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Why the United States Doesn't Consider Closer Bilateral Chinese-Russian Relations as A Security Threat?

Abstract

Chinese-Russian relations play an important role in the multipolar world order, both countries signed treaties and established the strategic partnership. When Xi Jinping became president in 2013, Russia was his first foreign destination after becoming president. And Russian president Vladimir Putin also claimed that the relationship is "in its best period in history" and that the bilateral cooperation has already reached a higher level of comprehensive strategic partnership. Now the two great powers are getting closer and may cooperate to counterbalance the superpower, United States. These two countries could be a threat to the United States. What is the United States' concern about the Chinese-Russian relations? Will America be worried about its affection when the China-Russia relationship gets better? This article is trying to answer why the United States doesn't consider the closer bilateral Chinese-Russian relations as a security threat? By defining what is a threat and presenting Chinese-Russian Contemporary relationships, then triangle relationships to analyze and finally to give three reasons. First, the US-Chinese relations is the most important and the best in the triangle relations and the priority of the US policy for China and Russia is trade and economy, and both countries need to have economic cooperation with United States. The second one is the mistrust and suspicion remain between China and Russia. And the third factor is that Chinese-Russian strategic partnership can be doubtful.

Key words: Chinese-Russian relations, a security threat.

Introduction

The rise of China is not only reshaping the existing international order, reshuffling the great power ranking, but also narrowing the political and economic influences on Russia in the region and at a global level. China and Russia both claim to strive for a multi-polar international order.¹ In their statements, Beijing and Moscow are vocal in criticizing the United States hegemonic policies and position in the world. But at the same time, Moscow and Beijing are carrying out diverse bilateral policies with Washington. From Beijing's side, NATO twists and turns in the missile-defenses issue and the opening of the air-bridge to Afghanistan through Russian airspace for the United States are certainly disturbing signals and introduce an unpredictable element into Chinese-Russian relationship. From the Moscow's side, the close interdependency between China and the United States is annoying because the only relationship that is of a truly strategic nature for China is the one it has with the United States²

The United States was left standing high as the only global super-power in the 20th and the 21st century, however, as Dr. Stephen Blank says, Chinese-Russian relations are very important because these two countries could be a threat to the United States and their relations in Asia have an influence on the ties of all interested parties to Russia, China and Northeast Asia.³ The United States' security and prosperity in the 21st century still depend on the presence and engagement of the United States in Asia. What is the United States' concern about the Chinese-Russian relations? Will America be worried about its affection when the China-Russia relationship get better?

Mearsheimer in his book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* argues that China has the potential power to become a regional hegemony in Northeast Asia and it could be a threat to the United States. Now China and Russia, the two powerful countries, are getting closer and may cooperate to counterbalance the United States. But why United States doesn't consider the closer bilateral Chinese-Russian relations as a security threat?

¹ A. Moshes, M. Nojonen (eds.), *Russia-China relations Current state, alternative futures and implications for the West*, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Tampere 2011, p. 10

² Ibid, p. 15-16

³ S. Blank, "Russo-Chinese relations at a crossroads: An American View." [in:] A. Moshes, M. Nojonen (eds.), *Russia-China relations Current state, alternative futures and implications for the West*, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Tampere 2011, p. 74

There are three reasons. First, the US-Chinese relations is the most important and preferably in the triangle relations and the priorities of the US policy for China and Russia are trade and economy, and both countries need to have economic cooperation with United States. The second one is the mistrust between China and Russia. And the third factor is that Chinese-Russian strategic partnership could be doubtful. Is it the real strategic partnership or just a rhetorical one?

The definition of threat

Threat is a menace, one that is regarded as a possible danger or a warning that something unpleasant is going to happen, and the threat makes fear or is kind of fear itself. Threat is obvious for a variety of reasons concerning political dimensions, economic, military, and security. Here emphasize on a security threat. What is security? The traditionalists, backed by political realism, define security in terms of power. In reality, the meaning is closely linked to the military capability of a state.⁴

China has the world's largest population - close to one-and-a-half billion people, and has experienced 30 years of dramatic modernization and economic growth. It now has the world's second largest economy, a nuclear power, and continues to expand its regional and global status quo economically, militarily, and culturally. Russia occupies the world's largest territory and also has nuclear weapons and they support the Syrian regime.

