



RESEARCH PAPER

Central Asia: A Testing Ground of Sino-Russian Energy Partnership

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ABSTRACT

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Central Asia, once an exclusive zone of Tsarist, Soviet, and post-Soviet Russia, has transformed into a region inviting major players of the world to compete for region's energy resources. The region's history has been dominated by the 'Great Game' fought between Tsarist Russia and the empire of British in the middle of the 19th century. The growing trend of multi-polarity in international politics and a struggle for accessing depleting energy resources, particularly oil and gas, have triggered a fight for resources often dubbed as 'New Great Game' that is capable of determining the future of international political and economic system. This study offers a critical examination of power balancing acts in the energy theater of Central Asia between the US, Russia and China by exploring the energy alliances and partnerships in Central Asia. But, more specifically, it investigates the strengths and weaknesses of the Sino-Russian energy partnership and its repercussions for the US in the Central Asian region. It is a qualitative study that emphasizes exploratory and analytical design to investigate the prospects of great power competition in Central Asia over energy resources. Analyzing the challenges confronting their partnership, it seems improbable that the dynamics of power shift in Sino-Russian bilateral ties would result into slowing down the pace of their partnership. Both Russia and China, in fact, are offered great benefits through collaboration than to confront each other.

Introduction

Central Asian region is going through a major power rebalancing with the decline in the power of Russia and rise in China's influence. China has made phenomenal breakthroughs in Central Asian energy game in a short span of time. The rise of China in the region is mainly associated with its extensive dream for

regional connectivity and appetite for the region's energy riches beside other factors. Unlike the U.S., China does not attach any conditions of political reforms from the governments of Central Asian republics while making any offers. Contrary to Russians, Chinese do not put political pressures to keep Central Asia in its usual orientation.

While Chinese influence is growing throughout the Eurasian continent, the expansion of its geopolitical and geo-economic clout is highly manifested in the Central Asian region where China has learnt the way to manage the concerns of Russia over its increasing regional clout. With the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) supposed to expand the power or influence of China in Eurasia, preserving equilibrium with Russia in the region seems to be a great test of Chinese diplomacy in which it seems successful so far. Managing Russia's concerns which are another challenge for Chinese diplomacy, Beijing is clear-sighted to accommodating Russia, because it engages with the republics of Central Asia chiefly on economic matters. China seems careful not to annoy Russia by making any unconcealed push into the issues of political or military nature, the area where Russia shows zero tolerance. To maintain a delicate balance in China's soft power presence and Russia's media power in the region is another aspect of their energy partnership in the region which requires attention (Muzaffar, et. al. 2017).

Foreign policy of the U.S. has suffered setbacks quite recently in Central Asian region, where its clout had increased dramatically following 9/11 attacks. Recent events seem to point out increasing cooperation between Russia and China to restrict the influence of the U.S. in Central Asia. Although both of them have grown their ties stronger in the recent past owing to their shared strategic ideas, there are several factors that limit their cooperation at international level. Similarly, their interests in Central Asian region mix elements of cooperation with competition, thereby reducing the probability of Sino-Russian condominium in Central Asia. In spite of the convergence of interests and their growing energy relationship, there is a dichotomy that the partnership over energy between them has been stalled in the past many years. The question still to be asked is whether there is a real, genuine strategic energy relationship between the two countries. From the perspective of energy security, both countries are skeptical of each other and fear that energy will be employed as a political or economic tool by one country against the other.

Sino-Russian Energy Partnership

Talking about the Russian concerns and diplomatic challenges China is facing to maintain their energy partnership in Central Asia, Beijing has been quite effective at accommodating the concern of Russia about its position in the Central Asian region in part because Russia can hardly do something about the clout of China in Central Asia. In the economic domain, Russia cannot compete effectively, and the actions of Russia in Ukraine have alienated leading political elites of Central Asia. Yet several of Chinese objectives in Central Asia - economic development, ensuring political stability, pushing the West (the U.S) away - either coincide with the agenda of Russia or do not come into conflict, at least, with the short-term

interests of Russia. The first priority of China for the region seems to be the promotion of stability, both political and social, through development besides its major interest to access and diversify resources of energy to sustain its economic development. Keeping in view the chaotic situation in the Middle East and Ukraine, both Chinese and Russians are fearful of the potential for political instability in Central Asia; both of them seek to maintain and not to challenge the political status quo. Both of them are concerned regarding the possibility of extremism moving from war-torn areas to Central Asian region which shares borders with both China and Russia. Yet they share a common interest to restrict the extremism spreading into Central Asia, their tactics to maintain regional stability differ. Russia concentrates more on hard power tactics such as military presence in the form of bases, arms deals and counter-terrorism cooperation in the region.

