

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Is Moldova Putin's Next Move? 2

Foreign Policy Analysis: What Should USA do About Russia? 3

Illegal Immigration: Pathway to Citizenship 7

Illegal Immigration: Shift in Priorities 8

Russian-Chinese Relations and the SCO 9

Failure to Act: A Russian Immigrant's Perspective on the Crisis in Crimea

First appeared on Intercollegiate Review

By Nikita Chirkov

“Prankster” was the word that the Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin chose to use in describing the individual who came up with the list of names targeted by Obama’s sanctions. Indeed, after a series of formidable warnings that were issued by the White House, the expectations were set for a strong American rebuttal to Vladimir Putin’s annexation of Crimea. However, the resulting sanctions were nothing short of a laughable, piteous failure.

The arena of contemporary international politics is much like an extensive chess match of moves and counter moves. It stays immune to the demagoguery of political correctness and social discourse – those types of issues usually remain unique to the nations from which they originate. Therefore, the Crimean crisis can only be interpreted through two major geo-strategic perspectives: 1) Russia is correct in its occupation of Crimea and the defense of its citizens in the region; 2) Russia is incorrect in its military annexation of the region and its blatant dismissal of the international law.

Of course, the Russian perspective is clear: they believe that they have a right to reclaim their territory, protect their citizens, and allow them to join Russia through a referendum. And so what, Russia asks, that the referendum is unconstitutional ac-

ording to Ukrainian law? The outing of Viktor Yanukovich was equally unconstitutional, yet the West took no issue with that development.

The American strategic perspective is equally as clear: Vladimir Putin is seeking to claim total control of a strategic military region. Furthermore, the US recognizes that Russia is attempting to increase its dominance as an energy giant by securing locations that are crucial to gas export. Both of the latter objectives would elevate Russia’s role in the world and run counter to American political interest.

Whichever position we choose to take, the international political calculus of opposing national interests favors the side which makes bold, decisive, and calculated moves; and unfortunately for America, the ultimate chess master in this standoff is Vladimir Putin, not Barack Obama. While Putin sends nearly sixty thousand Russian troops to the border of Crimea, Obama slaps miniscule sanctions on vocal ideologues in the Russian political system. If the White House claims to defend the American interest with full force and magnitude, it is yet to demonstrate any serious commitment to its promise. To put it rather simply – the administration has failed to

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POINTS RAISED IN THIS ISSUE:

- *Russian vs American position on Crimea*
- *Putin and his upcoming strategic plans*
- *Will China and Russia become economical partners?*
- *Should we grant a pathway to citizenship for illegals?*

Is Moldova Putin's Next Move?

By Travis Wentworth

With Crimea once again united with the Russian mainland following the March 18th annexation, many among the Western Powers, NATO allies, and former Soviet states are questioning what Russian President Vladimir Putin's next move will be. Arguably, many point to an invasion into Ukraine, which in turn could lead to a split nation similar to Cold War Germany. Taking into consideration the ethnic, language, and political diversity between western Ukraine and eastern Ukraine, this move has the potential to occur. What we must look at in this situation is the likelihood of such an event.

While it is an obtainable move for Putin, such an invasion would lead to casualties among both the military of the Federation, as well the Russian economy. If

such an event would occur, Western powers would increase their support for Western Ukraine, which could lead to more stringent diplomatic actions against Russia. On the other hand, there could very well be an escalation of force in which case the world would be thrown into a tense situation similar to the Cuban Missile Crisis.

What is an obtainable move, which would be much easier than a full invasion into Ukraine, is a movement towards Moldova. On the Moldovan border with Ukraine is a region known as Transnistria (also known as Transdnistria). This

region, similar to Crimea, is full of inhabitants who lean more towards Russian influence than European. Following the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union, and Moldova becoming an independent state, Transnistria wished to remain with the Soviets. In 2006, Transnistria held a referendum similar to the recent Crimean one, which yielded that around 97% of the population wished to join the Russian Federation.

US Air Force General Philip Breedlove, who serves as NATO's top military commander, expressed the concern of a Russian troop buildup on the Ukrainian border, in addition to the 400 or so Russian soldiers stationed in Transnistria. He identifies these Russian soldiers on the border as a force ready to move in on Transnistria seeking an annexation into the Federation. An important thing which has failed to be highlighted in these fears of further Russian conquest into the region is why practically would Putin choose to do so?

On the Transnistria border with Ukraine, located near Moldova's Lake Cuciurgani, is the Kuchurgan Power Station. The power station operates with the use of Russian petroleum products, and effectively powers not only Moldova, but Romania and Ukraine as well. Russian pipelines wind their way through the Kuchurgan Power Station and continue on their way to Europe, along with the

power produced at this facility. Compared to the pipelines that run through Ukraine, those present in Moldova represent a smaller number of Russian pipelines into Europe. However, those that go through Moldova and the Transnistria region also in part, bypass Ukraine.