According to the Mearsheimer's book "The Tragedy of Great Power Politics," the author mentioned that the relations between great powers are a central aspect of life in the international system. "How much states that fear each other matters greatly, because the amount of fear between them largely determines the severity of their security competition, as well as the probability that they will fight a war."⁵ He pointed out the reason of fear as follows: 1. Great powers invariably have some offensive military capability that they can use against each other. 2. One can never be certain that other states do not intend to use that power against oneself. 3. States operate in an anarchic system and there is not a "night watchman" to approach for help when one state

⁴ C. Elman, *Realism* [in:] P. D. Williams (ed.), *Security Studies: An Introduction*, London and New York: Routledge Press 2008, p. 16.

⁵ J. J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, NY London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001, p. 42.

attacks another.

The best measure of power is the size of the state's military - the land power. The power is embedded mainly in its army and the air and naval forces because they are principal instrument for conquering and controlling territory. Power will affect the intensity of fear among the states.

As early as the 1990's, prominent analysts of the world politics like Richard Betts and Robert Jervis, as well as subsequent CIA studies postulated that the greatest security threat to United States interests would be a Russian-Chinese alliance.⁶ The rise of China revolves around the phenomenal development of the Chinese economy. China wants the United States economy to prosper because that means China will be able to continue exporting. As it is, exports from China to the European Union are all down but to the United States are up. China is not in a position to threaten the United States with financial growth. If China makes a decision to sell off massive positions of United States debt would turn the American economy into a downward spiral, it will harm not only China's investments, but also China's export-driven economy.⁷

In fact, some analysts of the East Asian trends regard the confluence of the energy and other current international crises as contributing to an already-formed Chinese-Russian alliance against American power and ideas in Northeast and Central Asia.⁸

Contemporary Chinese-Russian relationship

Today many aspects of the Chinese-Russian relationship are

⁶ R. Jervis, *United States Grand Strategy: Mission Impossible*, "Naval War College Review," summer 1998, p. 22-36; R. K. Betts, *Power, Prospects, and Priorities: Choices for Strategic Change*, "Naval War College Review," winter 1997, p. 9-22; J. C. Gannon, *Intelligence Challenges Through 2015*,

http://odci.gov/cia/publicaffairs/speeches/gannon_speech_05022000.html.

⁷ K. Rapoza, *Is China's Ownership of United States Debt A National Security Threat?* January 1, 2013, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2013/01/23/is-chinas-ownership-of-u-s-debt-a-national-security-threat/>.

⁸ D. Kerr, *The Sino-Russian Partnership and US Policy toward North Korea, From Hegemony to Concert in Northeast Asia*, "International Studies Quarterly," XXXIX, No.3, September, 2005, p. 411-437; C. C. Menges, *China: The Gathering Threat*, Nashville, Tennessee: Nelson Current Publishers, 2005; S. Blank, *Towards Alliance?: The Strategic Implications of Russo-Chinese Relations*, "National Security Studies Quarterly," VII, NO. 3, summer 2001, p. 1-30.

positive. Shortly after Putin assumed the presidency, Russia and China signed a *Treaty for Good Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation* in 2001, pledging a ten year commitment and elevating Russian-Chinese strategic cooperation. While making quite clear that this agreement was not directed against the US or the West, the treaty expressed the commitment of the Russian and Chinese leadership to the “multi-polar” world order. Konstantin Vnukov of the Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that while the two countries possessed “such different civilizations,” the “main trend” in the “almost four-century old” history has been characterized by “peace and good neighborliness” with “periods of confrontation” being “short-lived.” Vnukov described Russian-Chinese relations during the Putin’s era as reaching the “highest point in history...dynamic, encompassing all, even the most sensitive spheres.”⁹

Currently both sides say that these relationships are at their high point, argue that they represent a model for other countries relations, and contend that they can only get better as recent interchanges between them indicate.¹⁰ This would concur with Russell Ong’s argument that, “the basis for China’s strategic partnership with Russia lies in countering the global export of America’s liberal values.”¹¹ Moreover he notes that Russia’s political values, namely sovereign democracy, accord with so-called “Asian values” much more than with the European ones.

