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**The Central Asian Policy Of The Russia And China In The  
Context Of The Dichotomy Of Conflict And Cooperation**

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**ABSTRACT**

The Central Asian countries, which gained their independence after the Cold War, attracted the attention of their neighbors, China and Russia, as well as other great powers. The Central Asian region was seen as a new area of sharing because of its geopolitical location and rich natural resources, the USA's efforts to build up influence have troubled China and Russia, and the two countries have developed areas of cooperation in their policies towards Central Asia against the USA. But; major conflict areas have emerged on the basis of Central Asia, particularly by China's failure to turn Russia over to Central Asian energy sources. This situation creates a dicotomy in the policies of the two countries in the region. In this context, the main purpose of the study; It is a discussion of the question of whether Russia and China could continue to cooperate in the policies of the two countries by explaining the areas of cooperation and conflict based on Central Asia.

**Keywords:** Central Asia, Russia, China, Conflict, Cooperation

## **Çatışma ve İşbirliği Dikotomisi Bağlamında Rusya ve Çin'in Orta Asya Politikası**

### **ÖZET**

Soğuk Savaş sonrasında bağımsızlıklarına kavuşan Orta Asya ülkeleri, diğer büyük güçler gibi, komşuları olan Çin ve Rusya'nın da ilgisini çekmişlerdir. Orta Asya bölgesi jeopolitik konumu ve zengin doğal kaynakları nedeniyle yeni bir paylaşım alanı olarak görülmüş, ABD'nin etki kurma çabaları Çin ve Rusya'yı rahatsız etmiş ve iki ülke ABD karşıtlığı üzerinden Orta Asya'ya yönelik politikalarında işbirliği alanları geliştirmişlerdir. Ancak; Çin'in Rusya'yı devre dışı bırakarak Orta Asya enerji kaynaklarına talip olması başta olmak üzere iki ülke arasında Orta Asya temelli önemli çatışma alanları da ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu durum iki ülkenin bölgeye yönelik politikalarında dikotomi oluşturmaktadır. Bu bağlamda hazırlanan çalışmanın temel amacı; Rusya ve Çin'in Orta Asya temelli işbirliği ve çatışma alanlarının açıklanarak iki ülkenin bölgeye yönelik politikalarında işbirliğinin devam edip edemeyeceği sorunsalının tartışılmasıdır.

**Anahtar Kavramlar:** Orta Asya, Rusya, Çin, Çatışma, İşbirliği

### **INTRODUCTION**

The disintegration of the Soviet Union not only resulted in the emergence of new independent states, but also a historic process and the beginning or competition of new integrations in geopolitical areas. After the disintegration of the USSR, the Central Asian region, where five independent states were established, became the focus of the geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic interests of the great powers from the beginning of the 21st century.

The presence of great powers in the region disturbed Russia, which sees the region as a backyard within the framework of its close environmental policy. Moscow's main concern was to be surrounded by geopolitics and the marketing of the natural resources of the Central Asian region outside of its own will. In particular, the physical

proximity to the region of China and the USA's attempts to increase its influence in the region have worried Russia. But on the Central Asian region, the US's hegemonic attempts on the region have brought together Russia and China, which are basically competing with each other. The cooperation between the two countries is not only due to the problems of the US, but the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which they initially created to solve the border problems; BRICS, which China went to economic co-operation, especially in the context of oil and natural gas, is seen as other reasons for religious radicalism on the basis of Islamic revival after independence.

The views that bilateral relations between Russia and China went well with the degree of alliance led to the neglect of mutual problems and not to mention this area. However, as can be seen in the study, there are significant problems, policy differences and disagreements arising between the two countries. When these disputes are examined; Border problems that cannot be solved even with the SCO, competition on the energy sources and energy routes of Kazakhstan, the strategic superiority to be provided on the region, China's growing population and the Chinese migration to Central Asia, or the Collective Security Treaty Organization created by bypassing China by Russia appears to have come to the fore.

