REGIONAL POLITICS

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RUSSIAN AND CHINESE INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

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Introduction

In addition to the recent violent ethnic conflict in Kyrgyzstan, some of the other events attracting attention to politics in Central Asia are the Georgian-Russian war, the Color Revolutions, the Andijan events in Uzbekistan, the Karimov government's subsequent decision to end U.S. basing rights, Kazakhstan's economic rise, and the leadership change in Turkmenistan. At the same time, the security situation in Afghanistan and the growing insecurity about energy supplies has heightened the interest in security and economic cooperation in Central Asia. Russia and China have been reacting to these same pressures.

On the one hand, they have reached a broad agreement on the priority of regime security and the need to limit the long-term military presence of the United States in Central Asia. On the other hand, their agreement and priorities should not be viewed as entirely cohesive. The divergent interests within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), among the Central Asian states, and especially between Russia and China serve to limit any coordinated foreign policy toward Central Asia by the two powers.

This paper aims to establish a framework/background for a comparative analysis of Russian and Chinese policies on Central Asia based on a perspective that combines the interest-oriented realist school with value-driven or ideology-based foreign policymaking.

- To do that, I will first focus on those arguments that are most important for shaping foreign policy in the context of the growing pressure of globalization and the creation of new national identities and diverse constituencies.
- Second, I will compare the official state-sponsored values chosen by Russia and China in formulating their policies toward Central Asia.
- Third, I will look into how these state-sponsored values facilitate relations with Central Asia.
- Finally, I will examine the relationship between the states' interests and official state values and evaluate the effectiveness of Russian and Chinese foreign policies in Central Asia, as well as the Central Asian reaction to the power play between these two rising nations in their region.

I. The Role of Values in Foreign Policymaking

Traditionally, foreign policymaking studies share the assumption that states are rational actors and that they follow their own interests. Today, states still prioritize their interests by seeking to maximize their security and economic wellbeing. However, in the post-Cold War era this alone is no longer a sufficient explanation of foreign policy formulation. Instead, classical realist assumptions have been challenged by the rise in standards and ideas that call for qualitative justification of interest-maximizing behaviors. Formulating a foreign policy based purely on interests might be seen as a violation of some of the new regulations, such as peace and cooperation.[1]

Without offering values or ideologies to rationalize one's own behavior from the moral standpoint, foreign policymaking can leave states facing considerable domestic and international resistance.[2] Therefore, rational actors should offer a state-sponsored value-driven dimension to rationalize their search for benefits in seemingly non-interest-driven terms. For these policies to be effective, such values must persuasively provide an alternative to offset conflicting standards that question interest-based foreign policy. States, as rational actors, should almost always prioritize interests over values since following the regulations could result in deviating from national interests. In other words, if interests and sponsored values come into conflict, the latter are often less important than the former, particularly when there is excessive pursuit of values and ideology. In this sense, value-driven foreign policy in combination with interest-based assumption is different from solely value-driven policymaking, since the former includes both the carrot and the stick. That is, lack of cooperation could be denounced in moralistic terms. Finally, the efforts exerted by states to balance and combine values and interests depend on the actors in the political and social structure. Therefore, for instance, we could expect a pluralist

[1] For more comprehensive accounts of the changes and trends in international relations theories, see: St.M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy*, No. 110, Spring 1998; *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, ed. by P.J. Katzenstein, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996; R.O. Keohane, J. Nye, "Transitional Relations and World Politics," *International Organization*, Vol. 25, No. 3, Summer 1971; T. Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 1, Summer 1989; A. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999.

[2] See: J.K. Jacobsen, "Much Ado about Ideas: The Cognitive Factor in Economic Policy," *World Politics*, No. 47 (2), January 1995, pp. 283-310; A.S. Yee, "The Causal Effects of Ideas on Policies," *International Organization*, No. 50 (1), December 1996, pp. 69-108; L.H. Gelb, J.A. Rosenthal, "The Rise of Ethics in Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2003, pp. 2-7.

country like the United States to embed values in its foreign policymaking better than its Russian and Chinese counterparts.