According to the New York Times article¹², in 2013, the Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, had chosen Moscow as his first foreign capital city to visit as president. His predecessor, Hu Jintao, also selected Moscow as his first overseas stop after assuming the office, but Mr. Xi’s journey to Russia has a special significance. It seems that China tries to answer the Obama administration’s “shift toward Asia”, a policy regarded with suspicion as an attempt to restrain China.

⁹ K. Vnukov, *Russians, Chinese-Brothers Forever*, “International Affairs 52,” no. 2, 2006, p. 129-134.

¹⁰ Moscow, Interfax, in English, June 15, 2009, Open Source Center, Foreign Broadcast Information Service Central Eurasia (Henceforth FBIS SOV), June 15, 2009; Beijing, Xinhua, in English, June 17, 2009, FBIS SOV, June 17, 2009.

¹¹ Russell Ong, *China’s Strategic convergence With Russia*, “Korean Journal of Defense analysis,” XXI, NO. 3, 2009, p. 320.

¹² J. Perlez, *New Leader Of China Plans a Visit To Moscow*, The New York Times, 21 February 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/22/world/asia/new-chinese-leader-xi-jinping-to-visit-moscow.html?_r=0.

China and Russia have been closer lately on mainly international issues, showing common interests on issues that are important to the U.S, like the conflict in Syria and the nuclear ambitions of Iran and North Korea. These events are likely to be discussed for Mr. Xi's visit to Moscow, together with increased cooperation on energy policy.

In 2013, after Chinese president Xi Jinping's first visit to Moscow, he indicated that China would promote deeper cooperation with Russia, while the United States has been establishing ties with its own allies across the Asia-Pacific region. Even though there was a difficult history between the two neighbors, China and Russia recently have increased their friendship, forming a bulwark against the West. Mr. Xi's visit to Moscow just after he assumed the office, showed that China could fall back on its own sources of support to counterbalance the United States when necessary.

Mr. Xi said in a written statement issued upon his arrival in Moscow "China will make developing relations with Russia a priority in its foreign policy orientation,"¹³ the Chinese state-owned news agency Xinhua reported. Mr. Xi told Mr. Putin that the two governments should "resolutely support each other in efforts to protect national sovereignty, security and development interests,"¹⁴ adding that "The two sides have had closer strategic coordination on the world stage." And Mr. Putin also said that "Russia-China relations were the best in their centuries-long history." Because after returning to the presidency in May, Mr. Putin has distanced Russia from the West while focusing on Asia, particularly relations with China. Mr. Xi concludes a leadership transition begun when he became Communist Party chief, trying to distinguish himself from the immediate leader, Hu Jintao. But on the domestic issues, he has continued Mr. Hu's seeking of Russia for energy supplies and diplomatic support. Russia was also Mr. Hu's first foreign visit after he was appointed president in 2003. Mr. Xi told "the fact that I will visit Russia, our friendly neighbor, shortly after assuming presidency is a testimony to the great importance China places on its relations with Russia....The two sides have had closer strategic coordination on the

¹³ D. M. Herszenhorn/C.Buckley, *China's New Leader, Visiting Russia, Promotes Nations' Economic and Military Ties*, The New York Times, 22 March 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/23/world/asia/xi-jinping-visits-russia-on-first-trip-abroad.html?pagewanted=all#>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

world stage.”¹⁵

At the meeting, the two presidents signed agreements, including promises of cooperation on numerous fronts. The greatest focus was on energy development, not only the oil deal with Rosneft, but also an agreement to move forward with a deal on natural gas, which the two countries have been struggling to negotiate for years. Despite the increasing ties on energy and other issues, experts say the relationship is still burdened by Russian wariness and Chinese frustrations. Some Russians are anxious that China's economic growth and military strength could take the place of their country's influence, especially the Russian Far East. China has sought to draw Russia's Gazprom into agreeing to supply natural gas along a proposed pipeline from east Siberia for a long time. "Pipeline oil and gas cooperation is a good thing that benefits both sides," the Chinese vice foreign minister, Cheng Guoping, said "It suits both sides' energy security needs and national interests." For the Chinese leader, the first visit showed that the bilateral ties were very close together.¹⁶