This work; Cooperation between China and Russia will continue in the short and medium term, but will not continue in the long term due to large conflicts of interest , In fact, the two countries are competing in the Central Asian region , and this competition is prepared on the basis that the two countries will eliminate the cooperation opportunities in the region in the long term . The main problematic of the study is whether cooperation between Russia and China in Central Asia policies can be maintained. In the study, cooperation and conflict areas between Russia and China were evaluated in the Central Asian Region. Historical and descriptive research methods were used in this study. While preparing the research, books, articles, internet sources, magazines and so on. written sources are used; The qualitative information processing method used in Social Sciences was used as information processing tool.



## FIELDS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN CHINA AND RUSSIA

In this part of the study, cooperation areas of China and Russia in Central Asian policies will be discussed.

### **Shanghai the Cooperation Organization**

After the Second World War, the Cold War period began and the world turned into a bipolar structure led by the USA and the USSR. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, this bipolar structure was removed, and the old order and balance were destroyed (Tüfekçi, 2016: 102). Contrary to expectations, the post-Cold War world has not become a more reliable place, but has been the scene of new struggles after a short period of stagnation. During this period, the former USSR, the winner of the Cold War unipolar world and the hegemo the power of the US, tended to be decisive. The USA began to dominate the territory of the former USSR and Asia Pacific and began to surround Russia and China, disturbing many countries, particularly the Russian Federation and China (Ağır and Ağır, 2017: 122).

As a matter of fact, after the disintegration of the USSR, Moscow with his aim of becoming the only superpower in Asia and Pekin, which is the rising economic power, the solution to the border problems in the region and the increasing energy demand in parallel with China's economic growth has brought these countries closer to cooperation. However, in the western regions of China (such as the Tibetan Autonomous Region and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region) to remove the backwardness of Russia, China's production of surplus goods to buy cheap, China and Russia, especially between the development of economic relations based on arms trade and perhaps most importantly, With the understanding that the enemy of my enemy is my friend and good relations were established with the aim of becoming an ally against the common enemy America (Dannreuther, 1994: 63-64).

As a result of these relations, on 26 April 1996, a new power formation with the name of Shanghai Five (Shanghai Five) with Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan under the leadership of Russia





and China, And then the Shanghai Cooperation Organization were formed in 2001 with the participation of Uzbekistan (SCO, 2018). On the other hand, in the spirit of Shanghai theorist and the pioneer of the institutionalization, the economic financier and the gripping power of the Chinese People's Trust has been. Because SCO is a platform that provides opportunity for China to establish constructive relations with the Central Asian region for the first time in history and become an active actor of the region (Guang, 2013: 27). In this conjuncture, China's gains over SCO are briefly; He has adopted the separatist movements in East Turkestan as terrorist organizations in all Central Asian countries and managed to control them. China's foreign dependency on energy is facing a direct crisis of economic crisis and a breakdown of social unrest due to a potential crisis or high price increase (Marketos, 2009: 10-11), solved all of the border problems, divided gesel security and stability, as well as countries with SCO has developed its cooperation by achieving concrete results and increased its trade by only 8 times even between 2000 and 2010 (Bin, 2013: 34). On the other hand, China, which has made Russia strongly opposed to the anti-USA position, has prevented the USA from penetrating into Central Asia and it has allowed Washington to target Moscow instead of Pekin. (Laruelle and Peyrouse, 2013: 247).

In spite of all these policies and strategies of China, Russia tried to balance the global hegemony of America under the SCO and to balance China's active power in Central Asia alone. Thus, Russia considered the SCO as a means of fighting against "the big threat USA" instead of "small threat China". Because in its foreign policy, Russia adopted the role of as anti-hegemonic front through tactical alliance and regional blocs to break the US hegemony in the world and form a multi-pole system, in this direction with China followed a strategy against the USA (Mammadova, 2014: 80). Except for this "external factor" that determines Russia's approach to the SCO, The "internal factor", stemming from the instability of the Central Asian region, has dictated an alliance with China. Thus, Moscow has provided a geo- strategic rather than economic cooperation to the SCO (Marketos, 2009: 41) .

