



**Middlesex
University
London**

**'What are the main challenges that Russian foreign policy faces in
Central Asia?'**

Submitted by Muhammet Fatih Bulut

M00651466

MA International Relations

Module SSC 4994

Dissertation

Supervisor: Tunc Aybak

1 May 2019

Word Count: 12365

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to analyse the challenges faced by Russia, the heir of the Soviets, in maintaining relations with the countries in Central Asia where the former Soviet countries are located, and in protecting its hegemony over these countries. In this study, which has been composed using primary and secondary sources, interpretivism, which is a form of qualitative research, has been used. First of all, the importance of Central Asia's geography in terms of its rich underground resources and location, its global and regional importance, and the relations between the Soviet Union and Tsardom of Russia and the Central Asian countries will be reviewed. Then, the relations between Russia and the countries of the region in terms of the economic, energy and security aspects, and the negative reflections of global and regional developments on Russia's regional politics, will be discussed. Also, in the context of Eurasianism and regionalism, the common organisations of Russia and the countries of the region and the importance of these organisations for Russian foreign policy, and the effects of these organisations on regional and global politics, will be interpreted. In addition, the global and regional power, China's regional policies, and Russia-China cooperation and competition, both regionally and globally, will be analysed. Finally, the regional policies of the superpower the United States (US) and the US' economic sanctions against Russia will be analysed in terms of their global and regional benefits to China. As a result, it will be concluded that Russia, which still maintains its hegemony over the countries of the region, shares its interests with China in the region, where it cooperates with China against the US. Moreover, the economic and military weakness of the countries of the region has been a burden for Russia. At the same time, the security issue of the region, which is likely to be targeted by global terrorist organisations, may cause greater problems for Russia in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study could not be completed without the love, support and encouragement of my fiancé Esra, who had recently died.

I would also like to thank Tunç, my supervisor, who gave me every support in completing this study in the best way.



Table of Content

Chapter 1: Introduction	Hata! Yer işareti tanımlanmamış.
1.1 Background	6
1.2 Methodology	8
Chapter 2: Geopolitics Of Central Asia	11
2.1 Dissolution of the Soviet Union	13
Chapter 3: Russia-Central Asia Relations	14
3.1 Economic and Energy Relations	14
3.2 Security Relations	Hata! Yer işareti tanımlanmamış.
Chapter 4: Eurasianism and Regional Organizations	20
4.1 Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)	22
4.2 Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)	23
4.3 Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)	25
4.4 Shangai Cooperation Organization (SCO)	27
Chapter 5: Other Powers In the Region	29
5.1 China's Central Asian Policies, and Russia-China Cooperation and Competition Status	29
5.2 US Central Asian Policies and the Advantages of these Policies for China	31
Conclusion	33
References	35

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the former Soviet geography and the republics that gained their independence in this region took priority in the Russian Federation's foreign policy agenda. Central Asia is a strategic region in terms of Russia's interests and security, with its geographical location and rich underground resources. First of all, Russia, which aims to maintain its hegemony in the region, also maintains cooperation with the Central Asian countries in the fields of energy, the economy and security. In the ongoing relations under the names of the banners of organisations such as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the problem faced by Russia is that all of the countries in the region except for Kazakhstan are economically weak and are closed to integration activities. Furthermore, the instability in countries such as Afghanistan, which is close to the region, and the presence of militants of Central Asian origin in terrorist organisations such as ISIL and al-Qaeda reveal a security problem for Russia. On the other hand, Russia is not alone in the Central Asian region, which it sees as its backyard, as it was during the Soviet Union. Firstly, China, which has the largest economic, military and population power in the region, is the biggest rival of Russia in Central Asia. The Beijing government, which is on the road to becoming a global power and is in need of energy, wants to develop cooperation in the fields of the economy, infrastructure and energy with the Central Asian countries, which have rich underground resources. At the same time, China wants to get support from the Central Asian countries against separatists in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and aims to prevent them from spreading to the Central Asian region and creating a threat to China. The organisation that China has used in the development of cooperation with the Central Asian countries is the SCO, of which Russia is also a member. Another rival of Russia in the region is the US. The US, which aims to limit

the hegemony of Russia in the region and prevent China from reaching its energy sources, wants the governments of the countries of the region to be pro-US, and wants to establish a US-based order in the region. At this point, the research question, 'What are the main challenges that Russian foreign policy faces in Central Asia?' becomes important, because it is significant to note that in Central Asia, not only Russia but also a few other states have a say in the region, such as China and the US. The US, which is the most powerful superpower in a bipolar world along with the Soviet Union, began to show interest in Central Asia after the September 11th attacks. The US, which aims to prevent Russia and China from accessing energy resources in Central Asia and wants to establish regimes under its control, has not been very successful in these policies. In fact, these policies of the US have enabled Russia and China to converge and to cooperate on regional issues. Another important aim of this research question is to draw attention to how successful or unsuccessful Russia has been in its relations with the Central Asian countries. In addition, Russia is unable to maintain a relationship with the former Soviet countries. For instance, Kazakhstan, a former Soviet country, is the largest energy partner of China among the Central Asian countries. As a result, with this research question, in Central Asia, which is likely to be a hot conflict zone like the Middle East in the future, the policies and plans of some states will be investigated, and how Russia, which is the natural power of the region, is taking steps to keep the region in hand will be described.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Central Asia has been the homeland of the Turkic people for centuries. The historical geography of Turkestan, often referred to as Central Asia, was dominated by the Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th century. The weakening of the Central Asian Khanates and the lack of a central government facilitated the Russian occupation of Central Asia. Economic factors also caused Russia to invade Central Asia, because Central Asia had

potential to be a market for Russia (Capraz, 2011, pp56). After Russia's occupation of the region, it was important to change the demography of the region and to increase the prevalence of Russian in the region. Moreover, the policy of changing the demographic structure of the region, which started in these years, and spreading the Russian language continued into the Soviet period (Nogayeva, 2012). In addition, the peoples who came from the same backgrounds and spoke similar languages lost their unity through language as a result of these Soviet policies (Yilmaz, 2014, pp344). In this process, many people adopted the Russian language. The results of these policies continue to have an impact on the peoples of Central Asia even today, and the number of non-Russian Central Asian people whose mother tongue is Russian is currently quite high. Many of these people think that speaking in their Turkic languages is now a peasantry, and that speaking Russian is elitism. Another important point is that after the establishment of the USSR, the peoples of Central Asia engaged in a few revolts to try to gain their independence. The most important and most effective of these was the Basmachi Movement. During the uprisings that continued to grow from the establishment of the Soviet Union until 1936, there were violent clashes between the Rebels and the Red Army (Broxup, 1983). Most of the uprisings and riots were suppressed in a bloody manner by the USSR, and most of the rebels were arrested, and after a while the USSR ensured that the Basmachi Movement was fully terminated. On the other hand, in the 1920s, policies aimed at eliminating the names of nations and the creation of a uniform Soviet people were pursued. With this policy, called Nativization (Korenizatsiia), the aim was to assimilate the peoples of Central Asia in a common Russian language and culture rather than in their own culture and languages (Abashin, 2008, cited in Bassin and Kelly, 2012). The only type of people and common cultural model dealt with in this policy was actually the idea of Russianisation, and it succeeded; as a result of this policy, most of the other non-Russian nations adapted to the Soviet system by forgetting their cultures, languages and identities. On

the other hand, through the implementation of the Soviet Union's national policies, steps were taken in the areas of literacy and women's rights, and nations were encouraged to establish their own institutions such as universities and theatres (Morrison, 2017). These policies enabled the peoples of the region to be integrated into the Soviet regime, but on the other hand their troops, which had previously resisted against the Red Army as Turkestani, were broken. In addition, due to the policies implemented by the USSR, different nations emerged, such as Kazakh, Turkmen, Uzbek, Karakalpak and Kyrgyz, and they experienced differences with each other. In this way, the USSR aimed to prevent them from forming unity and separatist movements and shaking the central authority.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

One of the most important parts of any research is methodology. The methodological approach plays a major role in the search for, collection of and use of resources. There is a link between the research question and the research method because the research method leads to the answer to the research question. Furthermore, establishing the purpose of a piece of research is one of the most important steps in the design of a study (Maxwell, 2005, p15). The purpose of this study is to analyse how Russia, taking the legacy of the Soviet Union, became more influential in its policies and relations in the former Soviet regions, especially in Central Asia, and how it has implemented policies to maintain its influence. The research method which is appropriate for my research question is the interpretivist approach. Interpretivism is one type of qualitative methodology. The reason why an interpretative approach is used in this analysis is that the historical and cultural past is important for the study in connection with the research question, and the aim of this study is to give the most accurate and reliable answer to the research question by interpreting and analysing all of the available and accessible data. Additionally, interpretivism is "the philosophical position that people bring meanings to situations and use the meanings to make sense of their world and to

organize their behaviour” (Punch, 2016, p75). Furthermore, in this research approach, as well as the resources I use, my own observations and interpretations are also important, and the research questions can be answered by interpreting and analysing the sources utilised.

