot" to Asia came to an embarrassing end when the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 saw the first sizable European force beaten by an Asian state.

Similar patterns of excitement and apathy in post-Soviet Russia's behaviour toward its eastern neighbours were followed. While the long-awaited breakthrough in that country's ties with the United States was hampered by the disagreement over sovereignty of the Russian-controlled Kurile Islands, relations with China, South Korea, and Japan all made important leaps ahead in the 1990s. Rather, the focus of Russia's East Asian policy began to shift to its bilateral ties with China. According to Yevgeny Primakov, the nation's foreign minister at the time who was dedicated to a more sophisticated foreign policy, China and Russia officially became "strategic partners" in 1996. Long-standing border conflicts were settled in 2005 after China and Russia signed a treaty of a good neighbouring policy, friendliness, and cooperation in 2001. Trade and economic integration were badly hampered by China's growing desire to preserve tight connections with the United States and Russia's mistrust of Chinese involvement in crucial industries (History, 2018).

Through the integration of Eurasian nations, this new policy direction promised to make new efforts in three crucial areas: fostering economic growth in Russia's Far Eastern regions; rekindling relations with former Soviet republics; and forging closer political ties with China and East Asian nations. At the start of Vladimir Putin's third term as president, a rhetorical flourish signalled the start of Russia's most recent "pivot to the East." (2012-2018).

Putin said in December 2013 that Russia's swift growth in all of our eastern borders and its reorientation toward the Pacific Ocean are "our ambitions for the whole 21st century." Moscow still has a significant position in the world's political, economic, and cultural institutions. Local and regional activity is purposely discouraged under a highly centralised political and financial structure. Government expenditure reflects the concentration of economic activity as taxes and commerce move from the periphery to the centre rather than staying there. Up to 70% of Russia's transportation infrastructure, according to one estimate, is located within fifty kilometres of Moscow. On the Pacific Ocean's beaches, they are "becoming into just another experiment of Kremlin dreamers," claims one opponent, Viktor Larin. (Alexander Kolik, 2015).

The integration of Eurasia, the second ambition, has also encountered difficulties. The Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Russia, and Belarus founded the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), a customs union, in 2015. The failed attempt to get Ukraine to join the union led to political unrest and bloodshed. Trade conflicts and debates over sanctions

regimes have an effect on the EEU's remaining members. Only a few other nations are eager to join. Even Sergei Karaganov, a professor and dean at Moscow's Higher School of Economics, one of the most ardent supporters of Eurasian unification, acknowledges that there is "no feeling of accomplishment in communities or in elites" and that the EEU is instead dealing with a "torrent of criticism." Remembering that the EEU is largely a geopolitical venture rather than an economic one is crucial. Since it grants Russia the right to impose external tariffs on products to enter the EEU from China and other countries, the third purpose of the pivot, boosting Russia's ties with China, has performed better than the previous two. Due to their close personal bond, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping have presided over a rapid improvement in relations (Dubnov, 2018).

Despite the lacklustre Chinese investment in Russia, trade between the two nations has expanded, rising from \$21 billion in 2005 to \$108 billion in 2018. China's significant investments in two big LNG facilities in the Russian Arctic and the Power of Siberia pipeline, which will transport Russian gas to China later this year, are creating a strategic energy alliance between the two nations. China's primary supply of crude oil is presently Russia. Chinese consumers continue to be a big market for Russian weapon exports. China has received some of the most advanced Russian armaments, including SU-35 fighter jets and S-400 surface-to-air missile systems. According to some analysts, Russia only has a short window of time before Chinese producers start to acquire market share and China's domestic weapons sector reaches a comparable level of technical innovation. Direct military ties are also growing, as seen by the participation of a 3,500-person People's Liberation Army unit in the Vostok military drills in the Russian Eastern Military District in September 2018 (Lewis, 2019).

The strong diplomatic ties between the two nations are perhaps most significant. Despite sometimes arguing in the UN and other organisations, Russia and China never openly argue. Their diplomats often collaborate to direct discussions and make decisions. They are no longer only rule-followers; rather, by defending the notion of state sovereignty and downplaying liberal tenets like the promotion of democracy, human rights, and the responsibility to protect, they are beginning to have an impact on international norms and institutions of global governance.

But Russia is still unable to come up with a strategy that would allow it to contain China's ascent. Russia has been wary of Chinese initiatives overseas and concerned about Chinese incursions into its area of influence despite the tight connections between Moscow and Beijing. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was successfully prevented from turning into a free trade zone or economic club, which would have increased China's influence in Central Asia. Russia originally rejected participation when China first proposed the creation of the Asian International Investment Bank (AIIB) in 2014. Russia has not yet expressed a commitment to participate in the BRI, despite President Putin taking centre stage at a series of seminars on the initiative in Beijing. Due to its sluggish economic development at a time when China's influence is growing, Russia still has little global clout and runs the danger of feeling awkward as China's junior partner.

3. AN EXAMINATION OF SINO-RUSSIAN RELATIONS FROM A CONTEMPORARY STANDPOINT

To analyze the manner through which Russia and China cooperate within the Eurasian region their political, economic, and militaristic capabilities need to be identified and compared to one another, given the fact that this comparison helps highlight the facets of this bilateral cooperation based on the discrepancies in each country's capabilities that prompt them to fulfil them by cooperating with each turn allows both of them to achieve their interests and objectives eventually.

In other words, one country could be fewer capabilities than the other regarding a specific aspect; political, economic, and militaristic, which prompts it to seek cooperation with the other country to enhance these capabilities. This behaviour indicates that both countries are striving to achieve their self-interests by utilizing each other's excellence in one or two domains.

3.1 ENERGY NEXUS OF SINO-RUSSIAN PARTNERSHIP

China is anticipated to extend its involvement and investments in Russia's energy industry in light of its economic interests and the current geopolitical environment. In recent years, the groundwork for this has been established. If the West imposed a broad oil and gas embargo on Russia, China would undoubtedly be unable to offset or even make up for the significant economic losses. But if the West and Europe in particular, tries to progressively lessen its reliance on Russian energy instead of imposing a hard energy embargo, China and Russia will have more time to develop (new) cooperative energy projects. Long-term, China would be better positioned to cover the gap in European demand for Russian oil and gas, benefitting itself without jeopardising its stability or drawing criticism from the West (Olga Daksueva, 2019).

3.1.1 Energy Nexus of Sino-Russia

Oil commerce between China and Russia has greatly risen as a consequence of favourable geopolitical and economic circumstances. Geographically speaking, Western Siberia, which borders China's industrialised northeast and the northwest Tarim Basin, has significant gas and oil potential for Russia. China's manufacturing-based economy is economically

complemented by Russia's resource-based economy. Despite the fact that the fuel and energy sector provided 27% to Russia's GDP and more than 63% of all export revenues, oil and natural gas made up 43% of the government's income in 2015. In 2013, the oil and gas industry was responsible for more than 40% of investments and 75% of product exports. However, the market for the use of civilian energy is expanding in China, the world's largest industrial country (22 percent share in 2012). It is the country with the highest energy consumption in the world, and predictions indicate that even as energy intensity declines, overall national consumption will rise for the foreseeable future (Meidan, 2015). Russia fared pretty poorly until recently, despite the fact that China became a net importer of crude oil in the middle of the 1990s, and its demand has increased significantly since then. It made up about 2% of China's overall oil imports in 2000. Russia was not one of China's top ten crude oil suppliers in 2005, although making up merely 6% of the fifth-largest supplier in 2010. The exports of Russian crude more than quadrupled during the next five years. In the Amur area close to the Chinese border, Russia began delivering oil via the Skovorodino segment of the East Siberia-Pacific Ocean (ESPO) pipeline in 2011. In May 2015, Russia displaced Saudi Arabia as China's primary oil supplier (C., 2016).

Over the years, the two countries have inked a number of large energy deals. In June 2013, China's CNPC and Russia's Rosneft agreed to a 25-year, USD 270 billion oil contract. In the same year, Rosneft and Sinopec agreed to a second 85 billion USD deal for the delivery of 100 million tonnes of crude oil over ten years. Chinese businesses have begun purchasing ownership holdings in Russian oil and gas assets in addition to purchase agreements. The two most notable agreements are those between Sinopec and Rosneft about the possible joint development of the Russkoye and Yurubcheno-Tokhomskoye fields and those between CNPC and Rosneft regarding the cooperative development of oil and gas deposits in East Siberia (Ener-Data, 2022). Given that President Putin nationalised and virtually closed off foreign investment in Russia's energy sector, the rise in equity agreements is an indication of qualitatively improved connections and strategic confidence. Currently, natural gas makes up just around 5% of China's energy mix. However, from 2003 to 2013, the nation's consumption grew at a pace of 16%. In an attempt to reduce carbon emissions, China has switched from coal to clean-burning fuels; as a result, in the medium to long term, demand is projected to increase even more and exceed the global average. On the other side, Russia is now the world's second-largest producer of natural gas¹³. Despite their apparent

cooperation, Russia has not yet significantly influenced China's natural gas imports. A small amount of Russian LNG supplies are now sent to China through naval channels. The 2014 gas agreement, with Russia playing a significant role, is anticipated to change China's natural gas market (Zhu, 2019).

The 2014 agreement said that Russia will begin supplying China with natural gas from East Siberian reservoirs in 2018, accounting for one-fifth of China's total consumption. The Power of Siberia pipeline's eastern and western segments will sometimes intersect with China's border as they transport the gas to Russia's Pacific coast beaches. These oil and gas deals are significant from a geopolitical and economic standpoint. In response to urgent geopolitical concerns on a global scale, the agreements signal the start of a new phase in China's and Russia's coordinated diplomacy. By using their mutually accessible resource markets, they show that the two sides are ready to depend on one another for tactical support (Marcin Kaczmarek, 2021).

3.1.2 Geopolitical and Geo-Economic Attributes of Energy Sector

As was previously said, a combination of geopolitical and geo-economics issues have led to a recent strengthening of the China-Russia energy connection. Significant global changes have an impact on both China and Russia locally. Rising international efforts to resolve the Ukrainian issue have complicated and multilateral territorial disputes over desert rocks and reefs in the South China Sea (SCS), reminding of the accident-prone Cold War period. The general Western reaction has included a number of severe economic sanctions, especially in the wake of Russia's invasion of Crimea (Spisak, 2022). Moscow has indirectly experienced artificially low energy costs, putting the nation's energy-dependent national budget in jeopardy. Moscow has been specifically targeted by the US, EU, and a few other nations with punitive actions, including as the severance of economic connections, the imposing of sanctions on Russian officials and enterprises, and the exclusion of Moscow from the Western-run global financial systems and platforms. China and Russia have started talking about strengthening their energy cooperation as a realistic solution to the urgent geopolitical problems (M., 2015).