In fact, The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, whose foundations were laid by the Chinese side, Until now, has been under a legal superstructure of both China-Russian cooperation and competition on the Central Asian region and it is considered to enable civil execution. The creation of the SCO is the result of China and Russia's efforts to seek co-operation. Although there are serious conflict areas between these two countries, the fact that they have regional problems that they cannot cope without co-operation, leaves China and Russia to act in common on some issues.

### **BRICS**

In today's international system, while the effects of developed countries are decreasing day by day, the weight and strength of developing countries are increasing. These “emerging economies”, which were first mentioned by Jim O’Neill, the economist of the famous investment bank Goldman Sachs, were raised in 2001 as 'BRIC at with reference to Brazil, Russia, India and China. After that, South Africa was included in these countries and the BRICS group became a new balance in the international system.

In spite of the decline in the growth rates of developed countries after the 2008 Global Finance Crisis, developing countries have increased their share in world production and have become more effective in global economy. On the other hand, although there are different interests and expectations among BRICS member countries, it is observed that they have reached a compromise under this cooperation. When China and Russia are examined in this perspective, it is pointed out that these two emerging powers have common interests in Central Asia. Russia and China have been the most influential forces on the fate of Central Asia (Lewis, 1992: 32-33). While Central Asia is a region where Russia can provide raw materials to its economy, economic resources in this region constitute one of the main concerns of Russia's presence in Central Asia. Because Russia does not have sufficient internal resources. For this reason, it tends to the geography of Central Asia and natural resources that respond to its vital interests across the border (Kulnazarov, 2015: 129). Russia, which continues to claim that it is

a superpower, even though it is a rhetorical level, reflects its approach to the Central Asian region to different areas with the collapse of the USSR and to sell goods to world markets with high quality and cheaper than other countries. This situation gives great advantages to Russia in regional policy (Gabdullin, 2011: 22-23).

In China, because of the use of coal, the main energy source, environmental pollution has turned to natural gas consumption due to its horrific dimensions.

China's geoeconomic feature of natural gas, such as a source of energy on the sea road brings some problems for China. Natural gas is transported on land in this matter is of great significance for China. Because most of China's energy resources are imported by sea throughout the Pacific and this route is threatened by the American military presence in the Pacific. There are also border disputes between China and Japan and other countries in the East China Sea and South China Sea (Wasserstrom, 2015: 167). At this point, the importance of Central Asia, which will provide China with energy sources such as natural gas, oil and uranium, is very important. However, in Central Asia, it is difficult to implement strong policies independent of Russia.

Indeed, China is aware of the fact that in the short term Russia will not be able to break its influence in Central Asia, and that China has increased its energy needs, especially in the context of petroleum and natural gas; They focus on regional cooperation under BRICS in Russia due to energy export to China (Trenin, 2001: 283). Therefore, the energy potential of Central Asia is an integral component of geopolitical discourse both within and outside the region, Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. On the other hand, it is pointed out that this formation has emerged as a result of a political project in search of multidimensional equilibrium in response to the hegemonic role of the USA in the world public.

### **Removal of US Presence FromTheRegion**

The new world order, which had been unipolarized between 1991 and 2001 and was based on the absolute superiority of the US,

was never wanted to be accepted by the former eastern bloc countries, but was seeking a new power focus against the USA.

The interest of the USA in the region, especially after the collapse of the USSR, and the rise of Russia and China in the region, which tried to fill the geopolitical gap in the region, culminated this interest. The United States of America, acting in the future with the possibility that these forces might be a threat to it, started to fight against Russia and China with the effect of asymmetric (Nogayeva, 2011: 5) threat. Thus, Mearsheimer claimed that the main purpose of the USA after the Cold War was to dominate the western hemisphere and to prevent it being the only dominant one in the eastern hemisphere (Mearsheimer, 2001: 46). In this respect, the United States has developed policies for Central Asian energy, supporting energy transmission projects and enabling energy in Central Asia to reach world markets and to break the monopoly status of Russia's transfer of energy from Central Asia. Moreover, In the geography that Russia has defined and adopted as its domain, such as in Uzbekistan and the territory of Kyrgyzstan, America has obtained two military bases. It also has the ability to establish direct relations with the Washington administration and the Central Asian countries. As a matter of fact, the USA has tried to keep Russia under control by influencing an edge-belt area surrounding Russia. The civilian coup in Kyrgyzstan was part of the containment policy clearly demonstrated by the USA (Andican, 2006: 24).