Central Asia

Scholarly interest in Central Asia has become widespread after the five states—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan—gained their independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union.[3] There are many aspects of the importance of the region. Some stress the significance of its Islamic religion when discussing the security issue in Central Asia.[4] Others say that geopolitics play a greater role in the region, which has been described as the "second Persian Gulf," a new "grand chessboard," the "heartland of the heartland," or the "Great Game II."[5] The Cold War complex also haunts the republics themselves. Despite this unease, the politics and governments in Central Asia, the post-Soviet republics occupying it, their relations with their neighbors, and how they deal with the pressures of globalization seem to be some of the greatest concerns. Among the global powers that have prime interests in the region, the United States, Russia, and China are the leading competing forces, although nations such as Japan, South Korea, and India also have their sights set on the region.[6]

II. Russian and Chinese Official Values in Central Asia

Since the early 1990s, the largely statist-driven contemporary Russian government has tended to place less emphasis on values in its dealings with Central Asian republics. However, in the last decade, Russian foreign policy has signaled a change toward Central Asia, which can be interpreted as a value: "sovereign democracy." Originally the term was used as a reaction to NATO intervention in Ko-

[3] For instance, see: D. Christian, *A History of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1998; R. Foltz, *Religions of the Silk Road*, St. Martin's Griffin, New York, 1996; M. Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics in Central Asia*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1996; S. Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, U.K., 2000; Ch.W. Maynes, "America Discovers Central Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, No. 82 (2), March/April 2003, pp. 120-133.

[4] See: D. Hoffman, "Iran's Drive to Rebuild Seen Posing New Challenges to West," *The Washington Post*, 2 February, 1992; J. Nichol, *Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests*, CRS Report for Congress, 13 November, 2008.

[5] See: Zb. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Basic Books, New York, 1997; M.P. Amineh, *Globalization, Geopolitics and Energy Security in Central Eurasia and the Caspian Region*, Clingendael International Energy Program, The Hague, 2003; S. Cunnings, *Oil, Transition and Security in Central Asia*, Routledge Curzon, New York, 2003; R. Legvold, "Greater Power Stakes in Central Asia," in: *Thinking Strategically: The Major Powers, Kazakhstan, and the Central Asian Nexus*, ed. by R. Legvold, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2003.

[6] See: A. Bohr, "Regionalism in Central Asia: New Geopolitics, Old Regional Order," *International Affairs*, No. 80 (3), 2004, pp. 485-502; N. MacFarlane, "The United States and Regionalism in Central Asia," *International Affairs*, No. 80 (3), 2004, pp. 447-461; D. Smith, *Central Asia: A New Great Game?* Research Monograph from Strategic Studies Institute, 1996, p. 20 (see also: T.C. Shaffer, V. Hate, *India's "Look West" Policy: Why Central Asia Matters*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington D.C., September 2007; N. Joshi, *Reconnecting India and Central Asia: Emerging Security and Economic Dimensions*, Central Asia Caucasus Institute Silk Road Studies Program, Washington D.C., 2010; Ch. Len, "Japan's Central Asian Diplomacy: Motivations, Implications and Prospects for the Region," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2005, pp. 127-149).

sovo in 1999, against Russia's traditional ally Serbia. Tony Blair, the prime minister of Great Britain at the time, used "human rights above sovereignty" to imply a new international doctrine, which includes "an important qualification" of the principle of "non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries." Accordingly, this new doctrine is based on "values" rather than on "territorial ambitions." But values and interests, he adds, cannot be separated. "If we can establish and spread the values of liberty, the rule of law, human rights and an open society then that is in our national interests too. The spread of our values makes us safer."[7]

Moscow's reaction to NATO intervention in Kosovo was to reverse Blair's doctrine to "sovereignty is above human rights." Later on Russia followed this by constructing a comprehensive system of defensive networks, thus forming a sovereign state alliance. To do this, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) established the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2002 aimed at joining forces to combat international terrorism, illicit drug circulation, illegal migration, and organized crime. The CSTO members, Russia and all the Central Asian nations except Turkmenistan, agreed that external cooperation involving any member with a third party should be approved by all.[8]

In addition, in 2000 the *Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation* signaled a new direction in Russia's foreign policy toward Central Asia.[9] The new foreign policy called for developing bilateral relations with the Central Asian sovereign states by dropping the traditional multilateral approach and focusing less on the region as a whole and more on the specific nations as Russia's strategic partners.[10] In 2006, Vladislav Surkov, former deputy head of the presidential administration, used the term "sovereign democracy" to offer a qualitative value of Russian foreign policy: "the idea in a society's political life where the political powers, their authorities and decisions are decided and controlled by a diverse Russian nation for the purpose of achieving material welfare, freedom and fairness for all citizens, social groups and nationalities, for all the peoples forming that wider society."[11] Even though the term initially caused a split between liberal-minded politicians and experts such as Dmitry Medvedev, Mikhail Gorbachev, Mikhail Kasyanov, and hardliners, it found its manifestation in Russian foreign policy. For instance, Monaghan notes that Moscow is operating in "the nature of a unipolar world dominated by the United States—a world marked by double standards, the use of force and instability, and one in which Russia would need to protect its sovereign independence."[12] Moreover, former Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov argues that contemporary Russian foreign policy would include cooperation with NATO, as well as the CSTO and SCO, in order to adapt to the "chal-