Geopolitics and the two nations' desire to diversify their energy import and export sources both help to strengthen their relations. Indeed, given that Russia is heavily reliant on the

European markets for its exports, Europe's reliance on Russian energy imports is merely one component of the "dynamic asymmetrical dependency" between Russia and Europe. Russian exploration efforts get substantial support from Western businesses as well, particularly in the expanding Sakhalin Island area. The recent drop in commodity prices and the sizeable contribution of export revenue from energy to Russia's national budget have increased this reliance on exports (and to a lesser degree, investment). Russia's main export is energy, and the European Union still controls an unreasonably big portion of its international commerce. For instance, in 2014, European markets received more than 90% of the natural gas and 70% of the crude oil exported by Russia. As a consequence, just as Europe's reliance on Russia for energy creates a strategic concern, Moscow's reliance on European markets for export does too. China provides Russia with a reliable market for export diversification in this regard, particularly in the case of natural gas (D, 2015).

Since 2011, China has surpassed the US as the world's top energy user. China is heavily reliant on the Middle East for its oil and, to a lesser degree, natural gas needs. Two-thirds of the nation's total oil imports and 40% of its total natural gas imports come from the hydrocarbon-rich area. It is anticipated that the region's already significant position in China's energy mix would increase further if no new energy sources are found. For instance, from 2 million barrels per day in 2012 to 7.8 million barrels per day in December 2015, China boosted its imports of crude oil from the Middle East. It is obvious that the unpredictable nature of the regional political climate has a significant influence on China's energy industry. Concerns regarding the security of the trade routes are further heightened by the fact that the resources are imported via marine channels (80% of China's crude oil imports pass through the Malacca Strait), which would be rendered considerably worse in the case of a war in the SCS. The export and import diversification plans of Russia and China are thus complementary and compatible given the current geo-economic conditions (Ambrosio T. , 2017).

Financially linked to their cooperation on energy-related issues is the two parties' long-term objective of decoupling from the USD-dominated global economy in favour of trade in local currencies, which includes commodities like crude oil and natural gas. As a substantial portion of Russia's export revenue comes from the sale of energy resources, Moscow also searches for new markets to offset the economic loss brought on by the drop in oil prices and

the financial sanctions. Naturally, Russia looks to China (and other emerging economies in the Asia-Pacific) to make up for the financial losses resulting from its strong ties with the West owing to the latter are increased energy consumption (Blank S. , 2020). The financial stability of China enables large-scale energy transactions, which need expensive infrastructure, maintenance expenditures, and logistical costs. For instance, in order to fulfil the Russian Yamal LNG's requirement for foreign funding, the Export-Import Bank of China and the China Development Bank opted to provide the business a \$12 billion loan in 2016. The Silk Road Fund (40%) and CNPC (20%) jointly own 30% of Yamal LNG (9.9 percent).

Chinese and Russian technological abilities enable cooperation on the speedy completion of projects, even if they are not on the same level as those of the industrialised West. In turn, this promotes the financial viability of the deals. Because of their superior technical capabilities, China and Russia are able to embark on challenging projects like the "Power of Siberia" pipeline. Due to its challenging geography and climate, this project presents significant technical and engineering challenges. In sectors (both directly and indirectly connected to energy) where they are weaker, China and Russia not only cooperate on projects but also exchange technology (Bobo, 2017). For instance, the two nations decided to work together in June 2016 to build a civilian advanced heavy-lift (AHL) helicopter. When The U.S and European companies are limiting technology exports due to the sanctions, technical cooperation is essential for Russia. According to a study by the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, Russian purchases of Chinese shale oil extraction equipment may rise "if US, and European firms continue to obstruct technical transfers as part of prolonged sanctions against Russia." However, experts believe China won't be able to replace the West as Russia's technological supplier (Ambrosio T. C., 2020). The complementary nature of their scientific and logistical capacities, however, may lead to more collaboration between China and Russia if Russia removes its limitations on foreign investment in Russian energy enterprises. In reality, this kind of collaboration has grown over time to include a wide variety of activities, such as shale exploration, nuclear energy projects, offshore drilling in the Arctic, and loans and acquisitions (Cox, 2016).

3.1.3 Sino-Russia's Energy Cooperation and Chinese Interests

Conflict between Russia and Ukraine erupted on February 24, 2022. The European Union and the United States were the main driving forces behind the West's extraordinary sanctions

on Russia after its invasion. China, the second-largest power, on the other hand, was the first to reject to comment on this matter. The Russian-Ukrainian conflict and Western sanctions will undoubtedly have an impact on China's future economic growth, but these issues were barely discussed during the "Two Sessions," the annual meetings of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), which ended on March 11.

When Wang Yi emphasised China's strategic partnership, unwavering friendship with Russia, and a bright future for cooperation at the Press Conference on China's Foreign Policy and External Relations, he provided the most authoritative and direct response to the sanctions the West had imposed against Russia during the "Two Sessions." However, this does not imply that China would (or even could) provide Russia the kind of help needed to offset the possibility of suffering a significant financial loss as a consequence of the Western sanctions (Xinhua News, 2022).

In reality, after frequently criticising unilateral sanctions over the last several days, China's Foreign Ministry only committed to maintain "normal" trade and economic contacts with Russia. This means that China will not preserve its friendship and ties with Russia without first putting its own interests and advantages into consideration.

It is possible to read the phrase "China's regular commercial and economic cooperation with Russia" in a manner that encourages further Chinese involvement and investments in Russia's energy industry while also taking into account the critical necessity for "stability first." This interpretation is consistent with the "Two Sessions," where China's overarching development goal was amply stressed. The following is a list of the main causes.

The first is that now, energy-related products make up the majority of Russian exports to China. The sum of all commerce between the two nations surpassed US\$145 billion for the first time in 2021. The strong rise in China's imports from Russia, which climbed at a pace of about 38% to more than US\$79 billion in 2021 (General Administration of Customs of China, 2022(a)), was a key factor in the bilateral trade's growth of 36% from 2020. The bulk (73%) of China's imports from Russia was mineral goods, especially mineral fuels, mineral oils, and their by-products (68 percent). The percentage of imports was larger than in 2020 as a result of the higher than average growth rates of mineral commodities in general (57%)

and mineral fuels, oils, and other items in particular (60%) (General Administration of Chinese Customs, 2022 and 2021). Prior to 2024, the initiative aims to double bilateral trade to \$200 billion (Belt and Road in Shanghai, 2022).

Second, rather than being one of China's energy providers, Russia is the country's primary foreign energy supplier. All forms of energy, including electricity, coal, pipeline gas, and liquefied natural gas, are imported from it in the highest quantities. It is rated second for importing gas, coal, electricity, and liquefied natural gas. It is ranked sixth for importing liquefied natural gas. Given the shock of the power supply gap it experienced last year, China must assure a consistent and inexpensive energy supply from Russia in order to meet its long-term rising domestic energy demand and aid it in achieving its economic growth objectives. China will be able to accomplish its targets of reaching the peak of CO₂ emissions by 2030 and moving toward being carbon neutral by 2060 by increasing supplies, particularly of natural gas from Russia.

Third, China is aware of the urgent need to secure energy supplies from Russia, especially gas supplies, as well as the expanding desire for greater investments in this sector. Three instances demonstrate this. First, China's direct investments in Russia totalled \$12 billion in stock in 2020 (ranked 13th vs. Germany, which was rated 11th), with the majority of that amount—41%—going to the mining industry, which normally involves the extraction of coal, crude oil, and natural gas (MOFCOM, et al., 2021). Further, China invested in the energy industry in 21 of the 49 significant projects with a transaction value of at least \$100 million each that were made directly in Russia or indirectly via third countries to Russia between 2006 and 2021. Even back then, 67% of China's main investment intentions in Russia included the energy sector. Among other subsectors, the many energy efforts concentrated on coal, oil, gas, hydropower, and alternative energy. More than 62 percent of these energy projects have been started since the Belt and Road Initiative was unveiled in October 2013, both in terms of number and cost. Third, state-owned enterprises or government agencies provided backing for 19 of China's 21 major energy projects in Russia. Five of these Russian oil and gas projects received individual funding from China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC).

Fourth, there are now being developed new or expanded cooperative energy projects. China and Russia signed three agreements early in February 2022, during Putin's visit to China, to

advance the reliable operation of the oil and gas pipelines and to encourage a growth in Russia's gas and oil exports to China. (3) The CNPC and Rosneft Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Low-carbon Development. (1) The CNPC and Gazprom Far East Gas Purchase and Sale Agreement. (2) Supplemental Contract to the Contract for the Purchase and Sale of Crude Oil to Ensure Oil Supply from Western China Refineries (3) Rosneft and CNPC's Memorandum of Understanding. According to a statement made public by Gazprom in late January, the Sila Sibiri-2 Pipeline will be expanded to include the Soyuz Vostok Gas Pipeline, which would go across Mongolia to reach China. If it is effective, China's annual reliance on Russian gas would increase by 50 billion cubic metres (Global Energy, 2022).

Therefore, the Chinese government will undoubtedly continue to support, facilitate, and promote increased investments in and collaboration with Russia in the energy business in order to conduct "regular trade and economic connections with Russia." China has its own justifications for doing so, in addition to the fact that these two nations are friendly: To support China's economic growth objectives, a reliable and inexpensive energy supply must be ensured in order to meet the country's rising demand. China's ambitious climate ambitions for the reduction of CO₂ emissions are also compatible with the development of a reliable energy supply in the form of Russian natural gas. Given that state-owned enterprises make up the majority of Chinese investors in key energy projects in Russia, the Chinese government may more readily impose control over the conception, negotiation, and implementation of investment cooperation projects. A potential oil and/or gas embargo by the West on Russia would undermine Russia's negotiating position generally and its position in the energy sector in particular, favouring China in the related discussions. China is less likely than it is in other sectors to experience secondary penalties from the West as a result of its expanding involvement in the energy industry.

Does the increased cooperation between China and Russia in the energy industry make up for the significant economic losses brought on by the Western sanctions on Russia? The answer is and without a doubt; not anytime soon. China would not be able to absorb the volumes of oil and gas that Russia regularly delivers to Europe if the West enacted a harsh, all-encompassing oil and gas embargo. The only piece of transportation infrastructure that is currently having capacity problems is the pipeline that runs between China and Russia.

Even after the joint agreement was signed in 2014 and a pipeline with greater gas transportation capacity was started in 2019, the history of the development and construction of the China-Russia East-Route Natural Gas Pipeline reveals that it took years for the pipeline to reach its intended maximum capacity. (Predicted for 2023).