Reliable and diverse sources used in research are important for accurate and unbiased analysis. In this study, which includes primary and secondary sources, data from the university database and library as well as some valuable think tanks, research institutions and journals have been used. For example, in addition to the primary and secondary sources in the Valdai Discussion Club database, the most important think tank in Russia, the data and studies of the most important think tanks of Europe, called Ifri (Institut français des relations internationales), have been used. In particular, the speeches of the President of Russia in the Valdai Discussion Club, as well as the views of the Central Asian experts participating in the discussions, have been used. On the other hand, The Security Research Center (CSS) of ETH Zurich (css.ethz.ch), one of the leading universities in Europe, has benefited from the resources of some specific studies on Russia, China and Central Asian relations. Moreover, primary sources in the Russian Government (government.ru) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (mid.ru) databases (government.ru) have been utilised and analysed, as well as the work of Eurasianet (eurasianet.org), which is linked to Columbia University in the US, and provides reports and news on Russia, Central Asia and Eurasia. In addition, the research, reports and analysis of some valuable experts from the Institute for Security & Development Policy (isdpr.eu), a Swedish-based research and policy organisation, have been utilised. Nevertheless, it is also important that this institution has two specific geographic focal points, the Asian Program and the Silk Road Studies Program, and that it is an organisation that specialises in Russia, China, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

In any study, primary sources are as important as secondary sources. Examples of the primary sources used in this study are as follows: President Vladimir Putin, in his speech at

the Valdai Discussion Club, talks about the existence of radical Islamic terrorist organisations in Russia, such as Al Qaeda. Putin emphasises the importance of cooperation with China, and that Kazakhstan is the key player at this stage, and emphasises that Russia's trade volume with European countries has decreased and trade volume with Asian countries such as China has increased (Valdai Club, 2018). Furthermore, I will use an article written by Putin. In this article, Putin talks about Russia's policies in Eurasia and the role of regional organisations. Similarly, Putin touches on the experience of regional organisations such as the EU and the importance of these experiences for organisations in the Eurasian region. The most important detail in this article is that Putin emphasises that the idea of a Eurasian Union in which European Union-style countries are integrated is the only option for Russia (Russiaeu.ru, 2011). In addition, speaking at a meeting of Chinese and Russian heads of government, the Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev emphasises that in recent years China has been Russia's best trading partner, and that sanctions (US and EU sanctions) have had an impact on this (Government.ru, 2018). On the other hand, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, during his visit to Tajikistan, said that Russia's largest military base abroad is located in Tajikistan, and that it is a shield for the prevention and dissemination of drug trafficking, extremism and terrorism (Mid.ru, 2019). Similarly, Lavrov emphasises the importance of the SCO's regional role in the fight against drug trafficking and terrorism in Eurasia, at a joint meeting of the United Nations Office for Drugs (UNODC) and Crime and the SCO (mid.ru, 2019). Additionally, Lavrov says that the destruction of drug traffickers and terrorist groups in countries such as Afghanistan is essential for security and stability in the Eurasian Region. The primary sources used for this study are strategically valuable, particularly in understanding and analysing the importance of the regional organisations for Russia.

CHAPTER 2: GEOPOLITICS OF CENTRAL ASIA

Geopolitics is a branch of science that examines the importance of countries or regions in terms of world politics. In other words, geopolitics is the impact of a country's geographical position on its politics (Hagan, 1942, pp484). Central Asia has hosted the historical Silk Road and many cultures and civilisations in the past, and is now a region with rich underground resources, neighboured with two superpowers in Russia and China. Furthermore, Central Asia is a region of former Soviet countries such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan (Cummings, 2012, p11). The region is a place of interest for countries such as Russia, China and the US due to its rich underground resources and geographical location. In addition, the proximity of a country dealing with terror and drug problems, such as Afghanistan, and the potential conflict areas of China, such as Xinjiang Region, in this geography is a danger to the future of the region. At the same time, the presence of the Caspian Sea in the region, which has rich underground resources and is an important road to the West for Central Asian countries, further increases the attraction of the region. Similarly, it is important to note that the New Silk Road Project, which is expected to have an important place in China's trade with Western countries, is based on Central Asia and has a number of advantages for the countries in the region. Russia is one of the most prominent countries in this region due to the fact that the region is located in the former Soviet geography and has cultural ties. Another prominent country in Central Asia is Turkey. Turkey's main reason for appearing as a potential force for Central Asia is that it has a common history and a common language with some Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. However, due to Turkey's inconsistent foreign policy, the lack of interest in the region and its economic weakness, the impact on Central Asia is too low compared with Russia, China and the US. On the other hand, in the region, Kazakhstan is the richest country in terms of underground resources, and

the most important country in terms of multinational diplomacy in the international arena. Compared to other countries in the region, Kazakhstan is targeting a foreign policy compatible with regional and global actors such as Russia, the US, the EU, China and Turkey. In 2017 it hosted the EXPO-2017, one of the world's largest organisations, and Kazakhstan is also the country leading the establishment of the EAEU (Cornell and Engvall, 2015). This shows that Kazakhstan attaches importance to its relations with Russia, and aims to improve relations in terms of regionalism. Similarly, Kazakhstan is the country which has set out the idea of the establishment of a Turkic Council, which is an organisation composed of Turkic-speaking countries (mfa.gov.kz, 2018). This may mean that Kazakhstan does not want to be limited to Russia in its multi-faceted diplomacy, and has set a balancing policy. However, the biggest handicap for Kazakhstan is the low population potential and the high number of citizens of Russian origin. In addition, it should be noted that the Uighur and Uzbek populations are also very high in Kazakhstan. That is, the Kazakh population in Kazakhstan is slightly more than half of the total population. This may pose a danger to the future of Kazakhstan, the most notable country in Central Asia. In particular, due to the density of the Russian population in the Northern region and the intensity of the Uzbek population in the Southern region, ethnic conflicts and separatist movements can occur, as in Kyrgyzstan. In this case, Russia, which is a prominent country in the region, will be one of the most affected countries, because the future of the Russian population in the region may be in danger, and the region may return to a zone of conflict. As a result, any confusion in Kazakhstan, which is the most stable country in the region, will directly affect Russia, because it is the only leading country in the region involved in the regional organisations, and the country is the strongest in terms of energy resources and the economy.