Despite not being connected to the Russian mainland directly, Transnistria's annexation would also serve as a strategic advantage in regards to the energy control Moscow has over a good amount of Europe. In addition, such a move could also further destabilize Ukraine, and lead to a later opportunity for Putin.

While it is uncertain what Putin's next move will be, it is important to monitor the Transnistria region, as this might be his next step. It is safe to say, based on his political history, that Vladimir Putin does not make such a move without analyzing what the future benefits might be. He very well could invade Ukraine first, and then move towards Moldova. However, Putin could just leave his advancement at Crimea, and not press Western powers any more. The strategic advantage of Transnistria, the vast majority of those who wish to join Russia, and Russian troops already present in the region, make Moldova a highly likely next target for Putin if he decides to continue onward into Eastern Europe.

"In 2006, Transnistria held a referendum... which yielded that around 97% of the population wished to join the Russian Federation."

Foreign Policy Analysis: What Should USA do About Russia?

By Nikita Chirkov

Part 1:

History and Current Policy

The world of international relations is a fascinating field of affairs. From peaceful interactions among small states, to the aggressive continental engagements of the entire civilizations: there is nothing that can teach us more about human nature than history of these past and future events and the circumstances through which they originated. However, when I label international relations as fascinating, I do not mean to imply good, or universally beneficial. Indeed, an account that demonstrates two world wars, mass genocide of various ethnic populations and a near termination of the entire human race can not possibly earn those positive implications. On the other hand, there are undoubtedly positive elements in the world of anarchy of global politics. Trade agreements, peace treaties, and liberating interventions continue to inspire us with tales of honor and glory to this day.

When looking at the recent history of world politics and its rollercoaster appearance, one can not but notice two major players in the global theater:

Russia and the United States. Indeed, these two actors have joined forces to defeat Nazi Germany – perhaps a fait turning coalition that prevented a radical shift in all of human history. One would think that this fact would give an unbreakable boost to the cooperation of these societies ever since. Unfortunately, it is astonishing to see just how quickly this assumption became totally inaccurate. Ideological engines of the two societies were so incompatible, that even the most widely accepted principles such as private property rights in America were totally rejected in the USSR. With such a wide gap in mutual understanding of fundamental truths of civil societies, cooperation between the two superpowers became close to impossible, and they quickly found themselves at the opposing sides of the geopolitical spectrum. Bipolarity and the Cold War quickly became the norm of international affairs for the next few decades, resulting in a standoff that nearly caused a global nuclear disaster. However, just as abruptly as the cooperation of these two giants ended after World War II, it resumed again in the early

90's, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The ideological foundation was reconfigured to appear to be more democratic, and the walls that have kept the western values at bay began to crumble along with the once mighty Iron Curtain. What follows this monumental event is the time period in which we live today: a newly emerging “multi polar world” alongside with an unpredictable behavior of the Russian Federation. The common American approach to its former adversary has been rather soft and supporting. When the president Boris Yeltsin faced an internal struggle for power against the parliament in 1993, president Bill Clinton went as far as giving full support to Yeltsin, hoping to establish friendly relations with Russia: As the Boston Globe noted on September 22, 1993: “‘In a democracy, the people should finally decide the issues that are at the heart of the political and social debate,’ Clinton said in a statement issued six hours after Yeltsin appeared on Russian television to announce his decision.

‘President Yeltsin has made his choice and I support him fully.’”[1] The policy tradition started by Clinton continues to this day, with minor exceptions.

George W Bush famously confronted Vladimir Putin at the Beijing Olympic Games with a powerful demand that Russia stop its occupation of Georgia. Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney also proposed a harsher policy toward Russia by calling it “without question our number one geopolitical foe”[2]. However, Mitt Romney was never elected to office, and the current American policy has treated Russia with much flexibility, cooperation, and unnecessary tolerance. Consequently,

in an attempt to shed light on forgotten history and the ignored reality of Russia's international position, this work will take a look at the general overview of the current American policy toward the Russian Federation, analyze its faults, and provide a possible alternative that can finally solve the dilemma of Russia.

“...the current American policy has treated Russia with much flexibility, cooperation, and unnecessary tolerance.”

Part 2: Bipolarity and Multipolarity.