If the West and Europe in particular, does not impose a strict energy embargo on Russia instead of looking for alternatives to gradually reduce its dependence on Russia, China and Russia will have more time to begin, develop, expand, and put into practise their (new) cooperative energy projects. The final result would be improved commercial ties between China and Russia without jeopardising Chinese stability or Western sanctions. China would be able to more effectively fill the vacuum in European demand for Russian oil and gas.

3.1.4 Recent Developments in Sino-Russia Ties

Due in significant part to the continued reliance of the European energy market on Russian oil and gas, the United States and its European allies are on high alert as a consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Nord Stream 2 (NS2) pipeline to Germany has already been delayed as a result of Russia's support for the separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk in Ukraine, and Russian President Vladimir Putin has pledged to impose restrictions on energy exports. The White House is leading efforts to reroute energy supplies to Europe in an attempt to lessen the consequences of such a calamity, but analysts think any solution would be very expensive (Council E. , 2022).

Russian oil profits have lately been used to increase the country's foreign exchange reserves by roughly \$630 billion. For instance, the Kremlin was able to balance its budget in 2021 thanks to an estimated low oil price of \$45 per barrel; nonetheless, prices that year averaged near to \$70 per barrel. According to economic historian Adam Tooze, Putin has been able to shield his administration from the impact of the economic sanctions placed in place following Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea because to this astute financial approach (Abadi, 2021).

The need for energy in Europe is mostly met by Russian energy output, mainly natural gas provided via a network of pipes from the Soviet period that crisscross the Ukraine and other countries in Eastern Europe. Moscow has pushed for the construction of new pipelines, such the controversial NS2, to circumvent more established networks. A new gas pipeline has

also been approved, however the sales in China would still be modest in compared to those in Europe. Russia supplies around one-third of the natural gas used in Europe for power generation, industrial manufacturing, and winter heating. Russia is the largest single energy provider to the European Union (EU), providing more than a quarter of the EU's imports of crude oil. The degree of dependency varies widely across EU member states (Abbas, 2020).

3.1.5 Sino-Russia Ties and Central Asia

Over the last three decades, China's ties to Russia and the Central Asian nations have improved. As the Moscow-Beijing relationship continues to expand dynamically via economic and trade collaboration, military discussions, and regional security cooperation, ideological disputes and border difficulties are a thing of the past. Given the recent economic turmoil in Russia and China's expanding influence in its backyard, many experts think that the Sino-Russian partnership's present trajectory is reaching its limits and cannot be continued. It is projected that tensions and growing competition, notably in Central Asia, would arise as a result of the imbalance between China's development and Russia's fall. On the other side, big power politics would rule over the Central Asian governments. Such an interpretation, however, is based on two false premises: (1) Sino-Russian collaboration in modern times is primarily focused on balancing US hegemony; and (2) political and socioeconomic developments in Central Asia should be seen through the lens of the Great Game story (Bakshi, 2018).

Due to a number of factors, including Beijing's growing military presence, the US's declining influence in the region, Central Asia's growing economic dependence on China, and the two countries' opposing perspectives on the regional order, the two major powers in the area may end up at odds. But despite these events, there was no antagonism between the two countries. Though the Sino-Russian partnership's long-term prospects are yet undetermined, the present trajectory of cooperation is still far from being reached (PAUL STRONSKI, 2018).

The growing disparity in strength between China and Russia is not directly related to a war for dominance of Central Asia. As opposed to Russia, China steadily filled the gap. Moscow is frustrated by its failure to provide the area a more reliable economic footing. In the 1990s, Russia accounted for 80% of all commerce with Central Asia. China has now surpassed Russia in a number of areas, including commerce, investment, and infrastructure development, and has emerged as one of the most prominent players in the region. However,

China is not the only nation to benefit from Russia's fall. Multinational firms and foreign governments were also able to make large investments in the area. Despite these changes, Moscow continues to be a significant economic force for Central Asians. When comparing the export composition of the five republics' major economic sectors, Russia outperforms China in the markets for substantial products produced in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan while maintaining its market share in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (Preljevic, 2017).

More significantly, the objectives of China and Russia for the area are distinct. Through the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Russia often takes a collective stance to increase its political power. But in order to protect its economic interests, ensure its energy security, and progress the Belt and Road Initiative, China wants to adopt a bilateral strategy (BRI). It is a very complicated working environment between BRI and EEU. The EEU "appears to be the loser in this arrangement," while Russia has been referred to as the BRI's "missing partner." Although it primarily serves as a political instrument, the EEU is a Russian idea for an economic union. Moscow's contribution to the BRI's accomplishments in Central Asia is acknowledged by both China and other countries. Russia continues to have a significant impact on Central Asian political elites despite losing cultural supremacy in the area. It is crucial given the rise in ethno-nationalism and anti-Sino sentiment in the area, which is partly caused by Chinese policy in Xinjiang. Given the conditions, Moscow and Beijing have the political will to coordinate their regional operations and prevent catastrophes. The EEU and China reached a trade and economic cooperation agreement in 2018. "China committed to safeguard Russian interests in the area and China was compelled to recognise Russia's primary role in finance and investment in Central Asia," claims Russian political expert Arcady Dubos (Eder, 2014).

China has depended on the Russian military's presence in Central Asia and the SCO for its hard power. Russia could be uneasy due to China's expanding security presence in Tajikistan and readiness to do business outside of the SCO. Many believe that these actions would infuriate Moscow and serve as a signal of China's expanding political aspirations. To talk about a Chinese military presence in Central Asia, however, could be premature. According to the data, Afghanistan is more significant to China's activities along the Tajik-Afghan border than Central Asia in terms of physical force (Bosbotinis, 2016). The safety of

Beijing's western borders as well as the growth of terrorism and extremism into Xinjiang are among the top concerns. To improve their anti-terrorism collaboration, Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, and Tajikistan established the "Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism in Counter-Terrorism" in August 2016. In September 2016, China also pledged to build outposts and training facilities to help Tajikistan strengthen its defences along the border with Afghanistan. It seems improbable that China's intention to become engaged was not planned with Dushanbe and Moscow given the condition of military ties between China and Russia and the enduring anti-Chinese sentiments in Tajikistan.

3.2 BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

The new Silk Road initiative was first suggested by President Xi Jinping in 2013, and it anticipates better infrastructure linkages between Beijing and Europe. The new Silk Road includes Pakistan, Southeast and South Asia, Central Asia (in the shape of the Silk Road Economic Belt), and Pakistan (in the form of China Pakistan Economic Corridor). Through transit states and regions, this initiative links Turkey, the Middle East, Russia, the South Caucasus, Central and Eastern Europe, and the Balkans. A little more than 60 nations have chosen to participate in the BRI programme. China's approach to moving toward the West is stated to be the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which examines new trade routes, issues with economic growth, and limits direct links between Eurasia and Eurasian culture. The Silk Road Economic Belt's aim is believed to be to integrate national policy, infrastructure development, liberalisation, and multidisciplinary financial and cultural collaboration. However, this depends on how big it is (Sergei, 2017).

The Trans-Siberian Railroad and the New Eurasian Continental Bridge are only two of the crucial routes that link Asia and Europe. The main objective of the SREB is to connect Lianyungang and Rotterdam through the Trans-Siberian railroad that travels through Russia from Vladivostok to Rotterdam. China intends to construct a single, continuous train that will link China, Iran, and Turkey, as well as a high-speed railway that would connect Kazakhstan and the United Kingdom (Callahan, 2016). The TRACECA New Eurasian Continental Bridge, which would connect Central Asia and Turkey through Azerbaijan and Georgia, has been prioritised as well. This aim is expected to cost \$8 trillion, according to Sangar, with the Chinese Development Bank providing \$890 billion. The Silk Road Fund has received a total of \$40 billion from the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank. This Silk Road plan

has the ability to provide the Eurasian continent with a broad variety of possibilities (Clarke, 2017).

Unlike Russia's Greater Eurasia concept, China's New Silk Road is a push for globalisation rather than regionalization of international affairs. This approach has a number of consequences for Sino-Russian ties. For starters, China sees Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union as one of the New Silk Road's corridors, one that provides the quickest path while simultaneously serving as an united customs zone. Second, China does not want the European Union to restrict its economic presence in the post-Soviet space (Dobbs, *The Eurasian Economic Union: A Bridge to Nowhere?*, 2015). This becomes more viable if the EEU treaty's customs union is implemented, and some economic policies are combined under one coordinating framework. China, on the other hand, does not want to take political leadership in Eurasia, at least not just now, and is content to share responsibilities with other countries (except for the United States). Beijing's approach restricts the potential of post-Soviet competition between Russia and China and sets the path for the harmonisation of China's and Russia's Eurasia programmes (Barseghyan, 2017).

Greater Eurasia is not a Russian scheme to sabotage China's New Silk Road initiative. The Russian suggestion, on the other hand, is an unspoken endorsement of China's vision of Eurasia's economic cooperation, in which distinct economic blocs do not pursue a protectionist and restrictive strategy. Simultaneously, this perspective aids the Kremlin in projecting the illusion that it maintains political authority in its territory and interacts with Beijing on policymaking. Beijing is unconcerned about the future structure of China's relationship with the European Union. The potential of the EEU is insufficient to overcome the absence of a free trade zone (which China favours) as a barrier to collaboration. The Shanghai Collaboration Organization is unlikely to become the key forum for coordinating collaboration between the New Silk Road and the EEU due to China's aversion to institutionalization and the poor results of economic cooperation achieved so far under this framework (Abbas, 2020).

3.2.1 Implications of Bri

One of the most obvious consequences of the BRI for other foreign parties in Eurasia is that it poses a threat, a perception shared by both Western and Russian perspectives on the topic.

This is especially true in light of US interests in the area, where Beijing's initiatives are seen as presenting a geopolitical and financial risk. In this scenario, which is reminiscent of Mackinder's Eurasia, the BRI's land corridors are being exploited to bypass maritime crossings, endangering Washington's navy, one of its most important strategic assets. As tensions between China and the United States increase, the BRI may be regarded as an instance of Chinese land power interacting with American sea power, adding a new chapter to Mackinder's book. This highlights the BRI's continuity and change for Eurasia, since the danger it presents has generally remained constant despite China's growing influence there (Ghisay, 2018).

According to the Mouritz study, Eurasia is now seen as a Sino-Russian collaboration that has been one of China's primary regional influences rather than solely as a Russian entity. Recent developments in Europe and the Middle East have hastened the convergence of Chinese and Russian interests that Lo and Allison identified, strengthening the BRI's potential as a channel for greater Eurasian integration. The strained relationship between Moscow and Washington has supported this tendency as Russia has moved closer to China's geopolitical area of influence. This seems to contradict Trump's description of US foreign policy as a "reverse Nixon" endeavour to deepen the US-Russian relationship in reaction to China's rise. Instead, since Beijing and Moscow seem to share the same goal of weakening American dominance and developing a new Eurasia, current tensions are likely to provide greater opportunities for the BRI (Mouritz, 2019).