China, on the other hand, concentrates more on soft power and emphasizes to stabilize Central Asia through economic development. Contrary to Russia, China is hardly interested to demonstrate its geopolitical clout in Central Asian or renders it as its "privileged sphere of influence," or "near abroad" (Toal, 2017). For China, maintaining its power in South China Sea is much more significant than demonstrating its influence in Central Asian region. Rather China is more interested to create a stable and peaceful zone around its most restive western regions. Chinese interests in Central Asia are largely derived from its desire not just to make its western region stable and develop but also to connect it extensively with rest of China and the world beyond Chinese borders (Kennedy & Southern, 2017). This kind of political clout does not damage the interests of Russia in Central Asia.

Another objective of China in the Central Asian region is to seek overseas marketing opportunities for the firms of China active in infrastructure development and construction. It aims at reducing the excess/surplus capacity at the domestic market of China and creating opportunities both for the companies and labor force of China overseas. Although the companies of Russia are there to compete for bidding over infrastructural projects, this very area is over-crowded with the companies of Japan, South Korea, Turkey, and others, most of which are efficient than the Russian's. This over-crowded market with several multinationals reduces the possibility of direct confrontation between Chinese and Russians over the "Go Out" strategy of China in Central Asia.

The third key goal of China - most clearly viewed in China's BRI - is to expand the network of transportation aimed at facilitating Chinese flow of exports. Russia has been incorporated in this project directly by Chinese through one of its proposed corridors such as China-Russia-Mongolia Economic Corridor. Further, a scheme was announced in 2017 to incorporate the Arctic region in this project. These very transportation networks, if completed, will revolutionize the rail and road links between these nations. China is also actively involved in modernizing other rail projects of Russia, arguing that these projects would become part of China's BRI if they are realized.

Regarding BRI, Chinese interests are not confined to short-term benefits as it reportedly seems to lose around 30 percent of their investments in Central Asian region (Miller, 2017). Yet it still continues to construct rail and road lines throughout Central Asia with ambitious designs to link them to other rail and road networks around Europe – BRI's final destination, where the investments of China are also increasing in the sectors of transportation and logistics. The firms of China have also started finding avenues for installing fiber optics and related infrastructures of telecommunication throughout Central Asia, creating digital connectivity to the region of Central Asia and beyond. Chinese are quite optimistic that some of these new infrastructure projects will become beneficial and at the same time help creating at least friendly, if not pro-Chinese, regimes along the way.

Kazakhstan holds a key place in Chinese BRI – a scheme President Xi announced in Kazakhstan's capital, Astana in 2013. The central geographical position of Kazakhstan on the huge landmass of Eurasia renders it the most significant transit state in Central Asia for the efforts of China to connect western China with the European and Middle Eastern markets by rail networks. China has a keen interest in Kazakhstan, in particular, and Central Asia, in general, as a vital part of the BRI owing to the fact that it is comparatively less insecure than the alternative projects China is working on, especially China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Kazakhstan's prominent position in BRI is also enhanced owing to the fact that it complements rather than contradicting Astana's schemes of revolutionizing its transportation infrastructure, which renders the leadership of the country welcoming the initiatives of China.

While the BRI has become an extensive framework for uniting the current and future investment schemes of China in Central Asia, trade is what that drives the relationships of China with Central Asian republics. The economic rise of China in Central Asia took both Russia and the U.S. by surprise. While Russia in the first decade of 21st century sought to thwart the schemes of the U.S. to build a pipeline over the Caspian Sea bed for transporting the gas from Turkmenistan and other states of Central Asia to the European market, China made a quick entry to the Turkmen gas market and became very influential. Now-a-days, it is China's major market for natural gas supplies. For its sales of natural gas, Turkmenistan has become heavily dependent on China, a dependency that has increased from zero level in 2007, when Chinese CNPC first got a contract for exploring and extracting gas resources in the country. CNPC still holds this prestige to be the only overseas firm ever to get such contracts in Turkmenistan.