Before indulging ourselves in an analysis of the current state of affairs between Russia and the United States, it is first important to understand the two diverging views on bipolarity and multipolarity. The Cold War standoff between the two superpowers divided the world into two major camps: the Soviet block, with numerous allies pledging allegiance to the communism and socialism; and the American block, consisting of democracies and pro American regimes. However, many scholars took this elementary division in world power a step further. When looking at the bipolar structure, they contended that bipolarity actually leads to a safer world order than any other alternative.[3] According to this argument, the fear that arose from the devastating cost of starting a war made the world a safer place to live in. I personally find it difficult to come to this conclusion, knowing that during the cold war the world was no more than a push of a button away from self extermination. The multitude of vicious and bloody proxy wars which ensued during the time period does not suggest a peaceful world atmosphere either.

The conventional theory of bipolarity and multipolarity goes on to suggest that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world entered a multipolar phase. Here too, the experts start to split: many suggest that multipolarity is the dominant political condition, while few observe that the United States actually holds a unipolar influence in the world. Adopting Samuel Huntington's definition, we may simply say that unipolarity consists of "one superpower, no significant major powers, and many minor powers"[4]. Moreover, many proponents of this view also hold that it is the most stable world order.[5] However, even here, it becomes difficult to ignore obvious problems with the theory. If we hold that the world is strictly unipolar, we ignore the role of the international community in major decision making procedures, such as the Security Council of the United Nations. On the other hand, many world leaders who appear to cherish the idea of the multi polar world are simply using the theory to criticize the American involvement in global politics: "Moscow and Beijing continue to use the rhetoric of multipolarity as a code word for their opposition to what they see as the domination of the world arena by the United States"[6] (Trenin: 5). A perfect example to the latter truth is the Russian war with Georgia in 2008. After repeated statements of the Russian leaders calling for respecting sovereignty of developing

nation-states, Russian forces occupied a country of Georgia over a disputed region of South Ossetia. Moreover, Russian foreign ministry never stopped to criticize the American involvement in the Middle East thereafter, as if telling the world that the Russian intervention is somehow more justified than the American one.

It is precisely due to these problems with conventional methods of describing the historical state of international world order, that this work proposes a different approach as a basis of new policy-making strategies with Russia. That is, we ought to look at the world through a geopolitical setting. While arguments of polarity may be subject to significant debate, worldview that focuses on geopoliti-

"Many world leaders who appear to cherish the idea of the multi polar world are simply using the theory to criticize the American involvement in global politics."

cal analysis is much more efficient and accurate. In defining geopolitics, I will simply resort to the commonly agreed upon definition of Saul Cohen, who argued that "The essence of geopolitical analysis is the relation of international political power to the

geographical setting"[7] (Cohen 2003: 24). Simple, yet elegant, this approach is effective in analyzing both the cold war and the contemporary political setting.

Part 3: Geopolitics as Bases of Analysis and new Policy Approach

If we analyze the world through the lenses of polarity we face a fallacy of drawing lines between bipolar and multipolar worlds. It is as if the theory mandates that we label clear distinctions between the cold war political setting and the present political setting. A geopolitical analysis provides a different outlook of world politics altogether. First, there are no clear shifts of geopolitical setting from the 1980s to today. Geopolitical influences may have been substantially weakened by the collapse of the Soviet Union; however, they are far from gone. Russia, China, North Korea and other nations previously in the Soviet block find themselves alienated on most international issues. Of course, the bonds that hold the geopolitical sphere are not as strong as they used to be, and the geopolitical setting itself within the block may have become substantially different as China continues to grow as an economic superpower. Nevertheless, in context of world geopolitics, this eastern block is more than likely to oppose the United States in most of its policies on an international stage.

The second crucial detail that suggests a strong geopolitical relationship between the former soviet block is revealed through a geopolitical analysis of the economic factors of the region. In an extensive analysis of the China – Russia economic relationship, the Centre for European Reform notes that there is large potential for economic cooperation between the two sides:

“Russia is the world’s biggest hydrocarbon producer. China is one of the world’s biggest and fastest growing energy markets. Moreover, the two are neighbours, which means that energy transport is relatively straightforward, without the need for either risky sea shipments or pipelines that transit several countries. A long-term strategic energy relationship between the two looks not only commercially viable but almost inevitable”[8] (Peterson 2011: 2).

In addition to this obvious potential on paper, the Russian leadership has already announced its plans to move the energy development to the East:

“In recent years, Russian politicians and energy executives have repeatedly announced that in the future more Russian hydrocarbons would be sold eastwards, principally to China. In 2006, the then president, Vladimir Putin, promised that Russia would increase the share of its oil and gas exports going to Asia from a meager 3 per cent at the time

*to 30 percent by around 2020.*³ In August 2009, the Russian government adopted its ‘energy strategy 2030’. This document outlined a \$2 trillion investment plan for new fields and transport infrastructure, partly designed to raise significantly the share of oil and gas destined for Asia-Pacific markets[9] (Peterson 2011: 6).”