Since the BRI helps to position China as an alternative to the current international order, it has come to represent China's bolder challenge to the status quo. The BRI, already-existing Chinese international organisations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, also known as the "Chinese IMF," and the loose military alliance known as the "second Warsaw Pact" are all symbols of China's desire to create a new international order.

This move increases the likelihood that the BRI will be used in combination with Sino-Russian organisations in Eurasia to further Chinese integration of the region and gives validity to the concept that these organisations constitute a threat to US foreign policy goals in the region. According to Russian depictions of Chinese activities in Eurasia, the initiative's

main nodes may be seen as the result of present geopolitical circumstances, which further characterises it as a challenge to American hegemony (Yu, 2017).

This might be shown by China's ability to fill the economic gaps created by US sanctions on Russia and Iran, as seen by China's attitude in Iran after the US withdrawal from the JCPOA accord. China presently has a near monopoly on Iranian oil as a consequence of the sanctions, since many European companies decided to leave the country due to worries about US penalties. This plan might actualize Mackinder's projections about the problems the area faces by making Tehran and Moscow important centres for a BRI-connected Eurasia. The concept of Eurasia as a Sino-Russian land-based force attempting to oppose American maritime supremacy in a manner akin to how former land powers sought to oppose Britain's dominance would therefore be more strongly influenced by the BRI (Buzan, 2018).

On the other side, the BRI has implications for Russia, the area's previous authority. In recent years, there has been a convergence of ideas after the Cold War. As a consequence of the geopolitical events in Ukraine and Syria as well as other concerns, Chinese and Russian foreign policy objectives are evolving more quickly than in the past. Washington has labelled both countries as "revisionist powers," implying that they are aiming to undermine the US' global supremacy. As a consequence, the two sides have begun working together more. Both within and outside of Eurasia, Beijing and Moscow are pursuing Chinese interests (Haiban, 2019). They seem to be following in the footsteps of their older Russian counterparts. This partnership demonstrates how the BRI might be useful in the future. The possibilities for expanding Eurasian integration by partnering with existing organisations and programmes depict the area as a whole, in order to help Beijing. Its efforts are supposed to be founded on mutuality, a term that has been thrown about a lot recurring theme in discussions on China's foreign policy.

3.2.2 Bringing The Bri and The Gep Into Alignment

It may seem that two parties fighting for the same territory with opposing programmes is a method for increasing tension and maybe assassination. In actuality, the opposite is true. Recognizing the dangers of geopolitical competition, China and Russia have worked hard to avoid it by developing a cooperative framework that enables their key Eurasian programmes to converge (Mobley, 2019).

When Putin and Xi met in Moscow in May 2015, it was clear that they wanted to work together. In a joint statement, the two presidents promised to deepen regional economic cooperation and "defend peace and security on the Eurasian continent." Finance, infrastructures, and, in the long term, a free-trade deal between the EEU and China have all boosted the region's economy. A discussion forum was also established to look at practical ways for better linking the EEU and the SREB, a notion known as *du ji* in Chinese and *sopryazhenie* (соединение) in Russian (Barseghyan, 2017).

Apart from presidential summits and official joint statements, both nations have built an "excellent structure" for frequent contacts that works at all levels, "from talks between heads of state and government ministries downward." The intellectual elites of both nations have been invited to advise on the potential of a BRI–GEP merger, reflecting both countries' high-level commitment to Eurasia cooperation. The Russian International Affairs Council, for example, funds GEP research, while the Chinese government funds a study called "Study of the Docking Path and the Growing Trends of Belt and Road and Greater Eurasian Partnership Initiatives." The disparities between the two programmes are seen as mutually complementing and strengthening aspects by both Russian and Chinese researchers (Sushentsov, 2015).

3.2.3 Sino-Russian Cooperation from Varying Chinese and Russian Perspectives

Sino-Russian specialists are bilingual and have a deep awareness of the political structure, history, and vital to decide of their respective geographic specialisations. The majority of them have lived in the region for a long time, either as students, professors, or government employees. They frequently employ the same approaches used by Western China specialists to assess China's foreign policies while doing study on Russia's international standing in order to aid China's political leadership. They read and analyse op-eds, among many other things, in analyses by local peers they've recognised as domestic & global influential, with whom they routinely contact via research visits, dialogues, and seminars. Accordingly, the final results and assessments, as well as policy suggestions for China's decision-makers, are then released (Kaczmariski, 2018).

Whenever Chinese scholars examine Russian views on Eurasia, they see a strong desire to find common ground and collaborate with China. Russian academics see China's BRI as

largely a local and international economic strategy, rather than a geopolitical master plan, in public debate. Some see it as a jumbled mess with no clear aim, performance criteria, or timetable, characterised by "uncertainty and lack of concentration." Supporters of this viewpoint argue that geostrategic interpretations of the BRI demonstrate a lack of awareness of "the huge spectrum of opinion and sentiments regarding this programme inside China." Others believe Moscow can use the BRI to its advantage. The BRI could be prepared to accelerate Eurasia's economic cooperation at a lower cost to Russia, strengthen the EEU's role as a bridge between Asia and Europe, support regional infrastructure growth, and stabilise the adverse global effects of economic mega-blocs like the Trans-Pacific Partnerships at a time when Russia is facing significant economic challenges and appears to lack the resources to pursue some of its own priorities (Li, 2018).

These comments demonstrate that China's external marketing approach of promoting the BRI as a nice gift aimed at encouraging regional economic growth while emphasising the benefits to countries engaged has been successful in shifting Russian perceptions so far. In this manner, Russia resembles Western nations that have chosen to dismiss the BRI's geostrategic significance in favour of focusing on potential areas of cooperation with China. It's no surprise that the Kremlin is coordinating its Eurasian efforts with Beijing, given that Russian specialists feel the BRI lacks a well-thought-out and knowledgeable plan. Sure, some in Moscow may perceive flaws with the BRI, but there are no viable alternatives to resist it at this moment. Whatever the situation may be, Russia seems to be willing to play along for the time being, and China is doing all it can to ensure that it does (Barseghyan, 2017).

According to Chinese analysts, The EEU is part of Russia's 'geo-economic' plan for reforming the former Soviet Union's based on financial, political, and military environment. Following the end of the Cold War, Russia suffered a series of setbacks in its relations with the West, the most recent of which was the post-Ukraine sanctions. Moscow's expectations for what the West will indeed serve up in the years following the disintegration of the Soviet Union were low "wishful thinking," as Russia received "nothing more than lip service while [it] was in terrible economic straits." (Sushentsov, 2015).

Chinese opponents claim that the BRI would undermine Russia's interests in the short run. The rising power and influence disparity between China and Russia, particularly in Central

Asia, is seen as potentially problematic for a Russia that adoringly plays the older brother position. 'Russia is concerned that China will eclipse its authority, jeopardising its image and capacity to act as a major power,' says Central Asia specialist Jiao Yiqiang. Nonetheless, Jiao believes that China and Russia have almost identical goals. According to Yang Lei, director of the Eurasian Research Centre at the Zhou Enlai School of Government, the similarities between the BRI and the GEP far outweigh the differences: both focus on improving the growth of a Eurasian transportation corridor that has inevitably led to incorporation through infrastructure and trade. Even though there are certain geopolitical concerns, they will not impede bilateral cooperation in the near future. "After the integration process has evolved to a certain degree, the topic of reining in Russia's hegemonic aspirations will have to be addressed," Yang advises (Buzan, 2018).

Finally, Chinese researchers argue that the present international order, which is dominated by Western countries, is the direct danger to Russia. Given current US policy changes that some Western analysts see as undermining the current Western-led system, Chinese experts feel that maintaining order is a shared duty that both nations must share "unquestionably the largest hurdle to China and Russia's rejuvenation." Moscow and Beijing are keen to strengthen their economic ties throughout Eurasia, which they see as essential for social and political stability. At the end of the day, a "secure and stable Central Asia is a shared interest." If both countries coordinate and cooperate in security cooperation within the GEP framework, they may strengthen their significant benefits against a common threat. They could "jointly defend peace and stability" and "curb the [US'] new interventionism" if they worked together (Lukin, 2021). As a result, Chinese evaluations of Russia's motivations and vulnerabilities are similar to Western judgments. While many Western experts believe that a clash between China and Russia is unavoidable, their Chinese colleagues see an opportunity to complement each other and collaborate on shared objectives.

3.3 EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING SINO-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

Unlike the previously mentioned domestic capabilities that each country has which determine the Sino-Russian relations and their readiness to cooperate, the international factors are represented by the external impactful actors within the global political sphere that influence both Russia and China to form an alliance and enhance their cooperation or disrupt their cohesiveness and cause them to split and maybe turn them against one another.

These international actors include a number of different countries and regions that influence Sino-Russian relations and how their level of cooperation within the Eurasian region; such as the EU, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, South America, and the Anglo Sphere. However, since the current study focuses on studying the influence of USA on such cooperation, the following information extracted from political and economic-related data in the literature pertains to the influence of USA as an international actor within the global political system upon Sino-Russian relations.

First of all, and based on the aforementioned, China could be perceived by the Russians as a probable threat in the future, and as far as I am concerned, if Russian policymakers do not prefer to take than fact into consideration then they should reconsider reviewing China's economic hegemony over the Eurasian region that is destined to prosper in the next few years thanks to BRI, and other investment projects, joint initiatives, and the globally accepted payment system that China uses. Therefore, this probable threat can make Russia a bit cautious in terms of the level of cooperation with China, which can threaten Sino-Russian levels of collaboration and convergence in the future.

But these threats can be a bit mitigated when another factor is added to the equation; USA. The U.S. policy toward both countries has already encouraged them to enhance their level of cooperation in so many aspects. USA has been waging a series of sanctions upon both Russia and China due to their repeated intentions to interfere in Ukraine and Taiwan respectively. As a result, the U.S. sanctions and pressures since the early 2010's intensified the level of strategic partnership between Russia and China in a comprehensive manner, and that could formulate a major challenges for USA itself and the West in general (Feng, 2022, P. 94).

Another problem instigated by USA toward China is the Sino-American trade war that took place in 2018, which once again, pushed China to strengthen its ties and improve its strategic partnership with Russia. In that case, Russia utilizes China's economic force to finance its requirements on different levels, while China also benefits from Russia's excellence in different industrial domains. For instance, the Sino-Russian cooperation that has been magnified since the 2018 trade war between USA and China allowed Russia to receive capital, investments, goods, and cheap labour, whereas China was successful in receiving energy resources and advanced militaristic technology (Jiang, 2022).