Russia is concerned about the emergence of China as a major player in Central Asian energy and infrastructure departments that has serious implications. A decade ago, Central Asia was heavily dependent on Russia for its exports to global markets. This very status left Russia with immense leverage for maintaining a strong hold on what it deems its "privileged sphere of influence." In the end, China succeeded to restrict the monopoly of Russia over the energy export routes of Central Asia by building oil and gas pipelines from Central Asia to China. In

addition, the BRI of China, not the New Silk Road Initiative of the U.S., seems more tempting to Central Asia.

Conventionally, Russia has been a major trading partner of Central Asia. But commercial transactions between them have atrophied in the past few years. 2016 bilateral trade volume of Russia with Central Asia was \$18.6 billion and between China and Central Asia it was \$30 billion. The economic issues of Russia since 2014 have accelerated its deteriorating economic position in Central Asia. For instance, Kyrgyzstan annulled a project with many companies of Russia to construct five plants of hydropower, citing the inabilities of Russian firms to secure financing (Harris, 2016). Owing to its deteriorating economic condition, Russia has not even been able to pay the salaries of Tajik local militia stationed at Russian military base in Tajikistan. At the same time, Russia not only pledged to invest over \$1 billion for Dushanbe's security but also pledged to enhance the number of troops in Tajikistan by 2,000 soldiers (Kucera, 2015). However, neither seems to have implemented, which raises concerns about true capability and willingness of Russia to react to the security problems in Central Asia and to project its influence there.

However, Russians try to maintain their soft power - with the help of historical and cultural links, and media. As far as its political clout in Central Asia is concerned, it not only strives to maintain that but also to restrict the U.S. role in these areas. The latter is one of China's shared objectives with Russia in the Central Asian region, yet China seems extremely careful not to annoy Russia by projecting its military clout in Central Asia. Whenever there is bilateral cooperation between CARs and China over security issues, it is mostly related to the threats of extremism faced by China from Uyghur diaspora - a problem that is mostly non-controversial for Russians. To address extensive security concerns of China, the platform of SCO has been utilized (Muzaffar & Khan, 2016).

The SCO expansion was realized with the inclusion of India and Pakistan in 2017 with the backing of Russia. One could suggest that the expansion of SCO was an attempt of Russia to temper the influence of China in the organization and to put more emphasis on Afghanistan, contrary to Central Asian region (Michel, 2017). However, the SCO expansion to enroll two regional powers of South Asia as permanent members is changing the organization into a broader multilateral entity that serves the Sino-Russian objective of creating a more multipolar global order. However, for good or bad, the greater focus of the SCO on Afghanistan in particular and South Asia in general would give both Russia and China an extensive regional role and a seat at the table in any world attempts to redress the security issues of Afghanistan and South Asia.

The political elites of Central Asia commonly see the growing presence of China in Central Asia as a stabilizing element. They believe the investments of China in infrastructure would help diversifying their economies and promoting larger economic development. China's BRI is welcomed by Central Asian states as a part of an extensive vision for enhancing regional connectivity. The analysts from China

believe that these CARs would eventually become key industrial hotspots in the near future. This raises major questions regarding the BRI's overall objectives and whether it would be influential to promote stability in Xinjiang Autonomous Region or Central Asian region, or improving living standards in these regions. Chinese are also very careful not to question the role of Russia in Central Asia, avoiding the dynamics of zero-sum game that have led to several conflicts between Russians and the West, particularly the U.S.

Nonetheless, China often seems concerned to address direct threats to China's western most regions, particularly Xinjiang Autonomous Region, rather than enhancing its security footprint in the region. Although it is not clear that for how long China will keep deferring to Russia on security problems of Central Asia. There is a grave possibility that at certain stage it may require to evolve higher capability for safeguarding its interests, firms, and nationals working in Central Asia in the face of consistent weakening of Russia's security role there. Given the dwindling economic situation, Russia has very limited resources to invest over security concerns of the region. Its record is also not good for forging regional stability. For instance, when ethnic conflicts made havoc in Kyrgyzstan in 2010, Russians failed to intervene, even though a formal request was made by the government of Kyrgyzstan for CSTO support during the crisis. However, for now, China seems content to increase its interests via economic soft power, instead of employing hard power tactics – an approach that has effectively kept friction between Russia and China to a minimum in the region of Central Asia.