2.1 DISSOLUTION OF THE SOVIET UNION

The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was established after the collapse of the Russian Tsarist regime in 1917 by the October Revolution, and continued its existence until 1991. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union led the Eastern bloc against the Western bloc led by the US. However, the Soviet socialist system collapsed for many reasons, both internally and externally. These reasons concern all aspects of life, including economic, social, cultural, political and military. To prevent the collapse of the union, the Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, made moves in the political sphere of Glasnost, and in the economic sphere of Perestroika. However, these steps could not prevent the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Soviet economic system and Soviet domination collapsed as a result of democratisation and reform attempts (Ericson, cited in Colton and Legvold, 1992, pp51). Additionally, the disintegration process of the Soviet Union began when the Baltic countries, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, declared their independence (Sakwa, 1999, pp487). Then, with the declaration of independence by other countries, the Soviet Union was officially demolished. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cold War was finished, and the US was the leading actor in the new unipolar system. Besides that, the collapse of the Soviet Union has led to many problems in countries which are independent, especially in the economic and managerial areas. Russia, dealing with post-Soviet economic crises, also faced a number of ethnic problems within the federation. For example, Chechnya, which was an internal problem for Russia for many years and entered into a conflict with Russia many times, did not want to remain in the federation and declared independence in 1991 (Starovoitova, 1997, pp11-12). As well as that, the presence of many nations under the umbrella of the federation still constitutes a potential danger for Russia. On the other hand, the Central Asian countries, which gained their independence from the Soviets, were far behind in terms of industrial development compared to other Soviet regions, because the

Soviet State had designated these regions as raw material suppliers (Menon, 1995, pp6-7). At the same time, the region, which was dependent on Russia for the processing of raw materials and underground resources, also needed Russian pipelines for the transfer of underground resources such as oil and natural gas. However, some countries, especially China, have become closer to the Central Asian countries as an alternative to Russia. The collapse of the Soviet Union, which Putin considers the greatest disaster of the 20th century (News.bbc.co.uk, 2005), appears to be a longstanding and ongoing global and regional problem for many former Soviet countries in terms of the economy, energy and security. Especially, Russia aims to maintain its influence in the former Soviet geography and, if necessary, conducts military operations in former countries such as Georgia and Ukraine. Undoubtedly, nowadays, many Soviet countries are ruled by their own authoritarian regimes, and are very much missing in terms of multilateral relations in the international arena.

CHAPTER 3: RUSSIA-CENTRAL ASIA RELATIONS

3.1 Economic and Energy Relations

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, new actors and quests emerged in the international system and in this context different policies such as involvement in the international system and regional unions began to be revealed. These processes have brought with them integration. The economic issue, which is one of the most important relations between countries, is of vital importance for Russia, which has been subject to sanctions by the US and the EU. On the other hand, there is a close connection between Russia and the Central Asian region, where the former Soviet countries are located. However, according to experts, for a long time the number one economic partner of many Central Asian countries has not only been Russia. China, one of the greatest powers of Eurasia, maintains close relations with the Central Asian countries, especially in recent years through economic

relations and projects such as the New Silk Road. At the same time, China, which carries out its relations under the SCO flag, sees the stability of the region as its own benefit, because it aims to get the support of the countries in the region on the Uighur issue. On the other hand, the significant sectors in Russia's economic relations with Central Asia are the military industry, mining, agriculture, transportation, construction and telecommunications (Oliphant, 2013). One of the reasons affecting the good relations between Russia and Central Asia in the processing of mining, the military industry and raw materials is the habits remaining from the Soviet Union period. Most of the energy transfers of the countries in the region are made through Russian pipelines. However, considering the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline and China's pipelines, it can be said that the countries in the region are less dependent on Russian pipelines than they have been in the past. Moreover, due to the economic weakness of the Central Asian countries, except for Kazakhstan, Russia provides economic assistance to these countries (Oliphant, 2013). In particular, Russia provides both economic support and loans to countries that have the weakest economies of Central Asia and lack political stability, such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Of course, these countries have made some concessions to Russia because of these economic benefits. The closure of the US base in Kyrgyzstan and the fact that Kyrgyzstan is a member of all Russian-led organisations are examples of this. It should also be noted that the capacity of Russian military bases in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan has increased in recent years. The first thing to remember is that Russia aims to keep these countries in its orbit and does not want to allow them to be on the side of Western countries, especially the US. In addition, the economic sanctions imposed on Russia by the US and some Western states negatively affect the economic relations between Russia and Central Asia. For instance, Kazakhstan, which is especially dependent on Russia in terms of oil, was the most affected country after economic sanctions were imposed on Russia in 2014 (Schenkkan, 2015). One of the main reasons for this is Russia, which provides Kazakh oil to the global

market both through its operation and through oil pipelines. On the other hand, after sanctions were imposed, Russia reduced its gas intake from gas-rich countries such as Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Schenkkan, 2015). One of the obstacles for the countries of the region to emerge from the orbit of Russia and present their resources to the world market is transportation, and the other is the instability in countries close to the region, such as Afghanistan. At this stage, the only other alternative to the region is China. In recent years, China has been operating with both Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in terms of natural gas, and importing it through pipelines (Duran and Purevsuren, 2016, pp288-289). As a result, the economic sanctions imposed on Russia by the US and the EU provide an advantage for China in Eurasia. Economic sanctions imposed by the US and the EU have evolved in favour of China not only on regional issues but also on trade relations between the two countries. At this stage, Medvedev has said that as a result of these sanctions, Beijing and Moscow have established closer relations, and Russia is aiming to increase cooperation with China, rather than importing from the West or relying on the West's technology (RFE/RL, 2018). On the other hand, the New Silk Road Project, which will contribute to Central Asian countries with investments from China, may harm the impact of the EAEU. However, China aims to increase cooperation between the New Silk Road Project – the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) – and the EAEU (Valdai Club, 2017, pp19-20). The development of relations between the two organisations may remove Central Asia from the backyard of Russia, but it is both economically and politically beneficial for both Russia and Central Asia, because Russia, which has been sanctioned by the West, by acting with China in the region could continue its influence in Central Asia and prevent the US from being effective in the region. However, the relations of these two countries, which share power in Central Asia, have some risks, especially for Russia. The most noteworthy of these risks is that Russia will not be able to respond at the same rate to China's economic leaps, because Russia has an unstable and crisis-

driven economy compared to China's balanced and planned economy. In brief, it is known that Russia and China cooperate in Eurasia, which cooperates on a global level. However, in the face of China's stable economy and strong investments, Russian-Chinese competition may become a regional issue in the future. On the other hand, in Central Asia, the key country for Russia is Kazakhstan. Russia and China are the top countries in the economic relations of Kazakhstan, which is the richest country in Central Asia in terms of economic and underground riches. Besides, Kazakhstan, one of the best partners of Russia in the EAEU and the CIS, signed an agreement with China on the New Silk Road Project (Valdai Club, 2017, pp13), one of its partners in the SCO. The fact that Kazakhstan is a country with an entrepreneurial and strong economy at the regional level is both an advantage and a disadvantage for Russia. On the positive side, Russia can easily integrate with Kazakhstan in regional matters, and Kazakhstan is more stable in the region than other countries. In other words, Kazakhstan is not cut off from the external world like Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, it does not need economic aid like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and it is not a burden to Russia. On the negative side, Kazakhstan aims to follow a multi-faceted foreign policy, and does not want to remain dependent on Russia. Namely, Kazakhstan, while developing good relations with China, Iran and Turkey at the regional level, also at the global level has good relations with the US and the EU, and continues its multi-faceted diplomacy. Due to such developments, Kazakhstan may leave the orbit of Russia completely in the future, and could cooperate directly with Western countries or with China.