The power struggle by China and Russia, which has the potential to emerge as a global competitor in Central Asia against these policies of the USA, has mutually fed each other and The USA's desire to increase its influence in the region has also pushed China and Russia to balance this power. While Russia perceived the expansion of NATO towards the Black Sea and Eastern Europe basin as a threat, it was troubled by USA pressure on human rights in China and arms trade with Taiwan . On the other hand, being in the geography of Central Asia for Russia is very important in geopolitical terms, and so called Central Asia is seen as Russia's " submarine " region. For this reason, as a geopolitical region, Central Asia has served as a security zone for Russia and as a buffer zone providing military and political

security on the southern border (Muzalevsky, 2009: 29). Because foreign military bases established in Central Asia posed a long-term threat to Russia's security, Russia opposed the effective existence of the USA and NATO in the region (Lewis, 1992: 32-33). As a matter of fact, these mutual policies between Russia and China against the common enemy USA brought the two powers closer together and led to the desire to remove the USA from the Central Asian geography.

### **Religious radicalism**

According to Rink and Sharma (2016: 8), religious radicalism is defined as supporting the use of violence in order to achieve religious-political goals of individuals within a certain period of time. When the regions of religious radicalism are examined, the most striking one is undoubtedly the Central Asian region where the majority of the people are Muslim peoples of Turkish origin (Golden, 2014: 13). Because the Central Asian peoples, who started with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and ended in 1991, lived under a totalitarian rule, were treated as second class citizens in the social life and public sphere, and wanted to reduce the influence of the existing belief systems in order to make the ideology of the system dominant and they are under pressure.

For many years, the Muslim peoples of Central Asian peoples, who lived in a society that had no importance for their religious values and individual existence in the dominant Russian culture and the influence of China, attempted to create an identity to redefine themselves in the post-independence period. Islam, which emerged as an element in the definition of identity, and the Islamic revival that emerged in this context, as Khalid (2007: 119) pointed out in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, aimed at the acquisition of the urban culture developed in the Maveräunnehir region during the period of Islam, and for the important figures of the Islamic tradition to be remembered as national heroes. taking the form of interest; In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, he claimed to represent local Kazakh or Kyrgyz identities against the Russian identity, which was dominant in local cultural life.

In Central Asia, identity design, which will bring Islam to the core of radicalism, is based on the ignorance which started in the Soviet period and continued in the process that came with independence. Just as in the Soviet era, the new state's adoption of the secular system, and the harsh measures it has adopted in this context, have resulted in the expansion of potential radicalism . In other words, religion as the socially most common value has become the label of radicalism since it is the only source of opposition to challenge the present system. According to Russian experts, the worst scenario in terms of Moscow is the growth of confusion in Central Asia region, destabilization of countries, exacerbation of the conflict environment and the emergence of "radical Islamists" to power as a result of the collapse of existing secular regimes. Because, considering the Russian geopolitics, the Volga, Ural and Western Siberian regions were found to be extremely suitable for external influence. (Sarseekev, 2014).

In addition to Russia, the emergence of new Muslim Turkish states in Central Asia with the collapse of the Soviets in 1990 and the regional Islamic awakening have not only alarmed Russia, but also China (Jamil, 2011: 151). Because the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China's sub- region, is located in the eastern part of the major Turkestan in the central part of Central Asia. However, the majority of the population is Muslim, The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, where the Uighur minorities live, is a region of strategic importance with its location and underground resources potential. This has led China to focus on the assimilation of the large minority in Xinjiang starting from the 1980s with an informal policy and to try to make Chinese culture dominant. (Dwyer, 2005: 30).

As a result, the attempt to implement religious radicalism, which is perceived as a common threat by Russia and China in the Central Asian region, has been another issue that has brought these two countries closer together and enabled the implementation of common policies.

## FIELDS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN CHINA AND RUSSIA

Although the relations between Russia and China are tried to be carried out under the framework of cooperation today, there is an inevitable reality among these countries; competition between the two countries.