The formation of the latter block should be alarming for the United States. After all, if it manages to fulfill its full potential, it could prove to be a serious threat to American interests. Heritage foundation makes a similar observation when analyzing the Asian economic relations:

“...in context of world geopolitics, this eastern block is more than likely to oppose the United States in most of its policies on an international stage.”

“A close Sino–Russian strategic relationship could erode the unencumbered capacity of the U.S. to act abroad and could also undermine economic freedom, democracy, and human rights in Greater Eurasia. China and Russia are employing a mix of hard and soft

power tools aimed at frustrating the United States in Central Asia, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India”[10] (Cheng 2013: 13).

Part 4: An Adequate Proposition

Now that this work has underscored the importance of shifting the world view to a geopolitical analysis method, the second step to the Russian American relations comes in a form of strategic policy implementation. Many would suggest cooperation with both China and Russia in order to offset a potential strengthening of the anti-American block. Jeffrey Mankoff of the New York Times even goes as far as to suggest an increased role of Russia and China in world politics: “[Washington] should also be open to new formats, such as the G-20, that place Russia and China on equal footing with traditional U.S. partners”[11] (Mankoff 2013). This proposition is perhaps the most dangerous advice to American policy-makers, for it ignores the fact that Russia has no interest in geopolitical cooperation with the United States in the near future. Any increase in international power would simply be a concession that would in turn be used to strengthen the Russian position.

Therefore, the proposition of this work consists of a balance between a steady continuation of a global leadership role of the United States and an establishment of strong American influence in central Asia. The former strategy does not allow Russia any more wiggle room than it already has by being a potential veto power on the Security Council in the UN. The latter strategy is a bit more complex, and requires American perseverance on multiple fronts. First, the United States must offer economic and infrastructural cooperation in the former Soviet Union states south of Russia. Many of these territories hold strategic geographical interest that connects Russia with its oil and natural gas consumers. By turning this region pro American, negotiations for constructing pipelines with Russia may prove to be more challenging and potentially limit its exporting power. Additionally, the US should work closely to encourage a formation of new NATO member states, thereby protecting them from a possible military occupation instigated by Russia. This may also include an installation of the “PRO” missile defense systems in countries surrounding the Russian border. Cooperation with central Asian countries may also significantly limit Russia’s economic coordination with China. Since most of the Russian pipelines go through the Black and the Caspian Sea, countries like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and others, will ultimately play a fate deciding role in Russia’s Asian economic expansion plan. Having these countries on the side of America will stack the deck in favor of American interest and may potentially prevent Russia from becoming an even larger oil and gas superpower.

The implementation of this strategy will have to depend on the willingness of the executive branch of the US government to recognize Russia as a major geopolitical threat. This would also require a tougher policy toward the Russian state on an international arena. Attempt to build the illusive “friendship” between the two nations in order to dismiss the geopolitical analysis of reality is close to madness, for we have to understand that the cultural and the internal political mentality of Russia is still fundamentally different from the US. Laws such as the one restricting American adoption of Russian children in 2012, and the sheltering of the former NSA insider Edward Snowden clearly demonstrate the political atmosphere of the ruling party in Kremlin. These signs cannot be viewed as positive signals for a future friendship; and unless some monumental change occurs from within the government and party structure of Putin’s regime, the policy herein proposed is the best approach for protecting the in-

terests of the United States, and her role in the international arena.

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Illegal Immigration: Pathway to Citizenship or a Gateway to Imprudence

First appeared on Intercollegiate Review

By Nikita Chirkov

Rarely a day goes by that an ordinary American is not reminded of some monumental contribution of the illegal workforce to the American society. Indeed, listening to such noble descriptions of illegal aliens makes one feel rather minuscule and unworthy of any sort of praise. While you, my beloved bourgeoisie, bathe in capitalistic material loving occupations such as doctors, lawyers, and businessmen – this superior working class of immigrants does, as the famous cliché puts it, the “jobs that you won’t do”.

More often than not I am tempted to leave the argument right there and then – after all, rebuking demagoguery of this sort requires a bit of disdain toward the more logically oriented reasoning to which one may be inclined. However, the problem arises in what happens next. The argument goes on to say that: a) Illegal immigrants come from poor countries with low standards of living; b) therefore, they deserve a pathway to American citizenship despite the fact that they immigrated illegally.

Ladies and gentlemen, demagoguery is one thing, but an insult to logic – the most benevolent and eloquent form of human reasoning – is quite another. There is no feasible circumstance under which “b” logically follows the “a”. There are plenty of legal, honest, and law abiding immigrants (such as myself) who came to this country after doing everything possible to respect its legal procedures in the field of immigration. Furthermore, many of us come from countries in which conditions are even more severe and intolerable than those in Latin Amer-

ica. We do not, however, use that as an excuse to disregard immigration law; and we wait our turn in line to receive our visas and green cards.