To a Chinese sensibility, the American competition is considered more threatening to its economy than its Russian counterpart. China is first foremost an economic super-power, and as a result, any other country that could compete with in on an economic level is instantly pushing it to form an alliance with this country's main adversary. In that case, USA represents that country, as it poses a huge economic challenge to China. This has pushed China to increase the level of cooperation with USA's main threat; Russia, in order to secure its strategic depth and make sure that it can withstand the U.S. dominance within the Western Pacific region without having to deal with any problems caused by Russia in the future. This cooperation has offered China with strategic advantages over USA. On the other hand, Russia does not consider USA the only threat to its national security, as it portrays the entirety of the U.S.-led NATO as a threat that prompts it to find its own alliance as well. And this alliance was already formed with China. Consequently, Russia believes that this interchangeable level of cooperation with china allows it to use China's economic power to support its militaristic and ideological competition against NATO (Pavel, Kirchberger & Sinjen, 2022, P. 296).

Furthermore, USA has been perceived by both Russia and China as a common threat that can bring them together and spur an improvement in their bilateral relations, due to the pressures that keep influencing their ability to formulate international relations with the rest of the world. These pressures imposed by USA hinder Russia's and China's ability to develop their own national strategies, and as a result, they were more encouraged to cooperate to face this external threat (Kaczmarek, 2021, P. 6).

One notable alliance that was formulated as a result of Russia and China perceiving USA as a common threat is BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). Although this alliance was not created to protect Sino-Russian relations from the American hegemony within the Eurasian region, it remains a strong evidence of how a country can act as an external factor that prompts two countries to be cooperating on a global scale. This was confirmed by who stated that these countries were led by Russia and China who sought to curb the U.S. global hegemony over trade, the economy, and the global political discourse (Nuruzzaman, 2020, P. 51). Moreover, BRICS is an alliance that was formed as a response to the increasing dominance of USA over the world. It was initiated by Russia and China, and it involves around 40% of the world's population, 30% of the entire world's land area, and its GDP is estimated to be about \$25 trillion (Singh, 2021, P. 30).

Moreover, according to the U.S. Department of State (2022), USA's interests within the Eurasian region revolve around the provision of assistance programs toward Eurasian states in order to help them integrate the pillars of liberalism and democratic rule into their political and economic systems, so that USA can benefit from new allies who follow a globalized open-market policy that can further consolidate its economic position as the world's biggest economic super-power. Additionally, USA attempts to eradicate the shackles of regressive communist ideologies that still haunt various post-Soviet states, especially in Eastern Europe, so that they can become productive and reliable allies to USA and the West.

Moreover, and Due to Beijing's actions harming its "interests, security, and values", NATO has selected China as one of its strategic priorities for the next ten years. The Western bloc's "interests, security, and values" are allegedly threatened by Beijing's aspirations and its "coercive practises," according to NATO, which has for the first time made China one of its strategic priorities. At a leader conference on June 29 in Spain, the alliance's new strategic concept was created, outlining its goals for the next ten years (NATO, 2022).

The toughest language that could be used to describe Russia as "the most serious and direct menace" to the alliance's peace and security was employed in the statement. It continued by stating that Beijing's growing links to Moscow, antagonistic posture toward Taiwan, and military aspirations presented "systemic difficulties." Aside from putting Taiwan in jeopardy, China is also alarmed its neighbours and significantly increasing its military might, notably with nuclear weapons. Jens Stoltenberg, the secretary general of NATO, claims that it disseminates false information from Russia and using cutting-edge technology to watch and rule its own citizens. He said, "China is not our enemy, but we must be open about the important concerns it brings (Aljazeera, 2022).

China replied on June 30 by denouncing NATO's proclamation as "totally meaningless" and stating that it disagreed with it "firmly." Western diplomats worry that China's hostility toward Taiwan may grow since Beijing has not denounced Russia's actions in Ukraine. China considers Taiwan to be a part of its territory; Taiwan makes no claims to independence, sovereignty, or international representation. NATO and the US have come under fire from China for supposedly inciting Russia to start a conflict while taking a neutral stance on the Ukraine problem. A few weeks before to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in

February, Chinese President Xi Jinping summoned Vladimir Putin to a meeting. Despite being aware that there were "no restrictions," they chose to work together (Peña, 2022).

The aforementioned extracted information indicates that the USA as an external factor has caused Sino-Russian relations to improve over the past few years, despite the increasing suspicious and fears shared by both Russia and China toward each other, and especially Russia, in the sense that Russia fears that the economic hegemony of China within the Eurasian region can push it out of the political scene and diminish its status and domination over various post-Soviet states.

3.4 CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES TO SINO-RUSSIA OVER EURASIA

The continual growth of nations and their alliances, in which nation states and organisations are players, is an example of the international system. On the other hand, a multipolar global order is being created by the polarisation of the international system and advancements in international relations, in which strong countries form alliances and control multilateralism's foreign policy. While it is critical to focus on Russia's projection of influence on the world scene. The disintegration of the USSR has resulted in economic weaknesses, which is a cause for worry since Russia has long aspired to be a great power. Russia chose the Greater Eurasia plan to oppose the unipolarity that the west was projecting and to carve out its own path for establishing domination and boosting its economy. Additionally, the initiative aims to advance the objectives of the Eurasian Economic Union. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the existing barriers to Sino-Russian cooperation, particularly those posed by BRI and economic cooperation.

3.4.1 China Over Eurasia

China has shown interest in building a Greater Eurasian relationship both formally and via experts. It's no accident that this interest raised once the United States' trade war escalated. China discovered that negotiating with the West will be challenging, much as Russia found after 2014, since the US is dedicated under Trump to containing China's ascent and preventing it from posing a danger to Western interests (Bolt, 2018).

The concept, or at least the notion of increased collaboration with Russia in Eurasia, is supported by the majority of Chinese specialists. According to a Chinese State Information

Centre article, "the successful application of Russian President Vladimir Putin's notion of a "Comprehensive Eurasian Partnership" Will be of critical strategic importance for the revival of the global structure," Li Zigu, the head of the Institute's Department of Eurasia, researches Russia's ambitions and, for even the most part, agrees with Russian thinking (Bhadrakumar, 2018). Since 1960, the Soviet Union and Russia have been seeking to build a "larger European family," according to Li. As part of the Greater Europe idea, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin suggested a new European economic framework "spanning Lisbon to Vladivostok" in 2010. On the other side, Western nations believe they won the Cold Confrontation and have continued to impose strategic pressure on Russia, forcing Moscow to admit defeat in the geopolitical conflict with the West Russia quickly realised that unification with the West was impossible (Barseghyan, 2017).

Russia's interest in Eurasia was piqued as a result of this. In the context of a changing economic climate, Li Zigu believes that, pushing Moscow to concede defeat in the West's geopolitical confrontation Russia rapidly realised that unity with the West was unattainable. Despite the fact that the project has a geopolitical bent and is mainly focused on the construction of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), China is a key participant owing to the initiative's synergy with China's planned Silk Road Economic Belt. Although there is some overlap between the GEP and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the GEP's openness, inclusiveness, and coordinated development ideals are comparable. As a consequence, the GEP might complement China's objective of maintaining Eurasian prosperity and stability while also influencing future international order (Dobbs, *The Eurasian Economic Union: A Bridge to Nowhere?*, 2015).

Despite the difficulties in aligning the GEP with China's BRI, Linking Russian and Chinese economic plans is "important not only to the creation of the Eurasian Economic Partnership, but also, in some respects, to its future prospects," according to Li Yongquan, head of the Chinese Association for East European, Russian, and Central Asian Studies. He believes ASEAN will join a new organisation, and that "in the future, matching China's and the Russian-led EEU's growth objectives would drive the Eurasian Economic Partnership's construction."

Zhao Huasheng is more hesitant regarding Russia's ambition in a 2018 piece, arguing that "it is not apparent if the Greater Eurasian Partnership would be a long-term strategy or just

a transitory policy for Russia." He also doubts "that Russia has the force to push the Greater Eurasian Partnership; hence it is questionable how far the Greater Eurasian Partnership can progress." "There is still rationale and urgency in strengthening economic, diplomatic, and security cooperation in the larger Eurasian area," Zhao says. "Greater Eurasian cooperation is in China's national interests," "Especially because it promotes the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative," he says, "China, Russia, and other interested nations should endeavour to enhance Eurasian cooperation (Abbas, 2020)."

Zhao displays more confidence in a recent piece, claiming that China is a crucial driver in Greater Eurasia since no political option is necessary. He suggests that China and Russia finish the Belt and Road Initiative, definitely consider starting trade negotiations with the EEU, plan cooperation and integration within the SCO, incorporate their respective agreements in cooperation projects, and work together to address regional financial inclusion issues (Huasheng, 2019). Russia and India are by far China's most significant special interests in the establishment of Greater Eurasia. China should make even more innovative use of the CRI (China, Russia, India) mechanism to strengthen its content, reduce Sino-Indian tensions, increase trust, and expand regional cooperation between China, Russia, and India. Beijing seems to endorse Russia's idea of broader collaboration in Greater Eurasia today, and has been working on its execution as well as alternative interpretations. It should be considered a Sino-Russian effort instead of a Russian one (Lukin, 2021).

3.4.2 Russia Over Eurasia

The establishment and growth of the Greater Eurasia community is not only a Russian goal. It's a reasonable reaction to the world's geopolitical dynamics. It is built on a rising relationship among Russia and China, which has been propelled by China's development, the breakup of the Soviet Union, and the formation of a new Russia. The US and its allies are fuelling it by attempting to stifle both nations' advancement within the Western-dominated international system. Other countries in the area have their own motives for getting more involved in the creation of an independent Eurasian system (Sushentsov, 2015).

Greater Eurasia fills the hole left by the Soviet Union's demise, which gave the 1990s the appearance of unipolarity. Consequently, most Eurasian nations felt powerless in the face of rising demands from the US and its allies in a unipolar world. The desire for a multipolar

world became greater, and it eventually became a reality. Greater Eurasia had become a component of the multipolar world that was forming (Entin, 2016).

Internal development will decide Russia's capacity to become a global powerhouse. Externally, active participation in Eurasian integration, the establishment of Greater Eurasia, and the deepening of connections with China, India, and the countries of Central, South, and Southeast Asia are all becoming increasingly apparent. Moscow's efforts to exert independent influence over the development of Greater Europe have been continually rejected by the West, and it seems that this rejection will continue forever. All ideas that benefit Russia include cultural variety, non-interference in other nations' domestic matters, compassion and tolerance as virtues, and local economic goals. Russia's capacity to use this to build an independent power centre, and whether it will collapse to another as a result of its own weakness, is totally dependent on its own capabilities.