[7] For an analysis of Blair's new doctrine, see: J. Ralph "Tony Blair's 'New Doctrine of International Community' and the UK Decision to Invade Iraq," University of Leeds, School of Politics and International Studies, *Working Paper*, No. 20, August 2005. Ralph adds: "To the historically minded, the New Doctrine bears an uncanny resemblance to the Old Doctrine of ethical imperialism, in whose name 'civilized' countries imposed their 'values' on barbarous ones."

[8] See: J. Nichol, *Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests*, CRS Report for Congress, 14 December, 2007.

[9] See the full text at [http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/text/docs/2008/07/204750.shtml].

[10] See: D. Trofimov, "Russian Foreign-Policy Objectives in Central Asia," *Russian Regional Perspectives Journal*, Vol. 1, Issue. 2, 2006

[11] V. Surkov, "Natsionalizatsiia budushchego," *Expert Magazine*, No. 43 (537), 20 November, 2006, available at [http://expert.ru/expert/2006/43/nacionalizaciya_buduschego/]. For an excellent analysis of the term, see: A. Okara, "Sovereign Democracy: A New Russian Idea or a PR Project?", *Russia in Global Affairs*, No. 2, July-September 2007. Okara notes: "The phrase 'sovereign democracy' came into use long before Surkov. During the Cold War, it meant a democratic state independent of the Soviet Union and the Communist camp and having an appropriate political regime. In today's world, it is broadly used in Taiwan where it provides an explanation for the island's independence from China and juxtaposes the democratic principles of the regime in Taipei to the regime in Beijing," available at [http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_9123] (see also: I. Krastev, "Russia vs. Europe: The Sovereignty Wars," *Open Democracy*, 7 September, 2007).

[12] A. Monaghan, "'An Enemy at the Gates' or 'From Victory to Victory'? Russian Foreign Policy," *International Affairs*, Vol. 84, No. 4, July 2008, pp. 717-733.

lenge to national security" arising from a "violent assault on the constitutional order of some post-Soviet states."[13]

Okara argues that the term "sovereign democracy" has two messages. The first message is that "we are a party wielding state power and sovereign elite, and the sources of our legitimacy are found in Russia, not in the West…" Second, being a power-wielding force we are the guarantors of Russia's sovereignty and survival in the context of globalization and other external super-threats.[14] We could add to this a third message in which Russia encourages foreign authoritarian rulers, for instance those in Central Asia, to transplant a similar Russian system to rule their countries, while persuading these rulers to counter the Western ideal of liberal democracy. Although the substance of the term is still debatable, it continues to dominate Russian foreign policy[15] and reflects a departure from a realist-minded foreign policy.

Similar to Russia, China's foreign policy is also concerned with the issue of sovereignty. However, since Hu Jintao assumed leadership in 2002-2003, China has instead striven to demonstrate that it no longer highlights the supremacy of sovereignty. Rather China presents itself to the world order as a "responsible state." This can be observed at the U.N., where China had been infamous for abstaining from voting on contentious international issues. For instance, a notable example of this change in Chinese attitude was when China supported U.N. Resolution 1769 to send peacekeeping troops to intervene in the humanitarian crisis in the Darfur region of its ally Sudan.[16]

Medeiros and Fravel see the new Chinese attitude as "a less confrontational, more sophisticated, more confident, and, at times, more constructive approach toward regional and global affairs," affording it the position of a "status quo power" in the international community.[17] Such observations are strengthened when Chinese officials identify "peaceful development" in a "harmonious world" as their diplomatic, and also to some extent ideological, guiding principle.[18] For instance, in his speech during his first official visit to the United States, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao spelled out "peaceful rise" as the cornerstone of Chinese foreign policy, by which China would remain actively involved in world affairs in a manner that "engaged," "respected," and "tolerated" other nations without harming their "different social systems and cultural traditions."[19] Although the academic debate on "peaceful rise" continued, Jia Qingguo explained the crux of the term as "despite initial resistance, the Chinese government gradually accepted the post-Cold War international reality and decided that it was not in China's interest to challenge the most powerful country unless China's own core national interests were involved."[20]

In order to achieve "peaceful development" in a "harmonious world," in addition to maintaining its non-interventionist tradition, Chinese foreign policy should demonstrate a number of values, such

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[13] Quoted from: D. Averre, "'Sovereign Democracy' and Russia's Relations with the European Union," *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2007, pp. 173-190.