How disgustingly arrogant and selfish would it be if I, fed up with the poverty and oppression in Russia, left to live in another country, disregarded that country’s immigration statutes, and in the next place claim that I

“How disgustingly arrogant and selfish would it be if I, fed up with the poverty and oppression in Russia, left to live in another country, disregarded that country’s immigration statutes, and in the next place claim that I deserved to be its citizen!”

deserved to be its citizen! Would not that type of treatment of illegal immigration incentivize more of it? Therefore, I firmly state that a pathway to citizenship is, to borrow from the dictionary of the left, “offensive” to any honest legal immigrant who patiently waited in line from the very beginning, and paid respect to the laws of immigration

of a country which they sought to call their new home.

Illegal Immigration Solutions: Shift in Priorities

First appeared on Intercollegiate Review

By Nikita Chirkov

In my previous article I have briefly summarized the points of absurdity upon which the immigration policy of the left is constructed. In this work, I am determined to continue the discussion by examining the first of several possible answers to the illegal immigration problem. After all, criticisms without solutions are like books without conclusions.

There are no easy answers to complex questions; however, there are plenty of easy tools with which the answer can be efficiently derived. Experience, as has been observed for centuries, is exactly the type of tool by which even the most complex, seemingly unsolvable problems find their logical explication. It would, therefore, be intellectually criminal of me

not to mention (if only briefly) the dilemma that clearly presented itself after my unfortunate encounter with this pedagogue of truth.

My move to America eight years ago was a dream that owes much of its actualization to a staffing company that my step father ran at the time. The concept of the business was simple: relieve the massive shortage of medical personal in America by providing a large pool of sophisticated and qualified foreign nurses to the understaffed hospitals. There was, however, one factor over which the company had no control – availability of visas. At the time this did not seem like a problem; after all, any rational government would be eager to alleviate a shortage in a particular labor market by a healthy flow of pro-

fessional legal immigrants. Shortly after the 2008 election, the company had over 130 medical professionals ready to come to United States – every single one of them was denied a visa. The government has successfully shut down a job creating company while denying America over a 130 highly qualified professionals.

However, here comes the punch line – the same evening after the company got the news, the left was actively campaigning for amnesty and pathway to citizenship for illegal aliens. In other words, those who are doctors get a “no” and those who “do jobs we won’t do” get a “yes”. Where in the world are our priorities? Consequently, allow me to make one rational and simple

proposition – let’s make legal immigration easier and illegal immigration harder. Let us properly position our priorities such that the incentives work in our favor, and discourage illegality while encouraging legality. Logical, elegant, and precise – how about that for a start?

“Experience, as has been observed for centuries, is exactly the type of tool by which even the most complex, seemingly unsolvable problems find their logical explication.”

Security Cooperation and Economic Competition: Russian-Chinese Relations Within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

By Alec LaFaille

In 2001, China, Russia, and a number of Central Asian states came together to form a loose organization known as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). At its founding, many analysts pointed to the SCO as an attempt by Russia and China to balance against a growing American and NATO influence and presence in Asia, especially Central Asia, following the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent War on Terror. These arguments were met by the Russians and Chinese, who claimed that the SCO did not exist as a challenge to the US or NATO, referring to the Organization's stated goals as being the "strengthening of mutual trust, friendship and good-neighborliness, and to encourage mutual cooperative defense". However, the Shanghai Co-Operation Organization, which seeks to create an alliance between Russia, China, and Central Asian States, cannot flourish in the long term due to the divergent desires of the two keystones in its formation: Russia and China. While China is seeking the SCO as a method of economic expansion, Russia approaches the SCO as an unofficial means of establishing a security apparatus to challenge NATO—"...still perceived as the biggest challenge to Russian security"—while simultaneously expanding its control over the energy market present in Central Asia. Because of these two different approaches to the SCO, and the inherent competition they create, the SCO is not a viable, long-term alliance.

In order to understand the SCO, a number of factors must be examined, including Russian and Chinese interests in Central Asia, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)—organized by Russia in Central Asia in 2002—and the current state of the SCO as either an economic or security organization as defined by its actions and internal issues. Only by understanding all of these factors can an accurate

analysis of the future of the SCO be gleaned.

Russia

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1992, Russia found itself bereft of the power it once wielded in the world stage; influencing states and events as it desired in the effort to check American international clout and ultimately in the pursuit of a world united under Communism. What it found instead was a crippled economy, a crumbling infrastructure, ineffective government, massive unemployment, and animosity from most of, but not all, former satellites. While states such as Finland, Poland, and the newly unified Germany distanced themselves immediately from Russia, others, such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and other Central Asian states maintained a close working relationship with the newly formed Russian Federation, to the extent that plans determined to create "...an EU-like arrangement among the former Soviet Republics..." exist.