However, Bobo Lo, a former Australian diplomat in Moscow and the director of the China and Russia programs at the Center for European Reform, has written an analysis of this bilateral relationships. He points out that Chinese-Russian relations are opportunistic, and China is in a better position because it extracts considerable practical benefits in oil, weapons, natural resources from Russia, and Russia also supplies China with its military hardware, including Kilo-class submarines and Sovremenny-class destroyers. But what Russia gets in return is just a rhetoric flattery of strategic partnership with China and illusion of a multipolar world. For example, the two countries' roles in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)¹⁷, as well as their energy and weapons trades, can show a deep asymmetry in Chinese-Russian relations. Thus far, China has consistently resisted Russia's lobbying for building the SCO into a quasi-military alliance that could counter NATO, besides, the SCO declined to publicly endorse Russia's account of its August 2008 war with Georgia. It seems that China is unwilling to impart any strategic significance to disputes in the Caucasus. Through the SCO

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ a Eurasian political, economic and military organization founded in 2001 in Shanghai by the leaders of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

and some investments, China has been entering Central Asia with economy. In recent years the Chinese enterprises have invested deeply throughout Central Asia in mineral, energy and other industries. In addition, China successfully have cracked the tough nut of Turkmenistan-- a gas pipeline under construction is slated to run from Turkmenistan to Xinjiang (Western of China).

According to Lo, the terms of Chinese-Russian trade relations have become increasingly unbalanced every year. Lo even said that "Russia looks like a Chinese subsidiary. China treats Russia with supreme tact, denying its own superiority."¹⁸

Nevertheless, nowadays Russia and China are getting closer to each other and some people believe that a new China-Russia alliance is now emerging and will lead to a multi-polar world order. In the near future a formal alliance between China and Russia will not occur because of many reasons, some experts pointed out there could be potentially high costs of such an alliance due to some problems. China may be dragged into unnecessary wars by Russia, and Russia is not interested in the alliance idea as it is unwilling to become China's junior partner in the relations. Furthermore, Russia wants to keep good relations with all Asian states, therefore, a strategic partnership is much better for China and Russia.¹⁹

How the United States sees the Chinese-Russian relations

US-China relationship is more important than Russia-China relationship, US-China relation is an interlocking relationship, so the United States doesn't consider Russia-China relation to be a real strategic partnership, because there are still mistrusts and historical factors between the two countries. The power and the status of Russia are declining in the multi-polar world. Instead of Russia, today's China has emerged the force to be reckoned with on Asia and Europe. China

¹⁸ Bobo Lo, *Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics*, "Brookings Institution Press," 2008; Stephen Kotkin, *The Unbalanced Triangle What Chinese-Russian Relations Mean for the United States*, "Foreign Affairs" 88 no.5 130-8 S/O 2009. Article is available from <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65230/stephen-kotkin/the-unbalanced-triangle>; James F. Jr (ed.), *China on the World Stage*, "Foreign affairs," 2010, p. 128.

¹⁹ Dingding Chen, *Are China and Russia Moving toward a Formal Alliance*, "the Diplomat," 30 May 2014. <http://thediplomat.com/2014/05/are-china-and-russia-moving-toward-a-formal-alliance/>.

has shifted its strategic alliance from the Soviet Union to the United States. The current United States' "pivot to Asia" is that it has often treated Russia as an afterthought, but with initial US-Russia post 2009 "reset" having largely run its course. As Arkady Moshes said, "A serious US-Russia dialogue on security threats in East Asia could save the dynamics of the "reset" process, and gradually raise the interest of the United States and its regional allies to invest in the Russian Far East."²⁰ And he thinks that the Asian security order would be a big challenging for the United States even if Russia became China's junior partner in the longer run, and not an independent political player in Asia, the American discussion demonstrates little wariness and concern about this, thus revealing a certain neglect of Russia, but this probably will change. In order to benefit from a possible American repositioning in East Asia, Russia should change internally to open itself to and guarantee the security of foreign investment and to get rid of the anti-Westernism of its foreign policy elite. If Russia fail to do so, it would extend far beyond a decrease in its influence vis-à-vis China or its geopolitical positions in Asia²¹

Currently Moscow and Washington need to take into consideration how they will refashion their relationship in the next few years. The United States and Russian concern about China's growing potential nuclear power that is impeding further progress in their shared strategic arms control agenda. Analysts point out that intensifying its regional diplomacy with Russia and America "rebalancing" to the Pacific, both nations have much to obtain if they cooperate well.