[14] See: A. Okara, op. cit.

[15] See: N. Mehdiyeva, "New Man in the Kremlin: What Future for Russian Foreign Policy," *International Spectator*, No. 43 (2), June 2008, pp. 21-34.

[16] For analysis of the U.N. resolution on the Sudan, see: R. Cohen "Will Security Council Resolution 1769 Make a Difference in Darfur?, Brookings Institution, 9 August, 2007, available at [http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2007/0809humanrights_cohen.aspx].

[17] See: E. Medeiros, T. Fravel, "China's New Diplomacy," *Foreign Affairs*, No. 82 (6), 2003, pp. 23-35.

[18] See: S. Xu Hui Shen, *"Qualitative Energy Diplomacy in Central Asia": A Comparative Analysis of the Policies of the United States, Russia and China*, The Brookings Institution, Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies, April 2011, p. 16, available at [http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Files/rc/papers/2011/04_us_russia_china_shen/04_us_russia_china_shen.pdf].

[19] Ibidem (for full speech, see [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/topics/wenvisituscaeth/t55971.htm]).

[20] J. Qingguo, "Learning to Live with the Hegemon: Evolution of China's Policy toward the U.S. since the End of the Cold War," *Journal of Contemporary China*, Vol. 14, No. 44, August 2005 (quoted from: S. Xu Hui Shen, op. cit., p. 16).

as impartiality in handling international duties and transparency in making decisions that might influence the wellbeing of citizens beyond its borders. Nevertheless, it can be argued that when compared to its Russian, and even American, counterpart, Chinese foreign policy seems to adhere to a stauncher moral background and to be a more value-driven foreign policy.

III. The Impact of the Value-Driven Foreign Policies of Russia and China in Central Asia

As noted earlier, the term "sovereign democracy" was initially used in response to the Western challenge of liberal democracy. Later the term gained more applicability as part of a new direction in Russia's foreign policy toward Central Asia. The Andijan incidents of 2005 in Uzbekistan can be utilized to understand its application. While the EU and the United States criticized Karimov's handling of the Andijan uprising, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov more or less endorsed Uzbekistan's official interpretation by saying that the incident was planned and executed by radical Islamist groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT).[21] In addition to Russia declining requests by the West to mediate in the conflict, the SCO refused to grant asylum to any of the Andijan protestors.[22]

The Russian attitude during and after the Andijan uprising could be argued to convey not only a set of values with respect to the Central Asian leaders such as priority of order over plurality, but also rewards such as encouraging and supporting the practice of sovereign democracy within their borders and remaining immune to human rights critics beyond them. After Andijan, Russia signed the Treaty on Allied Relations with Uzbekistan in November 2005, which highlights the respect for mutual sovereignty between the two countries. The Program of Economic Cooperation for 2008-2012 was signed, and the Russian energy giants Gazprom and LUKoil have invested about $2.5 billion in Uzbekistan since the signing of the treaty.[23]

On the other hand, energy deals and economic cooperation between Russia and Central Asian states, particularly Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, continued in the last decade as "sovereign democracy" became firmly embedded in Russian foreign policy. In 2003, Moscow concluded a series of deals with Astana over the joint exploitation of three oil-rich sites of Kurmangazy (Rosneft), Tsentralnoye (Gazprom), and Khvalynskoye (LUKoil). In 2005, the Russo-Kazakh joint venture KazRosGas was formally established, with the intention of producing 15 bcm per year from the Kazakh site of Karachaganak.[24] In 2007, Putin, together with President Nursultan Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan and President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov of Turkmenistan, signed a deal on the construction of a new pipeline to transport Turkmen and Kazakh gas to Russia.[25] Overall application of the term "sovereign

[21] See: International Crisis Group, "The Andijan Uprising", *Asia Briefing*, No. 38, 25 May, 2005; M. Walker, "Analysis: Uzbek Leader Escapes Isolation," *United Press International*, 7 May, 2005.