As Vladimir Putin began taking over the government in the late 90's, his strong leadership, expressed goals of returning Russia to the forefront of international politics, and efforts at strengthening the Russian economy by tying it closely with the government, allowed Russia to stabilize and address methods to impact the world once again. Much of Russia's success in repairing its economy relies upon its decision to focus on the export of energy and indeed, much of Russia's ability to impact the world today comes from a combination of its military and its energy. According to the US Energy Information Agency, the Russian economy "...largely depends on...(and) continues to be driven by energy exports".

"Much of Russia's success in repairing its economy relies upon its decision to focus on the export of energy..."

As an energy exporter, “Russia attempts to control the energy output channels from the upstream so as to exert more influences upon...energy consuming countries”. Thus it is in Russia’s interest to control and protect as many energy resources as is possible in order to solidify its importance on the international stage while fueling its economy via its control over the price of oil. This effort recently brought international attention as Russia arrested some 30 Greenpeace activists—initially charging them with piracy--as they tried to board a Russian oilrig in arctic waters in protest of Russian drilling practices. Further emphasizing the Russian imperative of protecting these resources, President Putin has announced that Russia would “...support its economic interests with military power”, tying Russia’s expanding energy interests directly to its military. Such statements highlight not only Russia’s focus on energy export, but also its emphasis on security, and by extension, the export of security. As one source blatantly states, “Russia has little to sell abroad except oil and arms”.

All of these factors in Russian economic and security thought come to a common ground in Central Asia. Much of Central Asia has a wealth of untapped energy resources, such as oil and gas, uranium, and hydro-energy that would allow Russia to command an even more decisive role in the energy market than it has already, thus increasing its ability to affect the international stage in the manners in which it seeks. Furthermore, as a testament to their close relations and Russia’s intention to militarily support its economic interests, “all Central Asian countries are dependent on Russia in arms trade...which facilitates close military cooperation with Russia...”. This military integration, along with an increase in intelligence sharing between Russia and Central Asian nations illustrates an unofficial security alliance, in which Russia is the dominant partner. In this situation, while Russia does not officially control the energy resources in Central Asia, it es-

entially controls the security apparatus of each nation, and as such, per Putin’s marriage of economics and military, Russia controls a demanding presence in the Central Asian energy market and will continue to so long as the Central Asian nations focus on security concerns.

The Collective Security Treaty Organization

While this paper focuses on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, it is essential to address the Collective Security Treaty Organization in order to better understand the future of the SCO. Founded in 2002 by Russia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and others, the CSTO is a formal military alliance spanning most of Central Asia and parts of Eastern Europe. As a formal military alliance in the same vein as NATO, the

Russian led CSTO embodies the Russian desire for a regional, “...conventional military structure with integrated security functions, including a Rapid Reaction Force...” and “...should be the sole structure of its kind in the Post-Soviet space...” aiming “...for functional exclusivity in conventional se-

“All of these factors in Russian economic and security thought come to a common ground in Central Asia.”

curity”. The creation of this organization serves as a direct challenge to the SCO due in large part to overlapping membership. Furthermore, as an official military structure, the CSTO is able to demand troop commitments from its participants, in many instances limiting the Central Asian States’ ability to supply troops to other multilateral organizations. Finally, by forming a strict alliance among the signatories, and by excluding China, Russia has ensured that it’s presence is felt and desired more among Central Asian nations than China’s, giving Russia the ability to circumvent Chinese influence in the region should it (China) come to dominate the SCO.

China

For China, the end of the Soviet Union presented the opportunity to assert itself on the world stage as the new, viable, alternative world power to the United States. And while China has succeeded in supplanting itself as a dominant power in East Asia and a check on the US presence there, it has turned its eyes to the Central Asian states in hopes of acquiring new markets and resources with which to fuel its expanding and demanding economy. A common assertion argues that a high economic growth rate is necessary for China to validate its regime, though the notion of GDP being a direct representation of the standard of living in China is recently coming under fire.

Nevertheless, as an emerging world power, the Chinese economy not only demands new markets, but the continued development of Chinese lands, namely western China. Already, China ranks as the number one consumer of energy in the world and in 2009 became the second largest net importer of oil in the world. Further development of Western China will necessitate access to more, new, and diversified energy reserves. As such, China's "primary task... in conducting international energy cooperation is to establish a diversified, stable, and reliable energy supply system and to strengthen cooperation in oil and gas...". Central Asia thus presents itself as an ideal source of energy to move that development with its wealth of oil, uranium, and hydroenergy as well as its close proximity to Western China. It is in China's interests then, to establish a dominant presence in Central Asia so as to diversify its access to energy, thus allowing it to acquire energy at the cheapest price possible. Furthermore, as China continues to develop its resources in its western frontier, increased stability in its bordering, Central Asian neighbors as well as increased border security will be necessary to ensure the safety of those developments. In order to achieve this, China turned to the creation of a new, multilateral organization focused on the furtherance of Chinese goals.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Founded in 2001 by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, the exact nature of the SCO remains a constant source for debate. While the official charter invokes "mutual trust, friendship and good-neighborliness,

and... mutual cooperative defense" for the immediate goals of combating ethnic separatism, religious extremism, and international terrorism, the approaches to achieving these goals have differed greatly between China and Russia, with Central Asia being caught more or less in the middle.