3.2 Security Relations

Russia, which is one of the most powerful states in Eurasia, has a great role in Central Asia because of the deep influence and relations left over from the period of both the Soviet Union and the Tsardom of Russia. One of the biggest problems for Russia, which aims to continue its influence and hegemony in Central Asia, is the issue of security. In particular, one

of the biggest fears for Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union was the possibility of one of the former Soviet states joining NATO (Gabuev, 2018). A Central Asian country that is out of the control of Russia and is a part of NATO would pose a threat to Russia, because in the case of any regional state being included in NATO, Russia may face NATO superiors and NATO troops in the Central Asian region, which it sees as its own orbit. Similarly, in a possible NATO-Russia conflict, Russia may be threatened by possible NATO bases in the Central Asian countries on its border. In addition, Russia aims to keep security under its own control in Central Asia, and tries to prevent other external actors from being active in the security of the region. On the other hand, another problem with the security of Central Asia for Russia is the influence of the Afghan Islamist Taliban on Central Asian countries, and Islamism. In particular, the emergence of Taliban-related groups in Tajikistan and the possibility of war in an unstable region such as Afghanistan could pose a threat to Russia's Central Asian policy (Bagan, 2012). At the same time, Al Qaeda, a global terrorist organisation, sees Central Asia as a safe haven in the middle of Afghanistan, and the Caucasus, where jihadist militants are located, is a potential terrorist threat for the region (Al-Shishani, 2005, pp7-8). The fact that there can be radical religious organisations in the Central Asian region, where potential ethnic conflicts can occur, worries the countries of the region as well as Russia and China. One of Russia's biggest concerns on this issue is the collapse of authoritarian regimes that are under their control in the event of possible chaos or civil war in the region. Another issue which concerns Russia is that the Russian minority in Central Asia has been damaged due to the rise of radical Islamic ideas, and the Muslims in the Russian Federation cause internal confusion in the country. In addition, Putin has touched on the Russian-Chechen war, and he has stressed that the Al Qaeda militants who fought in that war and the threat of terror are still continuing (Valdai Club, 2018). In other words, Russia is afraid that there will be a separatist movement in other republics within the federation, as

there has been in Chechnya before, and therefore it gives importance to Central Asia because Central Asia is a barrier for Russia. Russia is also concerned about the security of energy lines, because Russia will be one of the most harmed countries if Central Asia is transformed into a region where civil war and terror organisations are moving comfortably, as in the Middle East. At this stage, the words of the Russian Foreign Minister are important. Lavrov, during his visit to Tajikistan, pointed out that the Russian military base in Tajikistan is the largest Russian military base, while also emphasising the importance of this base in the fight against terrorism in Central Asia (mid.ru, 2019). As a matter of fact, a country with a weak state structure such as Tajikistan cannot be very successful in preventing a possible terrorist attack or preventing terrorists from infiltrating other countries. Namely, Russia knows that protecting its own borders and its interests on Central Asia begins in Tajikistan on the border with Afghanistan. A further point to be considered is that ISIS, one of the most powerful and barbaric terrorist organisations in the Middle East, has many warriors of Central Asian origin, and claims to have sleeping powers in Central Asia (Kazantsev, 2016, pp3-4). Another important point is that if the Central Asian militants in the hot conflict regions such as the Middle East leave the region after the war, their destination is likely to be Central Asia, their homeland. This possibility poses a potential threat to Russia, because in the event of possible confusion in Central Asia, Russia may lose its hegemony in the region, and the US and NATO forces, under the so-called anti-terrorism struggle, could disrupt the power of Russia by placing their power in the Central Asian region and imprisoning Russia within its own land borders. Moreover, the Russian economy, which is already in a bad state, may worsen in the case of military investments and possible war. Similarly, in an extraordinary situation, Russia, which consists of different republics, may break apart a second time after the Soviet Union.

CHAPTER 4: EURASIANISM AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS

The collapse of the Soviet Union has led to a shift in balances in both the world and in Eurasia. Russia, which followed a passive policy in terms of foreign policy until Putin came to power, has followed a more effective policy, especially in Eurasia, since Putin. The idea of the Eurasian Union under the leadership of Russia against the hegemonic structure of the US and the EU is often discussed by politicians and experts. In short, Eurasianism is a political, economic and social ideology that argues that Russians are closer to Eastern peoples and Eastern culture than to the West, and that Russians are not European, but Asian (Laruelle, 2004, pp116-117). Moreover, Eurasianism imagines that all of the Slavic, Turkic, Chinese, Christian and Muslim peoples will come together under the leadership of Russia under the name of the Eurasian Union. The ideal of Eurasianism and the Eurasian Union influences Russian foreign policy, both ideologically and because of the necessity to associate with the regional countries against anti-Russian Westerners such as the US and the EU. The most important findings which show the effect of Eurasian-based politics on Russian foreign policy are the cooperation of the EAEU, the SCO, the CIS and the CSTO, together with the Eurasian States. China should not be ignored at this stage. As the most powerful Eurasian countries, Russia and China act as natural allies in the integration, infrastructure and trade processes in Eurasia (Luzyanin, 2018). On the other hand, Central Asia, where the post-Soviet republics are located and the heart of which is an important region due to its underground wealth and geopolitical location, is an important region for Russia in Eurasia. Russia, which does not want to lose its role as a hegemonic leader in Central Asia, is not competing with China, which wants to improve its relations with Central Asian countries in the fields of energy and the economy. China is also careful about Russia's interests in Central Asia. On the other hand, Moscow comes to the fore in regional organisations established in the context of integration and relations with Central Asian countries. In addition, it is an indisputable fact that the idea

of the Eurasian Union has an impact on the regional organisations established in Eurasia. Putin says that the establishment of the Eurasian Union will be a driving force in terms of the cooperation of the countries of the region and their global growth and progress (Russiaeu.ru, 2011). In addition, Putin also emphasises in his article that the countries integrated with the Eurasian Union can achieve global growth only when they move together. However, it is doubtful how effective the EAEU will be at a global level, since the economic power of the countries in the EAEU is limited. In terms of Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan is the only regional country that stands out in the regional organisations. In addition, one of the key countries in the Eurasian Union and China's New Silk Road Project is Kazakhstan. However, cooperation in regional organisations, such as the EAEU and CIS, has not been very successful in cooperation with other Central Asian states, except for Kazakhstan. On the other hand, according to some Central Asian experts, Russia is uninterested in Central Asia and has not made any necessary initiatives on the Eurasian project (Valdai Discussion Club, 2018). This may be due to the weakness of the countries of the region in terms of the economy, military and population. However, the most important reason is that countries in the region, except for Kazakhstan, have a passive policy in their foreign relations, and close themselves off to foreign relations. The passive policies of the countries in the region are annoying for Russia, but for the countries of the region to turn their faces to Western countries would be a worse scenario for Russia. Nevertheless, Russia is aiming to maintain its power in the region and to keep Central Asia for itself against countries like the US, because the region is an important strategic geography in terms of the security issue for Russia, as well as the richness of its energy resources.

In Central Asia, where Russia has not shown the necessary attention, China, which cooperates with the countries of the region, has come to the forefront, especially in recent years. Furthermore, Russia, which has been exposed to economic sanctions by the US and the

West, has been cooperating with China in the Central Asian region. At this stage, the leading organisation is the SCO. “The SCO is seen as a more substantial basis for long-term cooperation between Russia and China, and this is China’s first attempt at inaugurating an international grouping.” (Flikke and Wilhelmsen, 2008). At this stage, considering China's initiatives and developments in Eurasia, the idea of the Eurasian Union being independent from China seems to be a dream for the future. However, Central Asian countries, which cooperate closely with China in organisations such as the SCO and the New Silk Road Project, may be more distant to China than to Russia, because the scarily large population of China and the low population of Central Asia can be a cause of concern for them. Although Central Asian countries, except for Kazakhstan, are particularly abstinent in their foreign policies with regards to Russia, they avoid a regional integrity without Russia.

4.1 Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, 12 of the 15 former Soviet countries, which considered themselves culturally and economically interdependent, came together and signed the CIS. With the establishment of the CIS, the strategic space that emerged after the Soviet Union was aimed to be eliminated by this unity. Although the establishment of the community is not very effective as a function, meetings held at regular intervals ensure the continuation of the dialogue between the countries. Moreover, the existence of the CIS has helped not only in its relations with Russia, but also in the development of relations with each other (Imanaliev, 2016). Although Russia aimed to cooperate with Central Asian countries under the name of the CIS, it has not been very successful, because from Russia's point of view, other Central Asian states except for Kazakhstan are closed boxes. Kazakhstan's characteristics which distinguish it from other countries are that it has a stronger economy than regional countries, and plays an entrepreneurial role in international relations. On the other hand, Russia, as the leader country of the CIS, remains silent in the conflicts between

the member states, causing the CIS to be a passive organisation. For instance, the CIS did not take any measures during the Kyrgyz-Uzbek ethnic conflicts in Kyrgyzstan and the Azerbaijani-Armenian conflicts. However, it is one of the aims of the CIS to resolve disputes and conflicts between the member states of the union peacefully (Voitovich, 1993, pp410). The unresponsive and non-sanctioned function of the CIS is evidence that this institution has no influence not only at the global level but also at the regional level. However, Russia, which cannot obtain what it wants through the CIS, could continue to cooperate with the countries in the region under the umbrella of more institutional and functional organisations such as the EAEU and the CSTO. In addition, according to experts such as Alexander Cooley, the CSTO imitates NATO, while the EAEU organises itself like the EU (2017). It is doubtful how successful the CSTO and the EAEU can be at this stage, because NATO and EU countries are considered to be very strong in economic and military terms, but there are no military and economically strong countries within the CSTO and EAEU countries except for Russia. In other words, these organisations may not be very effective either globally or regionally, but if countries such as China and India were to participate in the CSTO and EAEU, then a balance could be established against Western organisations.