In this part of the study, the conflict areas between Russia and China will be explained, and these will be divided into sections as border problems, Kazakhstan's energy resources, energy routes, strategic superiority, China's growing population and Chinese migration, and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

### Border Problems

The border problems between the Soviet Union and China began in the late 1950s. In 1962, around 60,000 Uighurs moved from the Soviet border to China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region due to economic reasons, The propaganda material were made by the Chinese media and the border dispute between the two countries has increased gradually. These border disputes spread to the 19th century and the Chinese leader Mao claimed that 1.5 million square kilometers of Chinese territory had been usurped by Tsarist Russia. (Kuchins , 1997: 3).

In 1960, as many as 100 Chinese livestock breeders crossed the USSR border, the tension climbed. In addition, the parties come together for the solution of the border issue in 1964, taking into account the waterways and streams, efforts to identify new borders could not alleviate the problem. This tension eventually led to border conflicts and, as a result, on 20 October 1969, urgent peace negotiations began between the two countries. As a result of these interviews, Central Asian region shared between Tsarist Russia and Manchu China, then After World War II, it was shared between the USSR and the People's Republic of China, including West and East Turkestan (Ford, 2004). However, in 1991 the USSR was destroyed and the Russian Federation was established (Kleveman, 2004: 114). With the disintegration of the USSR, China has been on



the north and northwest borders with the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

After this process, China has tried to reach a solution by discussing the border issue with these countries and organized a summit in Shanghai in 1996. As a result of these negotiations, they agreed not to engage in military activities in the border regions for the security of the border areas and to inform each other of the border's 100 km-deep operations (Tütenbayev, 2012: 439). But nowadays Russia and China seem to be allies, but the territorial disputes between them are not fully resolved. The People's Republic of China was not satisfied with the agreements made and argued that these agreements were made unjust. This raises the question of China's desire to recapture areas such as Manchuria and Western Siberia.

### **Kazakhstan's Energy Resources**

The need for natural gas, which became the most important energy raw material after oil in the 21st century and the oil that marked the 20th century, has become very important especially among the states that do not have these raw materials or think that it is inadequate. This situation puts the countries in need of energy into competition from the existing energy revenues. Therefore, Central Asian countries, which have a significant portion of oil and natural gas reserves, have been the new struggle area of hegemonic states such as Russia, China and USA. When Central Asian countries are examined, one of these countries is Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan, which is bordered by the Russian Federation in the northwest and north, China in the east, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in the south, and Turkmenistan and the Caspian Sea in the southwest, is located in the region where the corridors cross from north to south and east to West (Curtis, 1996: 42). The country is among: the world's first two reserves of uranium, chromium, lead and zinc deposits; top ten in the world rankings in coal, iron and gold reserves; the first twenty countries in natural gas, oil and aluminum reserves (Karibayeva, 2006: 73-74). All these features turn Kazakhstan into a competitive field between Russia and China.



As a matter of fact, China has started to pursue new strategies to minimize this by minimizing its attachment to Russia in the energy field and to seek cooperation with Kazakhstan. Because China has to carry out its rapid economic growth in a stable manner and to increase the demand for hydrocarbons and raw materials from Central Asia. For this reason, Kazakhstan is an important country in terms of Chinese energy relations. In provision this need of China, Kazakhstan is trying to diversify its sources of income and complete its economic development (Blank, 2005). Consequently, relations between Kazakhstan and china, which have a significant amount of petroleum raw materials in the country and the else which are increasing energy need, relations are increasing day by day on energy agreements. This situation leads Russia and China to struggle for energy resources and to be effective in the region in terms of energy reserves of Kazakhstan region (Ahrari, 2017: 210).

### Energy Routes

When the policies regarding the Central Asian region are examined, it is important not only to have an effect on the energy sources of the region but also to control the energy transmission lines. In this regard, especially Russia tried to pass the power transmission lines over its territory and aimed to control the energy strategically. For this reason, he often confronted China.