While Russia provides a much more militaristic approach to achieving security in the region through its extensive arms trade and its close, military integration with Central Asian nations, China makes a very different approach, forgoing the military in favor of softer solutions. Though still participating in obligatory military support to the SCO, China has pressed the SCO to develop a concept of security based not on the military, but rather on "...dialogue and consultation, mutual benefits and respects, and equality and peaceful resolution of disputes". In public, both Russia and China have embraced a hybrid of these approaches, promoting the SCO as a new approach to old, multilateral institutions and not as a "military alliance directed against any third parties..." i.e., the US, but as "...a process of dialogue and consultation...and a mechanism for enhancing regional cooperation in political and economic spheres". To this extent, the purpose of the SCO "...is not to challenge the US strategy, but rather to create a political space that operates outside that strategy...". However, in creating a space outside of the US strategy, the SCO inherently occupies a sphere opposed to the US strategy as can be seen in the final statement of the summer 2005 SCO summit, which "...indirectly criticized Washington for seeking to monopolize and dominate international affairs". Regardless, by creating this sphere, both Russia and China hoped to, and have succeeded in mitigating US ambitions in the region, securing it for their own exploitation.

However, actions by Russia have prevented China from fully realizing its goals in the region, cementing Russia's place as the dominant power. While Russia does not possess the economic power or diplomatic tact that China does, it possesses an abundance of military technology and experience that China lacks. Thus, through actions ensuring that the SCO achieves its goals through the application of hard power instead of soft power, Russia is able to control the SCO instead of China.

Furthermore, events have occurred which signal that Russia is currently in control of the SCO. For instance, the SCO's Peace Missions 2005, 2007, and 2009 were military exercises primarily led by the Russians used as a method to both formulate military strategy, as well as to showcase new weapons with applications that could only be directed at other nations, such as a "...supersonic 'carrier-buster' cruise missile...designed to get the attention of the US Navy". These exercises show that the SCO exists more as a regional security alliance than a regional economic organization. Furthermore, a Chinese proposal to create an "...SCO development bank stalled... as have earlier PRC proposals to establish an SCO-wide free trade zone" due to Russian opposition. In addition, President Putin, by way of statements made at official SCO events has "informed the world community that the SCO...(is) seeking more than simply a regional role...and represent(s) a constellation of powers for...a more 'democratic world order'", or at least a world with alternatives to the US system; a multipolar world as opposed to the unipolar world that existed following the dissolution of the USSR. These examples illustrate the emphasis that the SCO has placed on security through military instead of economic means, placing the Russian Federation in a more dominant position than China. In fact, because of this emphasis on military security within the SCO, the Central Asian countries participating have been "...drawn into Russia's security orbit, ad not primarily into the common Russian-Chinese orbit".

Future of the SCO

The initial formation of the SCO was largely born out of a Chinese desire to enter Central Asia in order to diversify their energy market and reduce energy costs in China. China's absence in historical, Central Asian tradition, and the lack of commonality between China and Central Asian countries necessitated a multilateral organization that could "...provide a narrative framework...of emergence as a responsible regionalist power...in which mission and purposes..." could later be developed. In essence, the creation of the SCO provided a way for China to justify its sudden interests in Central Asia. However, the Central Asian states—simultaneously understanding China's true motivations as well as the potential benefits to their own societies—sought Russia, with whom they shared an organic, historical tradition, as a check on Chinese ambition in the region. This distrust in China by Central Asian na-

tions can be seen very clearly in a survey conducted in 2004 and displayed below:

Table 1: Which Countries do you consider most trustworthy?

Respondent	Russia	China	US
Tajikistan	87	38	14
Kazakhstan	80	19	13
Kyrgyzstan	82	26	23
Russia	-----	15	15

As seen in the table, the level of trust given to China by Central Asian nations is very low, while Central Asian nations overwhelmingly trust Russia. This distrust is what initially necessitated Russia's inclusion in the SCO as it "...is unlikely that any of the Central Asian states will want to find itself alone with China...".