4.2 Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, radical changes and uncertainties have occurred both in the Eurasian region and in the international system. After the socialist regime collapsed, many independent republics emerged, but both political and economic issues were the biggest problems of these countries. The establishment of the CIS has enabled the former Soviet countries to settle the existing political uncertainty by means of dialogue, and has helped to improve their relations. However, it was necessary to establish a regional economic organisation to fill the gap in the economic and commercial area, because the CIS, which was established after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, was

not a useful organisation in the development of the economic relations of the member states. The Customs Union, signed by Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan in 1995 and later joined by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and the Eurasian Economic Community agreements established in 2000, are the roots of the EAEU, which was established in 2015 (Martín, 2015, pp4-5). Kazakhstan, the most important state in Central Asia, draws attention in the establishment of this union because Kazakhstan is the leading country in the establishment of the Eurasian Economic Community, which was a negotiation at the stage of the formation of the EAEU. On October 10th 2000, Nazarbayev, the President of Kazakhstan, led the establishment of the community (Weits, 2008, pp26-27). Kyrgyzstan is also a member of the EAEU, which Russia considers important in the development of economic relations with the countries of Central Asia and the continuation of cooperation, but the other three Central Asian countries, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, are not members of the EAEU. In addition, Putin has pointed out that the EAEU is beneficial for these countries, and that the foreign trade of Kyrgyzstan with Russia has increased two and a half times over since joining the EAEU (Kremlin.ru, 2017). The majority of this trade is in the form of investments made by Russian companies such as Gazprom in Kyrgyzstan, and the transfer of money by Kyrgyz workers in Russia to Kyrgyzstan. Another important point is that Russia has increased its annual aid to Kyrgyzstan in order for the Kyrgyz economy to meet the requirements of the EAEU (kremlin.ru, 2017). One of the problems for Russia is the resurgence of weak and small economies such as Kyrgyzstan, and it should be noted that Kazakhstan is the second biggest economy after Russia in the EAEU. However, the fact that Kazakhstan, which does not even reach \$500 billion GDP, is the second biggest power within the union raises the question of how the EAEU can develop in the future, and how it can play a role in the global arena, because the total economic power of the US (\$19 trillion) and the EU (\$21 trillion) makes up about one third of the world's power (\$127 trillion), and is more than eight times that of the

EAEU (\$4.5 trillion) (Worldbank.org, 2017). Therefore, if countries that are likely to join the union, such as China or India, enter the EAEU, the EAEU may become an important position, both regionally and globally, because the Eurasian Union, which will be combined with the regional powers against the US and the EU, could provide a balance in the international arena. However, it should not be forgotten that for now this organisation continues Russia's hegemony over the region, and it is important in increasing the economic relations with the countries of the region. On the other hand, if integration between the EAEU and SCO is achieved in the near future, the Eurasian region may become the rising power of the world. However, Russia can only be regionally effective with EAEU countries with limited economic power; it is very difficult to be effective in these conditions on a global level.

4.3 Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO)

Russia, which continued its influence in the Eurasian region during and before the Soviet Union, sought to maintain its influence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and determined its policies towards Eurasia for this purpose. Central Asia, which is a strategic region for Russia, has also increased in importance for Russia in terms of security, because it has rich underground resources, and there is a remaining Russian minority from the Soviet era. After Putin became President, the CSTO was established under the leadership of Russia in order to increase cooperation on security in the CIS (Weits, 2008, pp21-23). Although it is not as effective as NATO, since its establishment it can be said that the organisation is still important in terms of Moscow's Central Asian policy goals. One of the reasons why this organisation is important for Russia is to keep the region in its orbit against the possibility of the countries in the region joining NATO (Weits, 2008, pp26). Russia does not want to see NATO bases or NATO military forces in Central Asia, a region in which it considers itself to be dominant. Moreover, any revolutionary initiative supported by Western countries in Central Asia may benefit Russia, because Russia can maintain and increase its military

presence in the region. On the other hand, one of the most important events that led to the discussion of the existence and functionality of CSTO, which was established in 2002, was the Kyrgyz-Uzbek conflict in the South of Kyrgyzstan in 2010. The Kyrgyz government demanded assistance and intervention from the CSTO and Russia during the ethnic clashes in Kyrgyzstan, but did not receive any response (Yesevi, 2013, pp3). The reason was that the CSTO could only intervene against external threats, but it could have carried out a peaceful intervention if the decision-making mechanism had worked correctly. However, in 2010, CSTO members adopted the rule of authority to interfere in internal conflicts based on the example of turmoil in Kyrgyzstan (Stein, 2012, pp78). This is proof that the institutional structure of the CSTO is not yet fully established. On the other hand, Uzbekistan, which is the country most opposed to this intervention authority, suspended its CSTO membership. Another Central Asian country, Turkmenistan, did not participate in the organisation at all. The CSTO organisation, which is not even able to integrate countries regionally, is too weak to be comparable with NATO, and is too dysfunctional at a global level. Furthermore, it should be noted that within the CSTO organisation formed by Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, all of the countries except for Russia are militarily weak, and the whole burden is on Russia's back. In this case, Russia will be the most challenged country when any security problem arises in Central Asia, which is a region where terror organisations can potential derive internal turmoil. At this stage, experts such as Dmitri Trenin recommend that the CSTO should focus on Central Asia because of its proximity to these unstable regions and the close cooperation of the CSTO with non-NATO countries such as China, India and Pakistan (2010). However, in this case, the development of relations between these countries and the countries of Central Asia will be helped by Russia, and it is doubtful how much Russia can control these relations. On the other hand, the Central Asian countries are not only economically but also very militarily weak. In addition, the population

potential of the countries in the region is very low. In contrast, considering that Uzbekistan, which has the most powerful army after Russia among the CIS countries (Ibragimov, 2019, pp55), has the highest population potential in Central Asia, the CSTO will have to add Uzbekistan again. Thus, Uzbekistan, which has the strongest army in Central Asia, could be regained, and at the same time it could be prevented from engaging in military relations with the US and NATO.

4.4 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

Another organisation through which Russia cooperates with Central Asia on the economy and border security, especially in military matters, is the SCO. The SCO could be the most powerful non-Western organisation that influences the global system, and is an alternative to Western hegemony in the international arena. However, Russia is not the only major force in this organisation. China, the largest power in the Eurasian region along with Russia, is one of the main actors in this organisation. Moreover, Russia and China cooperate in Central Asia under the SCO. While Russia is trying to protect its interests in Central Asia, China is developing cooperation with the countries of the region in the fields of the economy and energy (Maduz, 2018, pp15-16). In addition, experts claim that Russia and China can prevent the rise of American influence in the region through the SCO. In other words, the importance of the SCO for Russia and the meaning it imposes on the organisation is to keep the US, the world's greatest superpower, away from the region, to improve its cooperation with the Central Asian countries, to maintain its hegemony, to develop its relations with China, and also to establish an alternative alliance against the US and the EU. In addition, the Lavrov notes that the role of the SCO is great in the fight against terrorism in the Eurasian Region and the spread of terrorism from Afghanistan to Eurasia, and the prevention of drug trafficking (mid.ru, 2019). On the other hand, in terms of China, the importance of the SCO is more detailed. China, the world's most productive country and therefore the country with the