The Russian influence on many countries in Eurasia, in terms of the manner through which their political discourse is structured, has not been lost over the years. This can be confirmed by Powell (2020) who indicated that the 26 states that once formed the Soviet Union are still politically influenced by Russia, even though the Union has collapsed for almost thirty years.

Tskhovrebadez (2016, P. 66) also confirmed this by stating that Russia still enjoys a substantial level of hegemony over post-Soviet countries by using different forms of strategic and political tactics that direct these states to succumb to the will of Russia regarding different issues. For instance, Russia tends to impose sanctions and cut ties with post-Soviet countries that refuse to adopt the Russian political discourse, while those who follow it might be rewarded with security deals.

Wu (2020, P. 100) also confirmed that notion by concluding that the Russian political influence over post-Soviet countries is still highly noticeable, in addition to the fact that Russia shares a wide range of borders with a multitude of countries in Central Asia. This dominance stems from Russia's interest in maintaining its foothold in post-Soviet states, especially in Southeast Asia, where it can reap its geopolitical benefits using different strategies that can achieve stability and prevent any potential political risks in this region. Russia has always been a strong key-player within the international political sphere, but it seeks even more power by surpassing China even though it remains one of its most important allies in the region, especially against USA (Treewisessorn, 2019, P. 42).

One of these strategies is a common tactic used by Russia that allows its policymakers to protect their strategic depth and solidify Russia's political influence and regional dominance within the Eurasian region is the initiation of "Frozen-Conflicts". Whenever a country that falls into the Russian sphere; post-Soviet sphere, exhibits any tendencies to join the Western bloc, the EU, or NATO for example, it finds itself in a situation where secessionist movements are being supported by Russia in order to elevate the level of conflict and instability within the country, and as a result, Western countries refuse to accept its ascension to their alliance due to their instable case (Albu, 2020, P. 68-69).

Accordingly, the countries that Russia still dominates partially or entirely that are situated within the Eurasian region are eleven in total, and they have been subject to Russia's frozen conflict strategy and had their stability rattled by the Russian involvement these countries' domestic political sphere. These countries include Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan; given the fact that Armenia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan are considered totally influenced by the Russian political influence. The most notable frozen conflict waged in these countries to tighten Russia's hold on the region include supporting secessionist movements in Transnistria in Moldova, Abkhazia in Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, and also Lugansk and Donetsk in Ukraine (Stoicescu, 2018, P. 1).

It has been concluded that Russia tends to enhance its political stance by interfering in other countries' political sphere. In contrast, the Chinese political doctrine seems to be largely different than its Russia counterpart. To further elaborate, Chinese policymakers do not tend to place more emphasis on other countries' political systems or governmental approaches. Indeed, it focuses more on becoming a strong ally to these countries on an economic level by magnifying trade and foreign investments with them. This sense of political apathy stems from the fact that China feels indifferent toward any country's political approaches, and refuses to interfere in any states' internal political matters (Dobbins, Shatz & Wyne, 2018, P. 11).

The China Power Project (2022) confirmed this by stating that China has always maintained a no-interference policy toward and all neighbouring states, as announced by its policymakers and officials who definitely refuse to interfere in countries' internal affairs. This neutrality and abstention on China's part is considered a distinct feature by which

China's foreign policy is characterized by, as opposed to Russia, to the point that Chinese propaganda officials always tend to portray China as a country that has never invaded other countries.

Liik (2021, P. 8) also confirmed this sense of neutrality by concluding that China has a tendency to work with anyone and construct lines of collaboration with several states without being interested in interfering in these countries' political internal affairs, which portrays China as a pragmatic power that does not intend to impose any ideological stance or political scheme upon any country or regime. This indicates that China's political capabilities are not extensive enough to elevate its status alone, and if China ever needs to enhance its position as a super-power and one of the key-actors within the global political system the it should not depend on its political power or any other political instrument; including interference in other countries' internal affairs, or instigating a series of frozen conflicts in neighbouring countries to influence their political discourse. Instead, and unlike Russia, China prefers to use economic strategies to create a sense of dominance over other countries, which justifies the analysis of the following domain.

3.4.3 Limits of Sino Russia Ties

Despite the expanding ties between the two nations, a number of basic obstacles stand in the way of cooperation. Since both countries are very concerned with preserving their strategic autonomy, neither would want to form legally binding security agreements with the other, like those that bind NATO or the American allies in the Indo-Pacific. When it comes to global security, the two countries have different interests. Refrain from giving your approval to Chinese support for things like Russian military operations in Africa and Syria, the annexation of Crimea, or trouble in eastern Ukraine. Similar to this, Moscow only supports China to seem to support the One China policy, whether in regards to Taiwan or the nine-dash line in the South China Sea.

As rival superpowers, Russian and Chinese spies are competing with one another. In 2020 and 2021, further proof of Chinese aggression in Russia emerged, including cyber activities intended to get advanced missile system designs. Moscow really believes that any major power will ultimately engage in espionage, even against its closest allies, despite the Russian counterintelligence agency's professional objections. Moscow is thus unlikely to have an emotional response to these actions. The level of distrust that presently exists between

Chinese and Russian intelligence agencies and covert organisations, however, is likely to impede future collaboration on delicate matters like coordinated information warfare against mutual enemies.

The development of China's economy has severely strained its ties with Russia. The economic climate in Russia is becoming less favourable for international investors, and Chinese companies have historically not made substantial investments there. Russia is a very challenging nation for Chinese firms to operate in owing to continuously changing regulatory requirements, extensive corruption, and governmental control over many lucrative areas, despite the increase of bilateral trade.

The US's economic sanctions on both China and Russia make cooperation between the two nations more difficult. Due in part to their limited exposure to the Russian market and the lack of resources available to conduct compliance for current or potential Russian clients, Chinese commercial banks have been extremely cautious in providing loans and services to Russian entities since the United States and the EU imposed sanctions against Russia. Large loans from politically connected Chinese banks have sometimes been given to Yamal LNG; the market and politics have a significant impact on these loans.

Similar to this, due to U.S. export restrictions on that company, Russian imports of Huawei equipment were halted, and Moscow has generally been more cautious when growing its relationship with Huawei to create 5G communications in Russia. In order to achieve this, Russia and China signed a \$400 billion gas agreement in 2014. Presidents of China's Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin met on May 8, 2015, in Moscow, where they resolved to combine the Eurasian Economic Union with the Silk Road Economic Belt. Aspirations for economic cooperation will be hampered by these political and economic restrictions, and China and Russia won't be able to openly unite against the West (Alexander, 2021).

3.4.4 Contemporary Challenges

It is stated that in order to become a global player in the international system in the twenty-first century, a state must strive for economic parity. A \$400 billion gas deal between Russia and China was inked in 2014 to do this. The integration of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road Economic Belt was agreed by Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin during a meeting in Moscow on May 8, 2015. The agreement

covers political organisations, institutional investors, banking institutions, monetary systems, and financial organisations that serve as trade hubs between China and Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (Sushentsov, 2015). On the other hand, this macro bloc seeks to maintain ties to the global economy while opposing US-led unipolarity. With Eurasian growth and connectivity, the Greater Eurasia plan—which combines China and Russia and is a crucial partner—advances their reconciliation. Conversely, the EEU and China's Belt and Road Initiative together offer both nations great economic potential, but they also create certain difficulties and problems where the goals of the two nations diverge (Luzyanin, 2022).

3.4.4.1 Militaristic challenges

One might argue that Russia, despite the increasing economic power of China, is still a dominant military power within the Eurasian and Central Asia region, thanks to its efforts to maintain its status as a state that dominates this region's security, through the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and other initiatives to build and upgrade its military bases all over the region as a tactical strategy that can allow Russia to withstand the potential Chinese encroachment of Russia's regional hegemony (Georgiev, 2022, P. 27-28).

However, when it comes to militaristic capabilities of both Russia and China, the following information should be taken into consideration (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2022):

- a. China: China is considered the world's second largest military spending country, with an estimate of \$293 billion in 2021 that was solely dedicated to enhancing its militaristic capabilities, which marks an increase of about 4.7% compared with 2020. China specifically targets the enhancement of its military as one of the most emphasized aspects of its five-year plan that spans from 2021 to 2025 that should receive more spending.
- b. Russia: Russia on the other hand has decided to increase its militaristic expenditure by only 2.9%, with an estimate of \$65.9 billion in 2021. Although this sounds below the Chinese level of military expenditure, Russia has raised its expenditure toward the military since 2020 after a 4-year decline due to low energy prices. However, things took a positive turn for the Russians when oil and gas prices went up and generated enough revenue for Russia to boost its military spending in 2021.

Nevertheless, Russia still possesses one crucial advantage over China, and that is the destructive power of nuclear weapons. Russia is, without a doubt, a nuclear super-power, and it is at the top of the list of global nuclear powers. Russia happens to be the number one country in having the biggest amount of nuclear warheads, with a total of 4,477 warheads by 2022, surpassing USA, China, France, the UK, Pakistan, India, Israel, North Korea, and South Africa. China on the other hand lags behind in the chart with only a modest number of warheads that reached 350 warheads in 2022. However, China is not standing idly by while Russia remains a threatening nuclear super-power, and it is already planning to increase the level of nuclear research and eventually its capabilities to produce more warheads (Federation of American Scientists, 2022).

3.4.4.2 Eurasian economic union

In 1994, Kazakhstan's President Nursuktan suggested the Eurasian Economic Union, claiming that a forum for economic cooperation was required. The Eurasian Economic Community was founded by five nations in 2000 after 20 years of development. The Eurasian Economic Union is the last phase of economic unification. As part of their merger in 2007, Belarus, Russia, and Kazakhstan agreed to and signed a custom union and a single economic zone. The parties agreed on three levels of common economic space, according to the document:

- a. The Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC).
- b. The Custom Union for Kazakhstan, Belarus, and Russia (CU).
- c. The Eurasian Economic Union (EurAsEC).

In accordance with the terms of this agreement, participants may utilise common markets for unified laws, shared energy, transportation, and communication infrastructure, a working tax system, and free movement of people, products, and money (Dobbs, 2015). It is essential because member states that have created institutional infrastructure are still in the planning and development stages of creating a framework and integrating procedures for their markets. In the year after Kyrgyzstan and Armenia joined the Eurasian Economic Treaty, it entered into effect.