Hurdles in Partnership

Foreign policy of the U.S. has suffered setbacks quite recently in Central Asian region, where its clout had increased dramatically following 9/11 attacks. Recent events seem to point out increasing cooperation between Russia and China to restrict the influence of the U.S. in Central Asia. Although both of them have grown their ties stronger in the recent past owing to their shared strategic ideas, there are several factors that limit their cooperation at international level. Similarly, their interests in Central Asian region mix elements of cooperation with competition, thereby reducing the probability of Sino-Russian condominium in Central Asia. In spite of the convergence of interests and their growing energy relationship, there is a dichotomy that the partnership over energy between them has been stalled in the past many years. At the start of 21st century, Both Russia and China planned potential cooperation regarding energy deals. However, it took almost 15 years for both countries to finalize the contract in 2014 (Lelyveld, 2014).

The question still to be asked here is that the strategic energy relationship between China and Russia is going to sustain in the near, if not far, future. Keeping the perspective of energy security in consideration, both are skeptical of each other and fear that energy will be employed as a political or economic tool by one country against the other. Even though Chinese are more than willing to heavily invest in the energy industry of Russia for increasing its imports of energy from Russia, it is also very keen to develop partnership with energy rich countries all over the globe, be it

Central Asia, Africa or South America. Central Asia is a region where their energy interests seem to be in contradiction rather than coinciding. Russian clout in Central Asia has already been limited by China through the completion of Central Asia-China Gas Pipeline and China-Kazakhstan Oil Pipeline. Moreover, these pipelines have provided China with leverage over gas price negotiations with Russia (Holtzinger, 2010). Though rich in resources of energy, Central Asia is susceptible to fundamental ideologies and separatist movements. Chinese objectives behind extending its clout and control in the Central Asian region are to contain the separatist elements in its own western most regions, Xinjiang Autonomous region and to diversify its supplies and sources of energy (Bolt, 2013). Russia, on the other side, has always deemed the region as its "privileged sphere of influence." In addition, Russia has always tried to control the infrastructure of energy of Central Asia. So, China's development of pipeline infrastructure in Central Asia to import Central Asian energy is in direct conflict to the interests of Russia's, thereby puts an obstacle to their strategic energy partnership.

Thus, though both Russia and China still share identical interests in terms of maintaining stability of the region and restricting the U.S. influence there, Russians are fearful of the time when China would start taking the control of the region's affairs. Russia is worried that as the economy of China is growing quite rapidly, the day is not too far when it will supersede Russian power in the region. China's emerging power status is conceived by Russians as a threat not only to their superiority in the region but also to their own national security. Even at the peak of their strategic partnership, China is still seen by Russia, to some extent, with anxiety and suspicion (Lo & Rothman, 2006).

Another concern of Russia is the growing imbalance in Sino-Russian partnership in the favor of China, which makes Russia feel more uncomfortable about its increasing dependency on Chinese. In terms of trade of energy, the growing energy demand from the countries of Asia-Pacific provides Russia with the temptation for extensive engagement in the region as exporter of energy. Russian objective is to seek expansion of its energy market not only to Asia but also to the U.S. Going with this very policy, Russia can have much better position to dictate the energy affairs and can have greater leverage to employ energy as a political tool in the region of Asia-Pacific. Keeping in view Russian policy to focus on the emerging energy markets of Asia, If Russia keeps on relying solely on China for its energy exports it might end up losing the bargaining chip to extend its clout in the markets of Asia. Moreover, Russian are skeptical of Chinese concerns that "it wants Russian energy for Chinese industrial consumption - and energy security - but does not welcome the arrival of a new, increasingly influential economic player in the region" (Lo & Rothman, 2006).

One of the key obstacles in the way of solidifying Sino-Russian energy ties is the issue of pricing for oil and gas. For instance, they had a conflict over pricing mechanism of supplies of oil through the ESPO pipeline in 2011. Both of them had

issues regarding the calculation of pricing of energy deliveries over entry and exit points of the pipeline. Russian were of the opinion that the cost should be calculated by including the transportation cost through the entire pipeline till Kozmino. While China, on the other hand, argued that the cost of energy transportation should be calculated from Skovorodino. Although the dispute over price was finally resolved after several rounds of negotiations, but the eventual consequence of that was the reduction in oil supplies which China was receiving from Russia in 2011, reflecting the dissatisfaction of China over the mechanism of pricing (Shadrina, 2013).The uncertainty in the Sino-Russian partnership is demonstrated from this very case.