[22] See: J. Corwin, "Is Russia Helping Tashkent Clean-up After Andijan?", *Eurasianet*, 14 July, 2005, available at [http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/pp071505.shtml].

[23] Note that the U.S. base in Uzbekistan closed after the Andijan uprising in November 2005 (see: G. Saidazimova, "Andijan Prompted International Power Shift," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 12 May 2006, available at [http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1068365.html].

[24] See: S. Xu Hui Shen, op. cit., p. 13 (see also: M. Laurelle, *Russia's Central Asia Policy and the Role of Russian Nationalism*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Washington D.C., 2008).

[25] For detailed discussion of this topic, see: "Perspectives on Caspian Oil and Gas Development," *International Energy Agency Working Paper Series*, December 2008, pp. 14-21.

democracy" to Russian foreign policy in Central Asia is best exemplified when Russia leverages its connections and resources to counter Western interests.

The main foreign policy objectives of China in Central Asia could be summarized as ever increasing energy reliance on outside resources and the Uighur separatist activity in Western China to counter the U.S. and Russian influence in the region and to monitor rivalry from neighboring India.[26] The cornerstone of the Chinese version of Central Asia lies in its commitment to multilateralism and establishing a harmonious neighborhood as part of its collective regional responsibilities. When compared with Russian bilateralism, the Chinese multilateral approach offers Beijing economic opportunities. In contrast to Russia's tendency to confront the West in the region, China offers a non-interventionist multilateral cooperation network.

Chinese energy reliance has naturally driven foreign policy since the 1990s. For instance, the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) began operating in Kazakhstan when it bought majority shares of the Kazakh Aktobemunaygaz oil company in 1997 and continued when it took over PetroKazakhstan in 2005.[27] In addition, CNPC, together with KazMunayGas, built a 1,000-km pipeline to connect Atasu (a town in the western Kazakh Karaganda province) to China's Alashankou in Xinjiang, which was completed in December 2005. This pipeline is important not only for the Chinese domestic market, but could also be instrumental if and when Eurasian oil and gas reach the Japanese and South Korean markets through Chinese territory.[28]

There are other agreements on oil and gas cooperation between China, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan signed in the name of building a harmonious neighborhood.[29] For instance, a notable energy advancement was signed between China and Turkmenistan in which the latter agreed to export 30 bcm of natural gas annually for 30 years through a planned Central Asian pipeline to be built by CNPC. Not only was this deal signed with Ashghabad, but China will explore for oil with Turkmenistan and is talking to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan about gas pipelines from the latter through, or with branches to, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, so that it can avoid having to depend on Russia.[30] Since neither of those Central Asian states wants to be permanently tied to subsidizing Russia at below market prices, the stage is being set for Sino-Russian rivalry in Central Asian gas affairs.

This is all the more likely as Russian demand increases, while its pipeline capacity is insufficient and while it is determined to subordinate Central Asian gas to its whims so that it can keep the region dependent upon it, maintain Gazprom's monopoly over gas and pipelines, and provide its own customers with cheap energy at subsidized prices. Thus Russia has consistently sought to organize a gas cartel under its domination to monopolize Central Asian gas projects and frustrate any efforts to sell independently to other markets. China's deals with Central Asian states like Turkmenistan indicate that it knows it cannot rely on Russian promises and is prepared to compete with it in Central Asia.

Chinese foreign policy is therefore dynamic on a Central Asian scale and comprehensive insofar as it seeks to build relations in different aspects of policymaking. Yet it also is in transition from the old statist model to something new that might possibly have more elements of multilateralism and a

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[26] See: V. Paramonov, O. Stolpovski, *Chinese Security Interest in Central Asia*, Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, Advanced Research and Assesment Group, May 2008.

[27] See: Zh. Saurbek, "Kazakh-Chinese Energy Relations: Economic Pragmatism or Political Cooperation?" *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 2008, pp. 79-93; St. Blank, "China's Recent Central Asian Energy Moves," *Analyst*, May 2009.

[28] See: Zh. Daojiong, "China's Energy Security: Domestic and International Issues," *Survival*, No. 48 (1), 2006, pp. 179-190.

[29] See: Ibidem.

[30] See: Ch. Durdiyeva, "China, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan Launch Turkmenistan-China Gas Pipeline," *Analyst*, 20 January, 2010.

value-based approach. This new approach could conceivably evolve into one that relies less on bilateral efforts to force states into compliance by invoking other political considerations.