biggest energy deficit, wants to benefit from the energy resources of the Central Asian countries and to improve relations with those countries. At the same time, it wants to prevent the spread of separatist groups in China from Central Asia and the threat to China, and takes measures under the name of SCO cooperation to maintain security and prevent terror. In particular, China, which sees Uyghur as a major security problem, wants to get the support of the countries that are members of the SCO, or are observers, and is trying to prevent the growth of the problem by cooperating with the countries of the region on the issue of Uyghur (Hayoun, 2015). At this stage, Russia's security concerns in Central Asia, which stem from separatism and radical Islamism, have been instrumental in Russia's and China's co-operation in the region. On the other hand, the SCO is different and is more comprehensive than the organisations which Russia established with the former Soviet countries. Besides the former Soviet countries, the fact that there are countries with both economic and population potential, such as China and India, makes the SCO the most comprehensive organisation in the world after NATO and the EU. In addition, the SCO, which is growing day by day as an alternative to the US and the West, is a large Eurasian-based organisation, and the Russians are not very uncomfortable with this, because this partnership offers many advantages to both Russian foreign policy and the Russian economy (Bordachev, 2018). However, Russia's and China's SCO-oriented policies and expectations from the future of this organisation are different. For example, China is aiming for a more comprehensive SCO in terms of politics, the economy and security, while Russia is aiming to develop regional cooperation and the region's security. On the other hand, since the Central Asian countries are economically and militarily weak and have potential for internal turmoil and insurrection, Russia and China need to cooperate more in this region. The economic strengthening of the Central Asian countries and the development of their military forces can provide advantages for Russia and China in the future, both in terms of security and in keeping control of the region. Otherwise, if the Central

Asian militants in conflict areas such as the Middle East return to their homeland, or in the case of popular uprisings seeking a change in the authoritarian Central Asian governments, such as the Arab Spring, Central Asia may become a second Middle East.

CHAPTER 5: OTHER POWERS IN THE REGION

5.1 China's Central Asian Policies, and Russia-China Cooperation and Competition Status

Another regional power that has policies regarding the countries of the region, except for Russia, and which wants to preserve its sovereignty over Central Asia along with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, is China. As in its international relations, China's most important agenda item in bilateral and multilateral relations with the Central Asian states is undoubtedly the economy. China's rapidly growing and modernising economy is constantly pushing to seek new sources for new raw materials and new markets for ready-made products, as well as logistical means. China is pursuing policies in line with its objectives and interests with the countries of the region whose economy is very weak, but rich in raw material resources. Considering these policies, together with the Central Asian countries, which is the most important transit route of China's new Silk Road Project (BRI), economic issues are becoming more strategic in terms of China. However, China is not planning a change of power in Central Asia, as Western countries try to do. China wants to improve economic and commercial relations with the Central Asian countries without undermining Russia's military and political authority (Stronski and Ng, 2018, pp10-11). This causes Russia, which is already in a difficult economic situation, to remain silent against China's regional policies. Further, the two countries are cooperating on many issues in the region. One of the most important reasons for Russia and China to cooperate on regional issues is to fill the power gap in the political, military, economic and energy fields and to prevent Western countries or companies

from operating in the region. China, along with the aim of developing economic and commercial relations in the Central Asian region, aims to prevent radicalism in the region and ensure stability in Central Asian countries (Stronski and Ng, 2018, pp10-11). The instability and chaos of the Central Asian region and the rise of radicalism are perceived as threats to both Russia and China. On the other hand, China is afraid of radicalisation in Central Asia, because it is afraid that its investments in the region will be endangered and that the possible radical Islamist movements in Central Asia will affect the Xinjiang Uyghur (East Turkestan) region. At the same time, China provides economic and political support for the Central Asian states to support China on the Uyghur issue (Swanström, 2011, pp27-28). Moreover, under the name of the SCO, China and Central Asian countries maintain close cooperation on the economy, energy and infrastructure. In addition, China aims to protect and develop its regional interests without risking the reaction of Russia, which is one of the reasons why the SCO has included Russia in addition to the Central Asian countries. On the other hand, the economic sanctions imposed on Russia by Western countries have caused close relations between Russia and China. Additionally, Medvedev says that China is Russia's largest trading and investment partner, and draws attention to the importance of Russian-Chinese relations at a time when Western countries have a bad attitude towards Russia (government.ru, 2018). This proximity to the two countries' international relations also applies to the Central Asian region. Russia and China are developing their relations under the flag of the SCO, and are trying to prevent Western countries such as the US from being effective in Eurasia. However, the two countries, which act as a win-win principle in Central Asia, also have some risks in their relations. China, which is economically better than Russia and has developed its commercial relations with the countries of Central Asia, also makes energy investments in countries such as Kazakhstan. This requires Russia to allocate more economic resources for the region, with the aim of keeping the Central Asian countries in its orbit. However, it will be

compelling for Moscow to be able to allocate more resources to Central Asia, as Russia has already been subjected to sanctions by Western countries and therefore needs China as its ally. Moreover, as China continues to improve its economic relations with the countries of Central Asia, it will also want to take some measures in terms of security, because it will aim to protect its investments. On the other hand, Beijing is beginning to see itself as a continental power in Eurasia, and, through its projects such as the New Silk Road, it is also developing its diplomacy with Central Asian countries. Besides, China has chosen to make economic agreements with the Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in a bilateral way rather than through the EAEU. This causes the role of the EAEU to be discussed. Under these circumstances, if Russia begins to lose its diplomatic supremacy over the countries of Central Asia, it may cause a deterioration in its relations with China, and already the Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are looking for balance between Russia and China.

5.2 US Central Asian Policies and the Advantages of these Policies for China

Central Asia is a region rich in terms of underground resources such as oil, natural gas, uranium and gold, and this makes Central Asia an important position for the US, because it is located in the middle of countries such as Russia, China and Iran, which the US considers its rivals. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the US, which supported the independence and free market of the states in the region, increased its interest in Central Asia, especially after the September 11th attacks (Wishnick, 2002). However, it cannot be said that the US is very influential in Central Asian politics, because the hegemony of Russia in the countries of the region is preventing those countries from leaving the orbit of Russia. Furthermore, against the US Central Asian targets, Russia and China, which are the two main powers in the region, have established close relations with the countries in the region under the name of the SCO, and in doing so prevent the US from being effective in the region (Rumer, 2006). Thus,

Russia and China are cooperating closely to prevent the countries of the region from seeing the US and Western companies as an alternative. In addition, the aims of the US to end Russia's dominance in the region and to confine it to its mainland, and to prevent China from reaching the energy resources in the region, are not possible in the near future as a result of this close cooperation. One of the most important reasons why Russia and China cooperate in terms of regional policy in the Central Asian region is the contrast between Russia and the US (Flikke and Wilhelmse, 2008, pp4). In fact, the sanctions imposed on Russia by the US and Western countries may be an advantage for China at some point. Similarly, the desire of the US and EU countries to transfer the energy resources of Central Asia to the West through lines such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan line has prepared the ground for Russia and China to engage in rapprochement on regional issues (Gunes, 2015, pp847). That is, at this stage, the anti-Russian opposition of the US and the Western world makes Russia and China natural allies in the Eurasian region, and it could also create the idea of the Eurasian Union with other countries in the region. On the other hand, at the forefront of the Central Asian policies of the US is democratisation. The concept of democratisation, which the US has previously used in the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, was also tried in Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia. In 2005, US-sponsored institutions funded the Kyrgyz opposition during a revolution called the Tulip Revolution. However, the real issue was not democratisation; the US, which wanted to limit Russia's power in Central Asia, overthrew the Russian-backed government and aimed to take over a country in Central Asia. By the same token, the US wanted its military base in Manas, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, to be permanent, and aimed to use Kyrgyzstan as a base for both Afghanistan and Caspian projects. Russia cannot take the necessary measures against such initiatives, which the US has established through organisations such as NGOs and Soros foundations. The biggest deficiency of Russia in this regard is the lack of a specific strategy. On the one hand, Russia cooperates with China against the presence of the US and Western