In a word, the foreign policy in Russia and China are dominated by trade, making China and Russia inseparable from the United States huge market. In the foreseeable future, the United States economic diplomacy to Russia will be greatly enhanced and then can grasp the opportunities in three diplomatic interactions.

Why should the United States concerns Chinese-Russian relations?

The United States clearly has an interest in the character of the

²⁰ A. Moshes, M. Nojonen (eds.), *Russia-China relations Current state, alternative futures and implications for the West*, The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Tampere 2011, p. 101.

²¹ Ibid, p. 102.

Chines-Russian relationship. Bolt and Cross in their research wrote: "The status of the Sino-Russian relationship has important implications for the United States. Cordial relations between Russian and China can benefit the United States interests, however an alliance between the two countries aimed against the United States in particular or the West in general would constitute a significant threat. It is in the interest of the United States to foster regional stability throughout the globe and given the shared transnational security challenges of the emerging twenty-first century, Russian, China and the United States would benefit by seeking means for strengthening security cooperation among all three major powers."²² As earlier mentioned by Dr. Stephen Blank China and Russia could be a threat to the United States and their geostrategic and geopolitical relations will affect all of Asia or the world politics.²³

Never before had a senior Russian leader been so explicit about the idea of counterbalancing the global domination of the West, led by the United States, by means of a Eurasian alliance. A few months later, during the Kosovo crisis,²⁴ Russia and China moved even much closer together in their opposition to United States "hegemony".²⁵ We can say that some international crises may contribute to Chinese-Russian alliance against American power and ideas.

Although China now has the world's second largest economy, maintain a nuclear power, and continually expand its regional and global status, Russia still views itself as playing a major role in Asian and global affairs, China and Russia continue to publicly acknowledge the importance of their "strategic partnership" in regional and global affairs. Chinese-Russian relationship will have a substantial effect on the

²² Paul J. Bolt and Sharyl N. Cross, *Contemporary Sino-Russian security partnership: challenges and opportunities for the United States*, "United States Air Force Academy Institute for National Security Studies, USAFA," CO, 80840, NO. 0704-0188, 2009, p. 1.

²³ A. Moshes/M. Nojonen (eds.), *Russia-China relations Current state, alternative futures and implications for the West*, Tampereen Yliopistopaino Oy-Juvenes Print, Tampere 2011, p. 76.

²⁴ <http://www.globalissues.org/article/126/the-kosovo-crisis> .

²⁵ Dmitri Trenin, *Russian-Chinese Relations: A Study in Contemporary Geopolitics*, in: E. Reiter (ed.) *Jahrbuch für Internationale Sicherheitspolitik*, Hamburg: E. S. Mittler 2000, p. 913-930; available from http://www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/03_jb00_46.pdf, p. 6.

future geopolitical, economic and security landscape in East Asia.²⁶ Ashley Smith said that the U.S. stands out as the world's only super-power, however, it now faces a major imperial rival in China and a host of regional ones including Russia, India, and Brazil. And now a shift of the United States security policy towards the Asia-Pacific, president Obama issued a new Defense Strategic Guidance: Priorities for the 21st Century Defense that "announced his CPivot to Asia". Obama continues to promise engagement with China to lure it into an international order under American hegemony, but his actual policies demonstrate an unmistakable shift towards containment of China as its principal imperial rival."²⁷ Therefore, in the same time when America concerned the Asia issue, the Chinese-Russian relations should be considered as well.

The weak Russia's position in the triangular relationship.