The EEU's favourable location, size, and population show that it has the potential to significantly affect the global economy. The formation of shared energy markets, the elimination of barriers to the movement of goods and money, the establishment of a common transportation hub, a coordinated agro-industry strategy, and the construction of a single EEU market are among the goals of the EEU until 2025. One of its objectives is to maximise the potential for global trade for interregional and cross-border cooperation. Other objectives include maintaining macroeconomic stability, fostering favourable business and investment climates, enhancing the scientific and technological potential of many member states, ensuring access to funds, infrastructure, and human resource development. The EEU's goal is to build partnerships with other nations in order to accelerate the economic integration process. Their purpose is to reach out to third-world countries and develop free trade agreements, memorandums of understanding, and non-preferential trade agreements. Serbia, Vietnam, and Egypt were successful in joining the EEU and signing the treaty. In addition, talks are continuing with India, Iran, Singapore, Israel, and South Korea (Togt, 2016).

According to Sergei, Russia's goal in establishing the EEU is to retake control over the post-Soviet space in order to unify Eurasia. It may be claimed, nevertheless, that Russia's objective is to strengthen its integration rather than just gain a foothold in the post-Soviet region by diminishing American influence across Eurasia as well as in post-Soviet countries. Russia is conscious of its current economic progress. In order to gain economic domination, Russia is focused on economic integration and extending its sphere of influence throughout the Eurasian continent (Sergei, 2017).

3.4.4.3 Combining eeu and sreb

In May 2015, Presidents Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping signed a statement to coordinate development and building between the EEU and the SREB. This proclamation is the product of an acceptable compromise between two nations, in which Moscow supported China's active position in Eurasia and China chose to handle the Eurasian Economic Union as a bargaining group comparable. This agreement is significant since it has received widespread support for connecting land routes in order to boost economic activity throughout the continent. According to Karaganov, the effort to connect the EEU with the Silk Road is a significant instrument for collaboration between Beijing and Russia under the EEU-SREB arrangement. Furthermore, in 2018, the EEU and Beijing inked an agreement for trade and

economic cooperation among EEU members. This agreement focuses on lowering trade barriers and streamlining customs processes in order to improve economic integration. This method aids the development of relations between EEU member states and China in order to maximise economic benefits (Pantucci, 2016).

In reaction to rising military and economic tensions with the United States, China and Russia declared themselves "excellent allies" in 2019 and pledged to work together for economic integration and prosperity in Eurasia. On the other hand, it has been stated that putting the EEU and SREB together is one of Asia's most important undertakings, benefiting all participating nations. However, there is a concern that BRI will have an impact on the EEU (KOBINSKAYA, 2020).

Since EEU states are involved in trade routes from China to Europe as transit or final destinations, the project's completion is crucial for the Eurasian Economic Union. As part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, China will establish a free trade zone. All EEU members agreed, however, that the massive trade imbalance with China would provide significant difficulties for many domestic agriculture companies. The main reason for Russia's participation in SREB is to harness China's potential as an investor and utilise it to build an infrastructure network throughout the Eurasian continent. The region's competitiveness would increase as a result of this connectivity, which would also allow transient trade and investment movements between Europe and Asia. It will also help the Eurasian Economic Union form an alliance with other countries and regional groups for greater economic competitiveness and international influence. The following tactics are being pursued by the EEU and SREB in an effort to advance intra-national development: Russia is interested in expanding its border regions via greater economic integration, whereas China can develop Western regions and incorporate them into the Eurasian continent.

Li argues that taking into account China's and Russia's goals are crucial for the chances of organisational integration in the future as well as for constructing a reliable EEU system. Given that China, Russia, ASEAN, and the Eurasian Economic Union are all significant economic organisations, cooperation between the two may lead to advantageous Eurasian economic integration. However, Russia is now seen by the Greater Eurasia Partnership as a "collaboration centre" (GEP). Sukhankin credits all of this success to Chinese measures,

which are shifting the centre of gravity of global commerce toward the enormous continent of the Eurasian heartland and away from the high seas. Furthermore, bilateral commerce between the Kremlin and Beijing has grown dramatically, with the two countries' combined trade set to reach \$200 billion by 2024. Because greater commerce necessitates free trade zones, China is now negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with the EEU. The region's existing Free Trade Zones may link China to the EEU and Europe (Cornett, 2021).

China prioritises the development of the East-West transit corridor, whereas Russia focuses on infrastructure development along the North-South meridian. According to Malle, Russia's economic progress faces significant hurdles from China. When the interests of both nations vary, these issues will arise. This scenario, however, may be addressed appropriately if Russia and China work out their differences.

According to Sangar's study, SREB's goal is to focus on rail and road networks while overlooking the transportation possibilities of inland waterways. Furthermore, Asaul, Malygin, Anatoly, Mokhov, Vladimir, and Seliverstove explain that the construction of SREB will allow prospective access to the Northern Sea Route to EEU nations, forming a new Eurasian transit route. Due to rising influence and the presence of China in the area, many predict Russian influence in Central Asia will wane. Furthermore, trade with China has the potential to stifle the industrialisation of EEU countries. This idea, however, is premature since Russia's footing in Central Asia, along with Chinese support, is strong enough (Kurtz, 2010).

According to Syroezhkin, merging the EEU and SREB will provide possible advantages to member nations, but it will also become a rival of the EEU in certain ways. Though the rail network is crucial and significant for linking the EEU and the SREB by moving commodities, it is stated that trains will never be able to replace ships because of the limited capacity for transporting containers. On addition, China's Silk Road is expected to reduce Russian commerce in the Eurasian continent. Transnational terrorism will be the most difficult and dangerous problem. The closeness of Russia's border to Central Asia and ultimately Afghanistan might stymie the linking of these two projects. Furthermore, the lack of a platform for integrating via these projects, where China and Russia may build mechanisms to offset probable security and economic threats, is a major obstacle. Due to a certain degree of divergence in interests, this idea also emerges that Russia cannot become

a long-term partner of China. However, the debate about Russian influence continues, with the Russian role seeming to be limited owing to China's dominant involvement in Eurasia. The fact that China is the world's largest economy is undeniable, but it is not a hegemon. The dominance of China in Eurasia will be naturally balanced by this wider Eurasia relationship. From China's standpoint, there will be no loss since China has already established a footing in Eurasia; it's a win-win approach for China, but with some agreed-upon collaboration between Russia and China (Cornett, 2021).

According to a new Silk Road Briefing report, China intends to strengthen Eurasian commerce by building connectivity between Central Asia, Russia, and Pakistan (CPEC) as well as a Northern Sea route to Europe through the Arctic. Furthermore, in 2021, China expands free trade development projects with Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, as part of the Eurasian Economic Union. This power axis between China and Russia suggests that both countries have put their differences aside and are developing their military, political, and economic connections. Joe Biden, the newly elected President of the United States, stated in a recent remark that the US will be more successful in dealing with Russia's aggressive actions, something that the previous government failed to achieve. The ascent of China and the comeback of Russia, as well as its linkage in Eurasia, are concerning for the United States, the West, and allies (Cornett, 2021).

4. RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

The previously conducted document analysis used several studies and official reports from the literature that has been reviewed in Chapter two along with other studies that were added to solidify the scope of the analysis. All information that had been extracted from these documents was analyzed in accordance with the theoretical framework that had also been determined in Chapter 1.

Neo-realism was mainly used as a theory that sheds light upon the domestic capabilities that prompt Russia and China to cooperate within the Eurasian region, along with the USA as an international factor that intensifies this level of cooperation. Political, economic, and militaristic domains characterized these capabilities, given the fact that no country excels in all three of them needs need to cooperate with the others to adjust its shortcomings and rectify the domains in which they lack severely or partially.

Accordingly, it has been found that Russia enjoys a higher political status than China within the Eurasian region and it views this region as its post-Soviet legacy or at least its extended strategic depth that must be protected and pacified by any means necessary. These means include the use of frozen conflicts by which Russia can easily equip some movements that for defection from their countries in order to raise the level of tension and internal conflict in these countries so that they remain under its thumb and hegemony.

Russia is heavily engaged in the political sphere within the Eurasian region, and it always interferes once it detects some threats arising from any of the post-Soviet states, and for that reason, Russia holds to keys to the Eurasian political scene. On the other hand, China does not prefer to interfere in other countries internal affairs and tends to refrain from engaging in political conflicts with other Eurasian states, as it follows a different path that depends more on economic strategies to penetrate these nations and less on frozen conflicts.

These findings indicate that China needs to cooperate with Russia as an influential and integral political super-power in order to utilize its ability to influence the discourse within the Eurasian political sphere, and push the rulers of its states to accept a specific decision or pass certain legislations that can facilitate the expansion of Chinese investments in an effective and a quick manner. This is also going to allow China to benefit from the political

hegemony of Russia over these Eurasian states in order to strengthen its main future economic initiative that can place China as the centre of the world's trade; BRI.

On the other hand, Russia also needs to cooperate with China to further enhance its political status within the Eurasian region and amongst all post-Soviet states. This can be attributed to the fact that for Russia to maintain its political strength within the region it will require substantial economic support from China to be able to finance its strategies and plans to keep these states under its political influence. Therefore, the interchangeable relationship between Russia and China pertains to the political power of Russia that China can use to support its economic decisions and the economic power of China that Russia can use to finance its political dominance.

As far as the economic domain is concerned, it has been found that China enjoys a better economic status than Russia within the Eurasian region, thanks to its no-interference policy and ability to conduct business with any nation around the planet, using different strategies to further enhance its GDP and size of trade with other Eurasian states; such as maintaining good economic relations with these countries by directing huge investments toward their infrastructures and businesses, linking financial systems within the world's trade sphere with a globally accepted payment system, and initiating a promising economic project; BRI.

On the other hand, Russia has been found to be lagging behind China due to its poor economic performance. Russia's GDP is not as big as its Chinese counterpart; neither is the size of trade between it and other countries in Eurasia. Russia also depends heavily on Chinese investments, goods, and trade. China provides Russia with different goods and services, along with different types of investments and projects that allow Russia to fund its infrastructure projects and create more prosperity that in turn initiates a nationwide sense of security and financial stability for each Russian citizen.

Additionally, Russia's overall economic capabilities do not support its initiatives to compete against BRI, and its only chance is to either merge with it somehow, with it already did by linking the EEU with BRI, or influence other countries in Eurasia, from the post-Soviet sphere, do not accept to be part of BRI, which will negatively impact China's promising project. Although the second choice might be effective in deterring China's encroachment over the Eurasian region, it is not considered possible now, because Russia still needs China's

economic support and any move against its economic plans for the future can sabotage Sino-Russian relations.

It is worth noting that I tend to believe that until Russia becomes economically stronger than China, it is more likely that Russia will begin to undermine China and use it as a secondary force within the Eurasian region instead of perceiving it as an equal partner. Therefore, it appears that the economic-based Sino-Russian relation is in favour of China thanks to the high dependence of Russia on the Chinese economy, and the inability of Russia to curb China's economic growth and dominance over the Eurasian region in the future.