countries in Eurasia. On the other hand, Russia has to share its hegemonic supremacy in the region with China. In other words, Russia is having difficulty in gaining superiority in this region, which is seen as its backyard. Therefore, Russia needs to develop a common strategy with regional countries through organisations such as the EAEU and CIS. Otherwise, the regional organisations spearheaded by Russia may become more dysfunctional, and the SCO, in which China is strong, can replace these organisations and break Russian influence. Consequently, Russia could lose the region to China while conducting policies on limiting US influence in the region.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, after the Soviet Union collapsed, its heir, Russia, formed unions with some of the former Soviet countries in order to recover its former image in the Eurasian region and globally. However, many former Soviet countries have left or disagreed with these unions, and have pursued a withdrawal policy. Furthermore, due to its rich energy resources and geographical location, Russia has a lot of difficulties compared to the Soviet period in the Central Asian region where the former Soviet Union countries are located. Russia, on the one hand, wants to maintain its hegemony over the countries of the region, but on the other hand acts with China, both a regional and a global force, against the global power of the US. However, the impact of China in recent years on Central Asia, which is organised and planned as well as economically very strong, may pose some problems for Russia in the future. For example, Russia, which wants to strengthen the EAEU regionally and to have a voice at the global level, can see China as a competitor that has strengthened its relations with the countries of the region under the name of the SCO, both in terms of the economy and security. In addition, it is doubtful how Russia, which has an unstable economy and has been sanctioned by Western countries, can compete with China, which has a project that could affect global balances in the form of the New Silk Road. Subsequently, at the global level,

Russia and China have been acting together in recent years, but in a region that is the backyard of Russia, such as Central Asia, their hegemonic power could be at risk. On the other hand, Central Asia's proximity to unstable regions such as Afghanistan and the large number of Central Asian people in global terrorist organisations such as ISIL and Al Qaeda pose a threat to Russia's regional policies. The spread of radicalism and terrorism could make the region, where there are also many Russian minorities, a hot conflict zone like the Middle East, which would mean war and instability next to Russia. Moreover, Russia, which is not in a very strong economic situation and has a military presence in Syria and Ukraine, may have to protect the countries of the region that do not have a military power and which do not have a structure to protect themselves. In this case, the US and Western countries might also place their troops in Central Asia under the name of NATO and the UN. Already, given the fact that the economies of the region, except for Kazakhstan, are weak, any conflict in this region would lead all of the countries of the region to disaster, which would mean the end of Russia's hegemony over the region. As a result, Russia, the enemy of the Western countries, may have to share with China its interests in Central Asia by moving together with China, and by combining the SCO, EAEU and New Silk Road Projects. In other words, in an ideal Eurasian Union, Russia has to share the role of dominant power with China.

REFERENCES

Al-Shishani, M. (2005). *SALAFI-JIHADISTS GEOPOLITICAL PERSPECTIVE OF CENTRAL ASIA*. Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst. [online] Washington, D.C: CENTRAL ASIA-CAUCASUS INSTITUTE. p.7. Available at: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/106082/Analyst%20vol%206%20no%2013.pdf> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2019].

Bagan, A. (2012). *Russian Foreign Policy towards Central Asia*. [Online]. [Research.net](http://www.research.net). Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Agata_Wlodkowska-Bagan2/publication/261402477_Russian_Foreign_Policy_towards_Central_Asia/links/00b7d5342f6f1b5cb7000000/Russian-Foreign-Policy-towards-Central-Asia.pdf?origin=publication_detail [Accessed 25 Mar. 2019].

Broxup, Marie (1983) 'The Basmachi', *Central Asian Survey*. Taylor & Francis Group, 2(1), pp. 57–81. doi: 10.1080/02634938308400421.

Bassin, Mark. and Kelly, Catriona. (2012) *Soviet and post-Soviet identities* . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bordachev, T. (2018). *The SCO as the Foundation of Greater Eurasia*. [online] Valdai Club. Available at: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-sco-as-the-foundation-of-greater-eurasia/?sphrase_id=633007 [Accessed 10 Apr. 2019].

Capraz, H. (2011). *Çarlık Rusyası'nın Türkistan'da Hâkimiyet Kurması*. [online] Sdu.dergipark.gov.tr. Available at: <http://sdu.dergipark.gov.tr/download/article-file/117875> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2019].

Cooley, A. (2017). *Whose Rules, Whose Sphere? Russian Governance and Influence in Post-Soviet States*. [online] Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Available at:

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/06/30/whose-rules-whose-sphere-russian-governance-and-influence-in-post-soviet-states-pub-71403> [Accessed 14 Apr. 2019].

Cornell, S.E. and Engvall, J. (2015). *Fourth Vector: Making Sense of Kazakhstan's Activism in International Organizations*. [online] Stockholm: The Institute for Security and Development Policy. Available at: <http://isdpeu/publication/fourth-vector-making-sense-kazakhstans-activism-international-organizations/> [Accessed 8 Apr. 2019].

Colton, Timothy J. and Legvold, Robert. (1992) *After the Soviet Union : from Empire to nations* . New York ;: W. W. Norton.

Cummings, Sally N. (2012) *Understanding Central Asia : politics and contested transformations* . London: Routledge.

DURAN, H. and PUREVSUREN, N. (2016). *GÜVENLİK, ENERJİ VE PAZAR EKSENİNDE ÇİN'İN ORTA ASYA POLİTİKASI*. [online] Dergipark.gov.tr. Available at: <http://dergipark.gov.tr/download/article-file/347597> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2019].

Gabuev, A. (2018). *"Russian-U.S. Flashpoints in the Post-Soviet Space: The View From Moscow."* / Russia in Global Affairs. Foreign policy research foundation. [online] Eng.globalaffairs.ru. Available at: <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/book/Russian-US-Flashpoints-in-the-Post-Soviet-Space-The-View-From-Moscow-19390> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2019].

Flikke, G. and Wilhelmsen, J. (2008). *Central Asia: A Testing Ground for New Great-Power Relations*. [online] Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, p.4. Available at: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/49801/2008_Central_Asia_Testing_Ground.pdf [Accessed 10 Apr. 2019].

Government.ru. (2018). *23th regular meeting of Russian and Chinese heads of government*. [online] Available at: <http://government.ru/en/news/34600/> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2019].

Güneş, E. (2015). *ÇİN-RUSYA İLİŞKİLERİNDEKİ ASİMETRİK DENGE ve AMERİKA BİRLEŞİK DEVLETLERİ*. [online] Politics.ankara.edu.tr. Available at: <http://politics.ankara.edu.tr/dergi/pdf/70/4/2---Ergin-Gunes.pdf> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2019].

Hagan, Charles B. (1942) 'Geopolitics', *The Journal of Politics*. University of Chicago Press, 4(4), pp. 478–490. doi: 10.2307/2125653.

Hayoun, M. (2015). *China to 'promote its repression of Uighurs' at Shanghai group meeting*. [online] The Independent. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/china-to-promote-its-repression-of-uighurs-at-shanghai-group-meeting-a6773386.html> [Accessed 4 Apr. 2019].

Ibragimov, M.M. (2019). *Priorities of the Construction of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the Conditions of Development of Forms and Methods of Contemporary Armed Struggle*. [online] Armyupress.army.mil. Available at: <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/English/JF-19/Ibragimov-Uzbek-Forces.pdf> [Accessed 5 Apr. 2019].

Imanaliev, M. (2016). *The Commonwealth of Independent States: Not Subject to Reform*. [online] Valdai Club. Available at: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/commonwealth-of-independent-states-not-subject-to-reform/?sphrase_id=623981 [Accessed 6 Apr. 2019].

Kazantsev, A. (2016). *CENTRAL ASIA: SECULAR STATEHOOD CHALLENGED BY RADICAL ISLAM*. [online] Valdai Club. Available at: <http://valdaiclub.com/files/11419/> [Accessed 5 Apr. 2019].

Kremlin.ru. (2017). *Interview to Mir broadcasting company*. [online] Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54271> [Accessed 9 Apr. 2019].

Kremlin.ru. (2017). *Press statements following Russian-Kyrgyzstani talks*. [online] Available at: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54828> [Accessed 11 Apr. 2019].