China, which is trying to break the Russian monopoly, completed the construction of the Alaankou pipeline, which is an important step of the China Central Asia pipeline in 2005, and connected one of the most important oil resources of Kazakhstan to China. In addition, with a length of 3636 kilometers, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan will pass through the territory, which is one of the largest projects, Central Asia-China gas pipeline for 30 years gas agreement with Turkmenistan (Nogayeva, 2011: 122).

Russia, which is very uncomfortable with China's policies, has tried to bypass China by making arrangements in favor of Japan on the routes passing through China for the planned pipeline towards the Pacific Ocean. While Russia has developed its economy with the energy resources it has dominated, it has started to need great energy in the development process in China. Therefore, China's direct energy initiatives, which were formed by competing with Russian energy companies in Central Asia, especially Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, were perceived as a threat to Russia (Mikheev, 2011: 85).

### **Strategic Superiority**

Central Asia, tightly controlled by the Moscow administration during the Soviet Union, fell into a power vacuum with the collapse of the USSR. The sudden and dramatic disappearance of the USSR brought with it the problems of how to fill the void of Russia in the region and how the future of Central Asia will be shaped.

After the fall of the USSR, Russia emerged as his successor and considered himself to be the patron of Central Asia. In this context, sometimes the bureaucratic structure and economic dependency relations established in the old regime period, sometimes tried to continue to influence the region by raising the rights of Russian minorities living in the Central Asian Republics. On the other hand, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of Central Asia as an independent geopolitical area created a golden opportunity for China. The active search for new energy sources for the fast-growing Chinese economy has increased the volume of investment made by this country into the energy sector of Central Asia. In addition, China has continued to develop its political and economic relations with the Central Asian countries, which have maintained their stable development. Because China immediately understood the strategic importance of Central Asia, especially with the richness of energy resources, has recognized that the region will play an important role in world balances (Andican, 2006: 7).

Russia's main concern with China is that as its economic power continues to increase, China is likely to consider itself a small

player and no longer consider it strategically important to consider it as an actor to be taken into account for its interests (Ahrari, 2017: 214). The struggle for dominance in this direction and the superiority complex which was tried to be created forced Russia and China to compete to fill the power gap in the region.

### **China's Growing the Population and Chinese Migration**

The Chinese people began to migrate beyond their borders about 1300 years ago and the question of whether the Chinese spread demographically to Russia with immigration has raised the question of whether China poses a threat.

According to Dyatlov (2001: 348), China's overpopulation and the possibility of becoming a global power together with the extreme limitation of resources make this possible. According to some, it is exaggerated that the Chinese people are waiting impatiently to flock to these regions; For some, this situation seems inevitable in the medium term, although this is not possible in the short term. Because, according to Chinese scientists' estimates, Natural resources and economic situation in China's current borders, most of 1.5 billion Population seem to be able to deceive. Therefore, it is thought that China can solve this problem only through the expansion of the land (Nogayeva, 2011: 196). In this context, the Central Asian region appears as a region that has witnessed China's efforts to increase its influence in the region through its population and language policies.

This situation brings to mind the question of whether Chinese invasion, Chinese danger or what is called yellow danger "in the West in the 19th century will pose a threat to Russia. However, according to recent studies, it is concluded that the Russian population in Central Asian countries living under Russian sovereignty has been decreasing for a long time and the Chinese population has increased. Therefore, the issue of "China threat" or "yellow invasion" in the countries of the region, especially Russia, remains the same. Because Central Asia is in a position where China can use its influence in the region and be surrounded by the Chinese population

in Russia's regions near the Chinese border (Lukin, 2002: 88). This is undoubtedly disturbing Russia, which is trying to become hegemon on Central Asia.

### **The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)**

Founded by the Community of the six Independent States (Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Belarus and Armenia) on October 7, 2002, CSTO is an intergovernmental military alliance. When the structure of the organization is examined, Russia's policies and expectations from this organization draw attention. It is known that Russia has the understanding of making CSTO and Central Asia's basic security organization by keeping China out (Weitz, 2012: 75).

In this perspective, the main reason of the China-Russia's tension in Central Asia is considered as the competition between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization which is dominated by China and the CSTO, which is directed by Russia militarily. Because at the point where China has decided to expand its presence in Central Asia through the intervention of the military and the realization of this intervention through the SCO, then The security perspectives of the CSTO conflicts with China's perspectives (Ahrari, 2017). Russia, which considers itself as the main guarantor of Central Asia security, tries to isolate China and prevent it from affecting these states.