IV. The Future: Interests, Values, and Russian and Chinese Foreign Policy in Central Asia

The West's attempts to push forward liberal democratic ideals in Central Asia have not succeeded so far. Similarly, the formulation of "sovereign democracy" as a subsidiary of Russia's foreign policy interests also has its problems and the actual reception of sovereign democracy in the region is very limited for two reasons.[31] First, sovereign democracy reminds the Central Asians too much of the "sovereignty" their territories previously enjoyed under Soviet and Russian rule or patronage. Since the Russian Federation gained its independence from the Soviet Union, Moscow has stationed troops in the territory of many of the former Soviet republics, including Tajikistan, Georgia, and Moldova. If sovereign democracy were used as the sole national ideology, these Central Asian countries would worry about Russia's influence becoming too great, as it was in the Soviet era. This worry would only result in negative consequences for Moscow's foreign policy in the region. Second, Moscow's support of the pro-Russian separatist movements in the former Soviet republics, like Transnistria in Moldova, or Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, presents even greater concern for the Central Asian leaders. If Moscow simply wished to transplant the Russian system in Central Asia, it could also promote sovereign democracy in separatist regimes if it wished to.[32] Therefore, Moscow has expressed certain reservations in preaching sovereign democracy in the separatist regions in Central Asia. This also signifies that Moscow is prioritizing interests over preaching values or principles.

To most mainland Chinese scholars with official connections, Shen mentions, China's oil diplomacy is interpreted as "not threatening" to the world, because China is not a status quo challenger.[33] However, to most non-Chinese observers, China is simply making the best use of its "harmonious" and "responsible" masks to enter the Central Asian energy market and engage Central Asian statesmen and businessmen to challenge other energy powers. Other powers regard the self-proclaimed benevolent Chinese intention of tying regional energy economies from Japan to the Middle East via Central Asia "as a bold attempt by China to dominate regional markets."[34]

What then does the future hold for the Central Asian countries? For one thing, even though they have made some attempts to form their own bloc, such as the Special Program for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), to monitor energy-related issues in the region, collective action by the Central Asian states seems unlikely. Rather, the Central Asian states will continue to formulate inward-looking security and economic policies. This holds true even when we consider the "multivectoral foreign policy" announced by President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev, in which he stated, "we are

[31] As quoted from: S. Xu Hui Shen, op. cit., p. 14.

[32] As noted by the Uzbek observer Alisher Taksanov, even Karimov of Uzbekistan, a beneficiary of the Russian promotion of sovereign democracy, was worried about the Russian action because: should it become angry with Uzbekistan, [Russia] might support the separatist tendencies in Karakalpakstan … [and] the separation of the Khorezm area, Samarkand, Bukhara, the Navoi and Dzhizak regions, and finally the Fergana Valley. In the end, Uzbekistan could be broken up into a number of small principalities (see: S. Xu Hui Shen, op. cit., p. 15).

[33] See: S. Xu Hui Shen, op. cit., p. 20 (see also: H.H. Lai, "China's Oil Diplomacy: Is It a Global Security Threat?" *Third World Quarterly*, No. 28 (3), 2007, pp. 519-537).

[34] N. Swanström *et al*, "China," in: *The New Silk* Road, ed. by S.F. Starr, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Washington, 2007.

witnessing superpower rivalry for economic dominance in our region... We have a choice between remaining the supplier of raw materials to the global markets and waiting patiently for the emergence of the next imperial master or pursuing genuine economic integration of the Central Asian region. I choose the latter."[35] Even though Nazarbaev's words echo the importance of regional economic integration and a careful bargain with the great powers to their own advantage, it is not realistic to expect the formation of a strategic partnership between the states of the region.

Certainly, Russian-Chinese relations and policies in Central Asia to date demonstrate the limits of the statist approach that puts politics and interests in command. In the past, such attitudes led to China's failure to secure access to the energy it believed it was going to receive and to Russia's failure to sell as much as it intended to China and other Asian countries. A value-based approach could certainly do better than this, and it has the added virtue of stimulating a more cooperative approach to relations among Central Asian countries. Yet it also provides an opportunity for the United States and the European Union to support an alliance that could reduce the burden of distrust due to interest-based realist policies and lead the regional political environment toward a more friendly and harmonious system. This would not be a remedy to the problems of the region, but it would certainly be a positive new start.

[35] For an in-depth analysis of Kazakhstan's foreign policy, see: "Foreign Policy of Kazakhstan: Risks and Perspectives," *Eurasia Transition Group*, Bonn, Germany, available at [www.eurasiatransition.org].