Concluding this discussion, China performs a crucial role in the development of the energy resources of the Far Eastern regions of Russia. For one, the geographical proximity of China to the Far East and East Siberian regions of Russia permits China to seek quick and easy access to the energy reservoirs there. Secondly, Chinese hold enough capital and are interested to make investments in Russian energy industry. As Russians are fearful of over-dependency of their exports of energy to Europe, they hold similar concerns towards China as their sole market for energy exports in the region of Asia-Pacific. Moreover, Russians are very much concerned over losing their clout to China in Central Asia. However, Russians still hold reserved opinion to decide to what extent this relationship should be and will be tightened.

Implications for the U.S

In order to assess the competition for the energy resources of Central Asia in the trio, U.S-Russia-China, a complex web of relationships has been explored in this study. An overview of the transforming foreign policy of the U.S. for Central Asia in the recent past reveals an effort to respond to new developments on the ground, such as the "Color Revolutions," the Andijan crisis in Uzbekistan and its consequent decision to terminate the basing rights of the U.S. at K2, economic rise of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan's change of leadership, and most importantly the growing strategic cooperation between Russia and China at the regional and global level. At the same time, increasing security concerns over energy supplies and the worsening situation of security in Afghanistan has increased the interests of the U.S. in Central Asian security and economic cooperation. These concerns of the U.S. have weakened further the already incompatible and marginally effective attempts of the U.S. to advance democratic trends in Central Asia.

In fact, the policy objectives of the U.S. are proving to be mutually inconsistent and counterproductive. After 9/11 the first phase of the involvement of the U.S. in Central Asian region focused primarily on countering terrorism, emphasizing a symptom rather than basic domestic causes of insecurity in the region, such as the corrupt and inexplicable governments of the region, and pervasive plight of poverty (Wishnick, 2004).Recently, the increasing priority of the energy in the relations of the U.S. with Kazakhstan and other republics of Central Asia has prompted distinctiveness for additional political reforms in the region. According to the report published by Freedom House in 2008:

“...Energy needs are increasingly distorting relationships between democracies that consume hydrocarbons and the authoritarian states that produce them. Euro-Atlantic democracies have yet to agree on a common strategy that advances both energy-security needs and basic democratic values. Energy dependence is promoting an uncoordinated and short-term approach to relations with authoritarian governments, the hardening core of which is located in the non-Baltic former Soviet Union. These democratically unaccountable countries are moving farther from the Euro-Atlantic neighborhood and creating alliances and networks outside of the Western community. As energy wealth has emboldened authoritarian rulers, the Euro-Atlantic democracies have seemingly lost their resolve and sense of common purpose in advancing democratic practices (Walker & Geohring, 2008).”

Russia and China both have been responding to these similar pressures on the ground as the U.S. In reaction to the “color revolutions”, they reached broad contract on the priority of security of regime and the need to restrict the long-term presence of the U.S. military in the region. These are the two major areas – defining political path for the states of Central Asia and guaranteeing a strategic foothold in Central Asia – where the U.S. finds itself in stark competition with both Russia and China.

On the international arena, both Russians and Chinese have become increasingly close associates driving to forge collaboration between them to counter the U.S. containment pursuits and to modify Western-dominated global order that is conceived by them as detrimental to their interests. The attempts of the West particularly the U.S. to promote the cause of human rights and good governance have been resented both by Russia and China. They view these coordinated efforts of the U.S. with suspicion and conceive these attempts to bring regime change for its geopolitical benefits. These common ideas have helped them strengthening their strategic ties, attempts that have speeded up since the initiation of Ukraine crisis in 2014. The biggest threat to the interests of the U.S. from the increasing strategic ties between China and Russia does not come from their collaboration either in Central Asia or the Far East. Rather, it originates from the combined efforts of both Russia and China to transform the world order to their favor. It includes their cooperation in global institutions and their wish to redesign international governance system to accelerate the power shift from the West to the East. At length, Chinese keenly value both the U.S. and Europe as their major trading partners; if ties between the U.S. and China deteriorate over the issue of trade, as it is happening under the administration of Trump, the significance of Europe for China will increase, which may soften the approach of China to challenge the current global system, or at least the place of Europe in it. Potential fissures could be generated between the “strategic partnership” of Russia and China because of this very development.