The triangular relationships have a fundamental change in meaning. In the past few decades, China's shift in geopolitical strategic direction from the Soviet Union to the United States is very important and it not only improves Chinese relations with the U.S., but better relations with Moscow than the US-Russia relationship. "Most important, both countries, whatever their current differences with the United States and their opposition to the "unipolar world", need good relations with America for a host of economic, financial and other reasons. For Moscow, the most vital foreign policy issue is debt restructuring and relations with the international financial institutions, where Washington plays a paramount role. Russia's economic development is doomed without access to Western technology and capital investment. For Beijing, suffice it to mention that China's trade with America is worth ten times its trade with Russia."²⁸

Zbigniew Brzezinski, CSIS (Center for Strategic and International Studies) Counselor and Trustee, said that China-US-Russia triangular relations now basically will not be changed, the basic reality is that US-

²⁶ D. W. Harkins, *Sino-Russian relations in the twenty first century: prospects and issues*, Lieutenant, United States Navy B.S., West Chester University, 2000, p. 4-5.

²⁷ A. Smith, *US Imperialism's pivot to Asia*, "International Viewpoint," April 15 2013, <http://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article2944>.

²⁸ D. Trenin, *Russian-Chinese Relations: A Study in Contemporary Geopolitics*, Moscow, p. 6.

http://www.bmlv.gv.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/03_jb00_46.pdf.

China relations is interlocking relationship, and Russia's position in the triangular relationship is the weakest.²⁹ He explained that except the nuclear arsenals in which Russia had a huge advantage of China but is not politically useful, unless launching a disastrous war. From the Chinese point of view, Chinese well-being depends on good relations with the United States that jointly contributes to global stability, and to the economic and financial stability. In terms of demographic dynamics Russia feels weak about their position in the Far East. Thus there is no worry that China may ally with Russia to balance the United States, since the basic reality is that US-China relation now is an interlocking relationship.

US-Chinese relations

As for the relationship between China and the United States, Kotkin, Princeton University professor of History and International Affairs, supposes that the global strategy "peaceful rise", introduced after Tiananmen Square massacre, compromises with the United States to establish new partnerships and gain great benefits. One vital element of this strategy is for China to take advantage of its de facto strategic partnership with the United States while sometimes swallowing hard in the face of the United States dominance.³⁰

Chinese leaders go out of their way to emphasize that China is still a developing country and that the United States will remain the sole global superpower for a long time to come. Therefore, it is a concession that China can pursue its own interests, and not like Russia paying the enormous costs of opposing the United States. The second element in China's "peaceful rise" strategy is making use of Russia for all it is worth, ex: weapons, oil or acquiescence in China's expanding influence in Central Asia.

US-Russian relations

The fact is that the US-Russian relationship lacks the kind of deep commercial basis that undergirds US-Chinese ties. And the ultimate

²⁹ Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Interpreting Xi Jinping's First Trip Abroad: *Glimpses of an Emerging Diplomatic Strategy*, <http://csis.org/multimedia/audio-interpreting-xi-jinpings-first-trip-abroad-glimpses-emerging-diplomatic-strategy>.

³⁰ S. Kotkin, *The Unbalanced Triangle What Chinese-Russian Relations Mean for the United States*, "Foreign Affairs" 88 no.5 130-8 S/O 2009. Article is available from <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65230/stephen-kotkin/the-unbalanced-triangle>.

stumbling block between Russia and the United States is the clash over the influence in the former Soviet republics. Two factors have caused this clash. The first one is that Russia will not relinquish its assertion of privileged interests in the former Soviet territories. The second factor is that the United States will not cease to view these lands terms of promoting or defending democracy in the former Soviet republic. It is impossible for the United States to abandon the nominal democracies in the former Soviet republic for the sake of more constructive relations with Russia. In this case, the prospects for US-Russian relations are bumpy.

The United States might think that Russia is not much more important, but it can't be ignored since the Russian remains a domination forces and due to its strategic weight in Europe. It is a reason that Russia remains a regional force alone for the United States to pursue better bilateral relations. And this is sufficient to constitute a change in American foreign policy to seriously consider the establishment of relations with Russia. Expanded NATO, at the same time, is not providing the enduring security it once promised. Thus, enduring security in Europe can't be had without Russia's cooperation or in opposition to Russia. In addition, China will become more assertive in East Asia and Central Asia. It is even under a "peaceful rise" strategy, China will increasingly oblige the United States to accommodate Chinese power. Therefore, in order to balance with China, the United States should set aside political considerations and reset relations with Russia.