The militaristic domain is another aspect of Sino-Russian domestic capabilities that influence the two countries' tendency to cooperate within the Eurasian region. Consequently, it has been found that Russia does not direct its budget spending toward the enhancement of the military as much as China. This is because China attempts to protect its economic interests by possessing an unmatched military force at least within the Eurasian region.

On top of that, China's trade with Russia is a bit directed toward benefitting from Russia by providing it with goods and investment in exchange for advance Russian military technology. This can further magnify China's militaristic capabilities and pose a direct threat to Russia in the future. When it comes to Russia itself, it realizes this fact very well and, as a result, keeps enhancing its nuclear capabilities and create more warheads that can serve as precautionary measures and an effective deterrent weapons respectively in the future against any probable Chinese attacks.

Therefore, it seems that Sino-Russian relations revolve around their militaristic capabilities that can limit each other's abilities to achieve their strategic objectives and self-interests in the future. Moreover, although China spends more money and allocates more financial resources to the enhancement of its arsenal and military power, Russia is still extremely superior in terms of nuclear power. Thus, there is a sense of balance in Sino-Russian relations regarding the militaristic domain.

Furthermore, it has also been found that both Russia and China are well aware of the bad history that once disrupted their relations in the past, as they are mindful of each other's weaknesses and strengths than can influence a schism in the Sino-Russian relations in the future. Russia once decided to change the structure of its ideological approach during the

mid-1950s and 1960s and followed a different path as opposed to China whose policymakers did not perceive Russia as a true communist country and considered themselves communism's vanguard.

This led to a split in relations, and turned both countries on each other, to the point that they almost went to war and they could easily have used nuclear weapons to eradicate one another. It is worth mentioning that the split had not ended until Gorbachev conducted an official mission to visit China and abolish all disputes between the two countries. Although this move was made a bit too late for Soviet Russia whose policymakers could not stop its demise a couple of months later, it should be noted that China was not the country to start peaceful negotiations, which is an evidence of China's animosity toward Russia and that Russia's inevitable need to have China on its side once again.

The incident of the Sino-Soviet split will always be put into consideration by both Russian and Chinese policymakers as they continue their cooperation within the Eurasian region as a reminder that any party can, at any moment, wage a series of attacks or cause the level of cooperation to deteriorate. Therefore, they will always be treating each other with extreme caution and try, to the best of their abilities, to prevent any future conflict between each other until one of them become strong enough to withstand any opposing move made by the other party. Until then, both countries need each other to help achieve their self-interests within the Eurasian region and continue to cooperate while being cautious of each other at all times.

However, there seems to be a favourable opportunity by seizing which Sino-Russian relations have already been intensified and can be further capitalized on in the future to improve the level of cooperation between the two countries.

This opportunity is represented by the common threat that challenges both Russia's and China's ability to expand within the Eurasian region, which is the USA. American pressures and sanctions that have been directed to curb both Russia's and China's political, economic, and militaristic power caused Sino-Russian relations to be enhanced and pushed both countries closer together.

The USA leads several conglomerates and is considered by Russia and China as a super-power that rules the world based on a uni-polar system, within which it plays the role of a gatekeeper as it determines which country is allowed to improve its capabilities based on it

political ideologies. Both Russia and China perceives this as an unfair system that should be transformed into a multi-polar system, and this is why they both initiated BRICS as an alliance that can withstand the American influence over the global political sphere, and strengthen each others' positions in order to overcome any sanctions imposed upon any of them in the future.

Based on the concluded findings, it can be indicated that Sino-Russian cooperation is curtailed by the following limitations and challenges, which helps answer the first research question "What are the major limitations and challenges that China and Russia would face in their Eurasian cooperation?"

Limitations: The limitations can be outlined as follows:

- a. China's lack of political influence as opposed to Russia which seems to be in control of multiple post-Soviet countries. However, this might not disrupt Sino-Russian relations or curb their cooperation thanks to China's comprehensive and inclusive economic policy.
- b. Russia's lack of economic power can create an asymmetric and disproportionate level of cooperation that tips in favour of China and turn Russia into a dependent country rather than an equal to China.
- c. Historical ordeals that happened in the past between Russia and China, such as the Sino-Soviet Split, which can occur once again and cause another schism in Sino-Russian relations and force the two countries to turn on one another, thus ending their cooperation within the region.

Challenges: The limitations can be outlined as follows:

- a. The constant U.S. threat posed by sanctions and pressures can be perceived as common challenges to Sino-Russian relations and can slow down the pace of their cooperation in multiple domains.
- b. The excessive nuclear power possessed by Russia that surpasses that of china poses a threat to China itself and challenges its abilities to become a militaristic super-power in the region in order to protect its Asian interests.

- c. The Chinese economic encroachment over the Eurasian region using regional and global integrative trade paths; such as BRI, which can undermine Russia's future economic capabilities and deprive it of any chances of becoming powerful enough to maintain its political status and influence over post-Soviet states within the Eurasian region.

The USA is also interested in interfering in the Eurasian region and gaining a foothold within the Eastern turf of the world, which portrays it as a constant threat to both China and Russia, and push them to enhance their cooperation. This is why USA exerts efforts to formulate an alliance with multiple post-Soviet states, which indicates that USA's interests within the Eurasian region revolve around the following objectives:

- a. The need to disseminate its democratic doctrine to pacify Eurasia.
- b. Prepare Eurasian states within the post-Soviet sphere to accept liberalism and become strong allies with the USA against Russia.
- c. Utilize the America-Eurasian alliance to curb any political, economic, or militaristic progress achieved by either Russia or China.
- d. Prevent Russia and China from protecting themselves against U.S.-led sanctions by directing the political discourse within the Eurasian region against them.

These interests can never be achieved as long as a strong Sino-Russian level of cooperation is maintained between the two countries, and that is because the USA's ideology in terms of politics and the economy gravitates more toward democracy and liberalism, while Russia and China both denounce democracy and maintain an authoritarian rule. The USA cannot afford to witness the spirit of its development; which is democracy, to be diminished by strong economic and militaristic super-powers. As a result, it tends to impose economic and trade sanctions on Russia and China to limit their progress within the region and protect its liberal ideology that is responsible for its development in the first place. These findings help answer the second research question "How American interests are halted by Sino-Russian Cooperation in Eurasian Region which compel US to act to limit their influence?".

Moreover, Russia should feel concerned if not extremely alerted by the rise of the Chinese economic powerhouse and the opportunities that can be seized by Chinese policymakers to enhance their country's political status in the future. One piece of evidence that reflects this

concern is Russia's decision to create the EEU, which was supposed to consolidate Russia's political stance by formulating an alliance with prominent Eurasian states. Another evidence is the uncontrollable amount of warheads that Russia has that surpasses those of China's nuclear weapons, and that could be attributed to the fact that Russia witnesses China's increasing military spending without being able to match it, due to the ineffective economic performance as opposed to China. Therefore, Russia's interests within the Eurasian region can be negatively affected by China's economic rise and militaristic advancement, and its strategic depth can be threat extent a certain extent by this Chinese progress. These findings can help answer the third research question "Will Chinese rise in Eurasian and Greater Eurasian region trigger Russia's regional sensitivities?"

The current thesis encompassed theoretical and methodological aspects to discuss the manner through which Sino-Russian relations are formulated and the limitations and challenges that threaten their cooperation within the Eurasian region. I managed to use a complementary approach by mainly utilizing neo-realism as a prominent international relations theory that studies the domestic capabilities and external factors that influence this cooperation.

These findings verified the research hypothesis, and indicates that Sino-Russian relations appear to be running smoothly now, but they might be troubled by one of these challenges, if not all of them, in the future. To sum up the nature of Sino-Russian relations, Russia has concerns about China's rise to become an economic super-power within the Eurasian region, which can prevent Russia from playing its role as a renowned and prominent political mediator and influential power amongst post-Soviet states. China's BRI can help achieve this Chinese dominance with ease, and push Russia out of the Eurasian context indefinitely. However, there is still a great deal of cooperation between the two countries, since they both view USA as a common threat.

Furthermore, the possible repercussions of a Sino-Russian condominium over Eurasia on the future realignment of the relative positions of the major regional powers are then examined by Chinese scholars. If the GEP and the BRI combine their strengths, Eurasia could develop into a regional bloc that wants to compete with industrialized regions and also increase the "economic discursive rights" of the rising powers in establishing a new international order, claims Li Ziguo, a Russia expert at a think tank connected to the Chinese ministry of foreign

affairs. According to Yang Lei, the EU, Japan, and India's cooperative objectives will eventually change as a result of a stronger Eurasian integration under Sino-Russian joint leadership. According to Yang Lei, the two programmes operating together would have a "deep effect on the framework of international relations." The EU will cooperate more closely with China and Russia in particular due to its "increasing sense of independence from the United States." Because they want to cooperate with China and "exert an effective impact on the rule-making process," they often act in this way. EU members are reluctant to cooperate with the EEU since doing so would increase its credibility and strengthen Russia's position. According to the theory, the EU will need to cooperate with both countries as long as the GEP and the BRI remain intertwined. Washington will be forced to "seek cohabitation" with them in order to protect its regional interests, much as how Eurasia will drift away from the US as China and Russia pursue regional integration.

Although cooperation between China and Russia in the Eurasian region is expected to grow in the future, there will be challenges along the way due to historical and global political reasons. The convergence and coordination of China's and Russia's foreign policies seem to be the result of several centripetal factors working together. These factors are significantly influenced by geopolitics and geo-economics. There are various geopolitical opportunities for cooperation in light of the turbulent conflict between China, Russia, and the United States in Eurasia and the Asia-Pacific region. More geo-economic cooperation is encouraged by the attractiveness, acceptability, and accessibility of the Chinese and Russian markets for bilateral trade and investment. Trade and investment in energy transcend political and economic boundaries due to their substantial influence on global economic activity both within and outside of state borders, making it a potent policy tool. Effective diplomacy has been shown to encourage cooperation in the achievement of political and economic convergence that can be shared and developed by all parties.

Consequently, further studies are required to be conducted using different regions and major super-powers, such as the EU and the GCC, as international factors that influence Sino-Russian relations, given the fact that I recommend using the GCC and the Arab World as an external factor, instead of USA, due to the promising economic and political future that this region of the world awaits.

The research also recommends conducting various studies that address Sino-American relations and Russo-American relations as well, to use the current thesis as a reference material that can be integrated within a comparison between these relations, to the most benefitted party, given the fact that the USA, Russia, and China are considered the super-powers that can shape the structure of international relations in the future.



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