Laruelle, Marlène (2004) '*The Two Faces Of Contemporary Eurasianism: An Imperial Version Of Russian Nationalism*', Nationalities Papers. Taylor and Francis Ltd, 32(1), pp. 115–136. doi: 10.1080/0090599042000186197.

Maduz, L. (2018). *Flexibility by design: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the future of Eurasian cooperation*. [online] Ciss.ethz.ch. Available at: <http://www.ciss.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/Maduz-080618-ShanghaiCooperation.pdf> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2019].

Martín, G. (2015). *The Eurasian Economic Union: ambitions and vulnerabilities of the 'other EU'*. [online] Stockholm. pp.4-5. Available at: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/194295/ARI49-2015-Pozo-Eurasian-Economic-Union-ambitions-and-vulnerabilities-of-the-other-EU.pdf> [Accessed 6 Apr. 2019].

Maxwell, J.A. 2005, *Qualitative research design: an interactive approach*, 2nd edn, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.

Menon, R. (1995). *CENTRAL ASIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY CHALLENGES: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES*. [online] Washington: The National Bureau of Asian Research, pp.6-7. Available at: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/144608/vol6no4.pdf> [Accessed 15 Apr. 2019].

Mid.ru. (2019). *Comment by the Information and Press Department on Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's official visit to the Republic of Tajikistan*. [online] Available at: http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/3495885 [Accessed 12 Apr. 2019].

Mid.ru. (2019). *Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks at a joint SCO-UNODC meeting on drug trafficking, Vienna, March 14, 2019.* [online] Available at: http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/3570498 [Accessed 11 Apr. 2019].

Mfa.gov.kz. (2018). *Kazakistan Ankara Büyükelçisi Abzal Saparbekuly Türk Keneşi Genel Sekreteri Baghdad Amreyev ile Görüştü.* [online] Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.kz/tr/ankara/content-view/kazakstanny-trkiadagy-elsisi-abzal-saparbekly-trki-keesini-bas-hatsysy-bagdat-mireevpen-kezdesti> [Accessed 7 Apr. 2019].

Morrison, A. (2017). *Central Asia and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Look at the Balance Sheet at the Centennial.* [online] Eurasianet. Available at: <https://eurasianet.org/central-asia-and-the-bolshevik-revolution-a-look-at-the-balance-sheet-at-the-centennial> [Accessed 9 Apr. 2019].

News.bbc.co.uk. (2005). *Putin deploras collapse of USSR.* [online] Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/4480745.stm> [Accessed 8 Apr. 2019].

Nogayeva, A. (2012). *ABD, Rusya ve Çin'in Nüfuz Mücadelesinde Orta Asya: Araçlar ve Süreçler.* [online] Bilig.yesevi.edu.tr. Available at: <http://bilig.yesevi.edu.tr/yonetim/icerik/makaleler/2466-published.pdf> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2019].

Oliphant, C. (2013). *Russia's role and interests in Central Asia.* [online] Files.ethz.ch. Available at: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/172941/russias-role-and-interests-in-central-asia.pdf> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2019]

Punch, K. 2016, *Developing effective research proposals*, 3rd edn, SAGE, Los Angeles.

RFE/RL. (2018). *Russia, China Lash Out At U.S. Sanctions While Forging Closer Ties*. [online] Available at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-china-lash-out-us-sanctions-forging-closer-ties-wto-iran-deal-medvedev-li/29588872.html> [Accessed 15 Apr. 2019].

Rumer, E. (2006). *China, Russia and the Balance of Power in Central Asia*. [online] Files.ethz.ch. Available at: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/46312/SF223.pdf> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2019].

Russiaeu.ru. (2011). Article by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin "*A new integration project for Eurasia: The future in the making*" ("Izvestia", 3 October 2011) | Russian Mission. [online] Available at: <https://russiaeu.ru/en/news/article-prime-minister-vladimir-putin-new-integration-project-eurasia-future-making-izvestia-3-> [Accessed 24 Mar. 2019].

Sakwa, Richard (1999) *The rise and fall of the Soviet Union, 1917-1991*. London: Routledge.

Schenkkan, N. (2015). *Impact of the Economic Crisis in Russia on Central Asia*. [online] Csw.ethz.ch. Available at: <http://www.csw.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD-165-3-6.pdf> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2019].

Starovoitova, G. (1997). *SOVEREIGNTY AFTER EMPIRE Self-Determination Movements in the Former Soviet Union*. [online] Washington: the United States Institute of Peace. Available at: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/30146/1997_november_pwks19.pdf [Accessed 6 Apr. 2019].

Stein, M. (2012). *Uzbekistan's View of Security in Afghanistan After 2014*. [online] Armyupress.army.mil. Available at: https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20120630_art012.pdf [Accessed 13 Apr. 2019].

Stronski, P. and Ng, N. (2018). *COOPERATION AND COMPETITION Russia and China in Central Asia, the Russian Far East, and the Arctic*. [online] Carnegieendowment.org. Available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_331_Stronski_Ng_Final1.pdf [Accessed 25 Mar. 2019].

Swanström, N. (2011). *China and Greater Central Asia: New Frontiers?*. [online] Files.ethz.ch. Available at: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/143933/2011_swanstrom_china-and-greater-central-asia.pdf [Accessed 25 Mar. 2019].

Trenin, D. (2010). *CSTO: Ripe for Reform?*. [online] Carnegie Moscow Center. Available at: <https://carnegie.ru/2010/08/25/csto-ripe-for-reform-pub-41469> [Accessed 13 Apr. 2019].

Valdai Club. (2017). *RESHAPING EURASIAN SPACE COMMON PERSPECTIVES FROM CHINA, RUSSIA, AND KAZAKHSTAN THINK TANKS*. [Online]. Available from: <http://valdaiclub.com/files/14845/> [Accessed 15 Apr. 2019].

Valdai Club. (2018). *Challenges As a Source of Growth: How to Make Eurasian Integration More Efficient*. [online] Available at: http://valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/factor-of-inevitability-how-russia-cohabits-in-eurasia/?sphrase_id=610739 [Accessed 10 Apr. 2019].

Valdai Club. (2018). *Vladimir Putin Meets with Members of the Valdai Discussion Club. Full Transcript of the Plenary Session of the 15th Annual Meeting*. [online] Available at: http://valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/vladimir-putin-meets-with-valdai-discussion-club/?sphrase_id=619739 [Accessed 10 Apr. 2019].

Voitovich, Sergei (1993) 'The Commonwealth of Independent States: An Emerging Institutional Model', *European Journal of International Law/Journal Européen de Droit International*. Firenze Ferrovial: Oxford University Press, 4(3), pp. 403–429. doi: 10.1093/oxfordjournals.ejil.a035838.

Wishnick, E. (2002). *GROWING U.S. SECURITY INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA*. [online] Carlisle, PA: The Strategic Studies Institute. Available at: <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a408234.pdf> [Accessed 10 Apr. 2019].

Weitz, R. (2008). *Kazakhstan and the New International Politics of Eurasia*. [online] Files.ethz.ch. Available at: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/105083/July08.pdf> [Accessed 25 Mar. 2019].

Worldbank.org. (2017). *GDP, PPP (current international \$) | Data*. [online] Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.PP.CD?end=2017&start=1990> [Accessed 12 Apr. 2019].

Yesevi, Ç.G. (2013). *ORTA ASYA'DA İŞBİRLİĞİ VE BÜTÜNLEŞME: KOLEKTİF GÜVENLİK ANTLAŞMASI ÖRGÜTÜ ÖRNEĞİ*. [online] Files.ethz.ch. Available at: https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/159610/KE-4_2013_Yesevi.pdf [Accessed 8 Apr. 2019].

YILMAZ, M.Y. (2014). *İŞGAL DÖNEMİ TÜRKİSTAN'DA RUS DİL PLANLAMASI VE CEDİD HAREKETİ*. [online] Jasstudies.com. Available at: http://www.jasstudies.com/Makaleler/1979266248_20-Dr.%20Mehmet%20Yal%C3%A7%20YILMAZ-son.pdf [Accessed 25 Mar. 2019].