Mistrust between China and Russia

There is still historical tragedy and mistrust between China and Russia. The pessimists point out that the relationship still lacks a strong commercial base, and relies exclusively on the dovetailing interests of national elites on both sides. There is a plethora of friction, mutual suspicions and resentment, particularly deeply rooted on the Russian side.³¹ For Russia, China is at once the focus of a genuine convergence of interests and the greatest long-term threat to its national security. For China, Russia is a main supplier of energy and weapons, but is always dismissed as a self-important power whose rhetoric go beyond real

³¹ L. Dittmer, *The Sino-Russian strategic partnership and its implications for the Taiwan strait embroilment*, "Journal of Russian Studies," No. 2, 01. 2002, p. 15-48.

influence.

From the historical point of view, since Russia has built a relationship with China, it has signed unequal Treaties with Russia. Later China's new regime Republic of China was forced to sign further unequal treaties with Russia. When Soviet Union was established, it provided aid and support to the Kuomintang but at the same time indeed helped the Communist Party of China (CPC) grow and finally overtook the mainland China. It is said that CPC and Kuomintang cooperated to fight with Japan but after the Second World War, with the support of Russia, CPC leader Mao Zedong attacked the Kuomintang and won the Chinese Civil war, later built the People's Republic of China which made an alliance with the USSR. Both as communist states, PRC regard USSR as an "older brother". Yet after the Stalin's death emerged ideological tension between the two countries, Mao and Gang of Four accused the Soviet leadership of revisionism, and later the alliance ended. After Deng Xiaoping became the new leader of China and took economic reforms, he agreed to restore the diplomatic relations. After the collapse of USSR, relations between China and Russia are currently close. They remain a strong geopolitical and regional alliance and significant levels of trade. But it is just an "axis of convenience" which Bobo Lo introduced driven by perceptions of the national interests.

The interest of state is very important for a state to gain more power and to strengthen the capabilities. But Russians only think about their own interests and in order to get the maximum benefits, they can even sacrifice the position of China, the historical facts can give evidence that Russia all the time took advantage of China and treated China unequally. In my personal view both countries can't be trusted, Russia still maintained the former Communist thought, and China as communist country. As before USSR made treaty and gave support to the Kuomintang but actually it intended behind for the growth of the Communist Party of China. And in alliance with Communist Party of China, the Kuomintang fought against Japan, it was just a good chance for Communist Party of China to strengthen their power and later with the Russian assistance the Communist Party of China occupied the Chinese continent. And the brotherhood relationship with Russia broke not long after Stalin's death. The historical mistrusts and other facts such as cultural prejudices, geopolitical rivalries, and competing priorities can't really make the two big states be so-called strategic partners.

Chinese-Russian strategic partnership could be doubtful.

Bobo Lo in his book *“Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics”*³² pointed out that the strategic partnership between China and Russia has been misunderstood. He calls the Chinese-Russian “mutually beneficial partnership” is just an “axis of convenience”- that is, “an inherently limited partnership conditioned on its ability to advance both parties’ interests.”

Now Russia and China can get better relations because of trade and investment and lack of military tension. Now China is getting much stronger than Russia and may take the place of the Russia statues in the global world. Because of the same interests, attitudes and strategies in the international issues, Russia has nothing to do but to cooperate with China. However, once China threatens Russia or both countries have conflicts of interests, the good relations will end in any time. Like a formal Chinese-Russian alliance, a stark Chinese-Russian conflict in the near future is possible. Optimists think that even if China’s relations with the United States and the other countries to the east and southeast improve dramatically currently, China will continue to have compelling reasons for maintaining stable relations with Russia and the countries of Central Asia, since Russia has the potential to become an important source of energy resources for China. More generally, China will continue to have a strong interest in maintaining a stable region in order to focus on economic development. Even now it seems that the relationship is stronger than it has been at any time since the 1950s.

According to the circle historical theory, the “forever friendship” will not be everlasting. There must be severe doubts as to the strategic potential of their relationship, since a lot of problems and complicated issues exist, for example, the two countries have the longest border in the world and Russia somehow feel insecure and suspicious of China and the anxiety can be found in the Russian Far East. Numerous Chinese have crossed into Russia to look for jobs, engaging in agricultural business and trade. Because of the growth of Chinese immigration, Russia faces the fears of demographic crisis and imbalance between their long borders. We can see the report in the New York Times,³³ it said that the influx of Chinese farm labor in Russia reflects

³² B. Lo, *Axis of Convenience: Moscow, Beijing, and the New Geopolitics*, “Brookings Institution Press,” 2008.