### **GENERAL EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION**

With the end of the Cold War, the change of the international conjuncture, in other words, the disappearance of the equilibrium-based on bipolar structure, led to the emergence of wide geopolitical and geoeconomic spaces spanning over the north-south transition and connecting roads of the Rimland belt in the east-west direction (Alwort, 1994: 527). As Brezinski calls it, Central Asia has become a chessboard with a world-wide struggle for power. While the collapse of the USSR was a turning point in terms of the region, it also brought important results due to a period of time.

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian Republics, which had recently won their independence, had energy

resources, while being democratic and economically weak, on the one hand, attempts to integrate with the world, on the other hand, their inability to deliver energy resources to international markets, and increased competition in the region. USA-led hegemonic attempts of the Cold War have disturbed former Soviet bloc countries, especially Russia and China. In 2001, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was established under the leadership of Russia and China to ensure a more secure development of neighborly relations between the border countries in the post-Soviet geography. In addition, bilateral relations were not limited to SCO and cooperation with BRICS continued in Central Asia. However, the emergence of new Muslim Turkish states in Central Asia with the collapse of the Soviets in 1990 and the regional Islamic awakening were another factor that led Russia and China to act jointly. However, in addition to all these cooperation, the struggle between Russia and China seems inevitable. Although Pekin and Moscow try to develop a common attitude towards the common enemy today, the definition of interests is similar.

Although the bilateral relations between Russia and China, which started between 1985 and 1990, continued in a positive way, in these relations; issues such as strategic superiority, Kazakhstan energy resources, Central Asian energy routes, China's growing population and expansionist policy are considered as conflict areas between the two countries. This is the case with the policy of Russia towards the understanding of the main security organization of Central Asia by keeping China out, not by the SCO. Because, above all, the growing Chinese threat is a major concern for Russia, both economically and demographically. This leads Russia to co-operate with the Chinese border countries (Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) to balance China's rising power.

Russia's plans to form a unity for these former Soviet Republics have disturbed China, which has adversely affected China's economic presence in Central Asia. Because China's investments in the Central Asian Region are not only aimed at meeting their energy needs, they also aim to rise as a global power by investing in energy-efficient regions in order to ensure energy security. However, Central Asian Republics are always seen as a big market for Chinese sourced

consumer goods and Pekin is trying to improve their commercial ties with these countries. In this context, China wants to reduce the influence of Russia, which it sees as rival power at the same time as trying to complete its ascension and establishing regional hegemony. In accordance with this theory, he acts in the Central Asian region with the concept of "soft power" and tries to provide power superiority. Because for China, there will be close cooperation with Russia, as there is no connection outside the USA, cultural differences are also deep.

When the mutual power struggle between Russia and China is examined; Although Russia is uncomfortable with China's hegemonic initiatives in Central Asia, it will have a lot of difficulty to reduce or limit China's existence. Because it's not just China, States in Central Asia also think that China needs to exist and that China will be able to provide the highest price for energy. This situation brings China to a more advantageous position against Russia and China is becoming an indispensable partner for these countries. China has a tremendous capital reserve and is an experienced country that knows how to use money in diplomacy. Therefore, the Chinese government, which is in the opinion of other developments, will be provided with the increase of economic development, and tries to establish economic hegemony in Central Asia by adopting the pragmatist method.

As a result; Although Russia and China have tried to develop their cooperation areas in the Central Asian region, the relations between the two countries are moving on delicate balances and they have the potential to create big problems in the future. Kazakhstan has the potential to spread to other areas, such as energy resources, energy routes, China's growing population, the CSTO and the struggle to achieve strategic superiority over the region. Considering all this, the study confirms that the cooperation between China and Russia will continue in the short and medium term, but it will not continue in the long term due to large conflicts of interest. Moreover, it is predicted that China will have a more rapid growth trend if the conflict areas between Russia and China are higher than the cooperation areas and the two countries are compared.

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