In the years since it's founding, the SCO has proven to be an effective method of balancing multiple desires and powers. On the surface, the SCO has succeeded—thus far—in balancing "...Russian defensive motifs and Chinese 'soft' economic and cultural..." power. By placing the two nations in a cooperative organization, their ambitions are checked; thus in this regard, the Central Asian States actually utilize the SCO as a check against rampant exploitation by either China or Russia. Simultaneously, the SCO serves as a method for China to engage itself in Central Asia, where it once had no place, and in so doing, diversify its energy markets while promoting security in the regions bordering West China. Finally, the SCO provides both China and Russia, but mainly Russia, a method to balance against the US and NATO with the combined power of the Russian military and the Chinese economy.

Ultimately however, the competition between Russian and Chinese economic goals will render the Shanghai Cooperation Organization useless. As addressed earlier, China's goal as an energy importer is to diversify its markets so as to drive down the cost of energy, while Russia's goal as an energy exporter is to control as much of the energy market as possible so as to influence

not only the price of energy exported, but also the countries that energy is exported to. Again, as related earlier, both Russia and China have a marked interest in the energy resources—oil and gas, uranium, and hydroenergy—available in Central Asia. Thus Russia and China are in direct competition for the same supply of limited resources. In a realistic perspective, this will inevitably necessitate conflict between the two nations. In fact, the cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia is a result of Chinese leadership considering the region “...of lower strategic priority than Moscow...”. However, even this small concession is questioned by Russia because of “...China’s growing energy engagement in the region...” which is being “...perceived as a challenge...and has triggered counter-moves aimed at securing exclusive Russian control in this field, rather than cooperation”. This is largely because in the modern day, Russia maintains a policy of using “...energy as a weapon to secure its national interests and defend its sovereignty”.

Ultimately, the success of the SCO relies entirely upon whether or not Russia and China can reconcile their differing approaches, and whether Russia continues to consider the US and NATO a greater threat to its security than China. In essence, Russia will be the final deciding factor; should Russia see Chinese encroachments in Central Asia—thus endangering one of Russia’s most powerful weapons when engaging the global community—as a more serious threat to their security than the existence of an unchecked NATO, then the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will most likely cease to exist. And given the recent trend of the US removing itself more and more from the international stage, the Western threat to Russia may not last much longer.

Resources

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Other Recommended Publications:

“Beyond the Gates of Paradise”

...Don't stop – that was the only thought that dominated the focused mind of Vitaliy as he sprinted through the forest towards the river. Never stop. Vitaliy has been running for over twenty minutes, and his legs were beginning to get numb. Branches slapped his face, and loudly cracked underneath his feet as they were mercilessly pounded into the turbid mud of springtime marshes. But he was almost there. Vitaliy only carried a small bag that he threw over his shoulder. His manuscript was securely rapped in animal skin under his coat. Luckily, he was not immediately detected by the guards which provided him with about a ten minute advantage.

At last, the river was in sight.

As if mimicking Vitaliy's pace, it hurried in the direction of safety with a slight roar that nearly harmonized the sound of leaves being moved by the mighty Siberian winds. As soon as he got to the shore, Vitaliy quickly assessed his situation. The water was still too cold for prolonged exposure, and thus swimming was not a preferred course of action. However, there were a few tree logs floating close to the shoreline. Afraid to waste more than another second, he picked up several large tree branches that lay nearby, and dove into the water. He managed to catch one of the logs right away as he resurfaced, but the others were floating further out. Holding the trunk with

his left arm, and paddling with his right, he was finally able to reach another log, and push the two together. This allowed him to climb on top and escape the bone chilling river. Lastly, Vitaliy quickly threw the tree branches on top of himself to add some protective camouflage – though in truth, the dirty appearance of his clothes were more than enough to conceal his starved body in the surrounding elements. Completely soaked, with water running down his hair, Vitaliy desperately listened for the sound of the perusing dogs. After hearing nothing but the Taiga, his exhausted face convulsed with a painful grimace of soundless laughter. These were the tears of a free man...[\[Read More\]](#)

“Degrees of Statism”

The year was 1991; it was autumn. Not the soft, kindly loving autumn we are used to down here in Texas, but a bitter, hellish time of the year that you would expect in the northern parts of the United States and Alaska. Busses and trolleys lingered busily throughout town, taking people from one place to the next for a small fee of 2 rubles

(\$.02) and a little shoving and pushing along the way. On such a bus, one fine but rather cold Russian morning, rode a gentleman by the name of Vladimir. Vladimir was a tall man, nearly 6 foot 9, and had to gently bend the upper half of his body upon encountering a doorway or any sort of entrance; but luckily for him, today he was going to one of

the most open places in Saint Petersburg. A place where he was prepared to give the truth about the Soviet government, and speak in one of the biggest rallies in support of the new “Russian Party”... [\[Read More\]](#)



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