³³ A. E. Kramer, *One Russian farmland, an Influx of Chinese*, “The New York Times,” 25 September 2012, <http://city.udn.com/50132/4875170>.

the growing trade and economic ties between the two countries, Russian is rich in land and resources, and China is in people. Some Russians harbor fears that broadening economic cooperation will lead to a wave of Chinese immigrants taking over sparsely populated territories. Another arising tension is that for protecting the oil and natural gas interests, Russia is now driving very hard bargains over its oil and gas with both Europe and its former Central territories. The Russian suspicions of Chinese intentions extend to the Central Asian nations. It is considerable for Russia that China quite interests in Central Asia.³⁴ Although the fears of Russia about the rise of China now will not change anything in Chinese-Russian current partnership, there is still a potential effect on the best and the long-term relationship.

Conclusion

China has a potential to become a regional hegemony and the rise of China could be a threat to the United States. Currently China built a closer strategic coordination with Russia and both sides said that their relationships are at their high point. In 2013 the Chinese leader, Xi Jinping, had chosen Moscow as his first foreign capital city to visit as president. It showed that China will make developing relations with Russia a priority in its foreign policy orientation. Analyst pointed out an alliance between the two countries aimed against the United States in particular or the West in general would constitute a significant threat. It seems that China ally Russia to counterbalance America. Some international crises may contribute to Chinese-Russian alliance against American power and ideas.

However, the United States doesn't look Chinese-Russian as a real strategic partnership, there are still deep historical tragedies and negative images rooted deeply in the Chinese-Russian relations. The mistrust and border conflicts still exist between China and Russia and it will affect the real partnership as it is said as friendly and forever peaceful relationships. Thus Chinese-Russian strategic partnership could be doubtful. The historical suspicions and cultural prejudices, geopolitical rivalries and competing priorities can't make the Russian and China be real so-called strategic partners. And this doubtful relationship will not threaten the security of the United States. The US-Chinese relations is the most important and best in the triangle relations, now it is an interlocking relationship, and for the

³⁴ R. J. Art, *The United States and the Rise of China: Implications for the Long Haul*, "Political Science Quarterly," Volume 125, Number 3, fall 2010, p. 335-338.

global stability, especially the economic and financial stability, China should build good relations with the United States. And the United States believes that the current interdependence between the United States and China is much more than the China-Russia relations, so China simply can't exist without the United States, for China, the Chinese-Russian relations seem strong, but it is just axis of convenience and nothing more than the continuation of history between Beijing and Moscow. The United States has repeated that the United States attaches great importance to relations with China, and they do not see China as a rival. The only relationship that is of a truly strategic nature for China is the one it has with the United States.

The United States wants Russia to become a more active Asian power to help manage the Rise of China, such as reinforcing calls to maintain freedom of the seas. And Russia hopes to use China to balance against the United States, but China doesn't view Russia as a strategic counterweight to the United States. Therefore, mostly the United States has not responded seriously to the China-Russia relations and its policy makers show little concern about the Chinese-Russian "strategic partnership". The United States doesn't worry much about Russia but indeed concerns about the future of China.

In a word, the United States foreign policy in Russia and China are dominated by trade and economy, making China and Russia inseparable from the United States huge market. In the foreseeable future, the United States economic diplomacy to Russia will be greatly enhanced, and then can grasp the opportunities in three diplomatic interactions. The United States maintain the only super-power in the world and the economic cooperation and the global stability are the priorities. One of the pillars of the United States strategy is to establish a stable, productive and constructive relationship with China. At the same time the United States is strengthening the trade economic relationship with Russia, as before to increase trade with China. Both Russia and China need the West to fuel further economic growth and development. Russian, China and the United States would benefit by seeking means for strengthening security cooperation among all three major powers. Therefore, the United States does not worry that Russia will against it just because of the benefit of China and for sure the United States doesn't consider closer bilateral Chinese-Russian relations as a security threat.

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