The compatibility of the economies of Russia and China uphold their ties. China is a source of financing and a major market for Russians. Contrary to the West, particularly the U.S. China does not make demands of any kind of political reform nor propel for change in the Russian policies toward Ukraine as a condition for bilateral partnership. In return, the economic and industrial progress of China is highly dependent on easy access and steady supplies of energy and other resources from Russia. With Russians desperate for overseas sources of investments following their isolation from the West and the downward trend in economic growth, China has been capable of breaking into Russian economic sectors where it faced obstacles before - especially in the projects revolving around energy resources and other mineral resources across the Far East of Russia and the Arctic. The leadership from both countries lauds the strength and development of their bilateral ties, especially in trade and economic issues, in the public domain. President Xi, while congratulating Putin on his victory in 2018 Russian election, said, the strategic partnership of China with Russia was at its "best level in history."

The increasing economic presence of China in Russia is an undeniable fact. It is more prominent in infrastructure, while it has surpassed Germany quite recently as a key exporter of machinery to Russia. Combined with sanction policies of the West that have turned Russia into a less attractive destination for business, the growing influence of China in Russia suggests that the multinationals of China are capable of undercutting Western competitors in the market of Russia. Huawei has already outcompeted Nokia in parts of Russia and Eurasia. With the increasing footprints of Huawei in the Arctic and other parts of Eurasia, the telecommunications companies of the West will probably face increasing competition from the East.

The widening gulf and even breaking of ties of Russia with the West in the recent past helped solidifying Sino-Russian strategic relationship. The political elites of China, therefore, got expertise to manage this increasing imbalance in their relationship by carefully managing the Russian concerns. One of such tactics is to invest in the major areas of Russian economy where Russian leadership wants Chinese multinationals to make investments. Chinese have voiced their support for the economic uplift of Russian Eastern regions and have not tried to build a substantial security footprint in the region of Central Asia till now. This very approach has not just helped China winning Russian hearts but also helped mediating some Russian concerns regarding the dynamics of power shift in their partnership.

Russia and China are taking benefit of the increasing power vacuum that is being created by the cutting of Western influence in the region which was initiated with the decision of Obama administration in 2014 to withdraw the troops of the U.S. from Afghanistan. The leaders of the region, in general, want the U.S. and Europe to stay there, in part to the region from being thoroughly controlled by either Russia or China. Kazakhstan, for instance, has attempted to adopt multidimensional diplomacy for years to acquire maximum leverage from all the major players of this New Great Game. 2018 visits of the U.S. by Kazakh President and the foreign

minister of Uzbekistan were thoroughly intended to invoke Trump administration reengaging Central Asia. Central Asia is keen to engage all three major players in the region because the approaches of both Russians and Chinese will not help building stable economies that can generate job opportunities for the masses of the region and ensure long-term regional stability.

The status quo between Russians and Chinese seems to remain intact in the near future, though there are many issues that pose a threat to their strategic partnership. The skepticism is found in Russian circles over Chinese intentions which were demonstrated in President Xi's speech in 19th Party Congress which aims to project Chinese power at both regional and global level. China intends to become a dominant leader, if not at the international level than at least in Asia. If China fails to fulfill its commitments towards BRI, or if it bypasses Russia, Russia's insecurity may intensify because of Chinese ambitions. It might be more difficult for Russians to demonstrate their value to China. If the need arise, Russia will be left with no option but to contend with a highly ambitious China, a perspective it has already started to consider and redress by cultivating its ties with other countries, including India.

Conclusion

The probability of course corrections between Russia and the West, particularly the U.S., the dependency of Russia on China will continue to increase in the near future. Both Russia and China seems contented with helping each other globally and its usefulness. Russia, while seeking cooperation with China internationally, can propel beyond its weight, while Chinese mostly try to avoid direct spats with the U.S. and Europe, its most significant trading partners, by permitting Russians to deal with confrontational international matters. With both Russia and China viewing greater dangers to their security originating from the West, particularly the U.S., than from each other, it is improbable that the dynamics of power shift in Sino-Russian bilateral ties will result into causing their partnership to slow. Keeping the U.S. influence at bay by working in collaboration serves their interests well rather than fighting with each other. The policy of the West, particularly the U.S. is required to come to terms with this reality.

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