



China's Role in Central Asia: Access to Markets

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Abstract: President Xi Jinping's Central Asian journey in the fall of 2013 marked Beijing's first-ever (re)turn to Central Asia as a lynchpin of the Belt and Road Initiative's (BRI) globally ambitious "Silk Road Economic Belt". China's Belt and Road Initiative present Central Asia as a hub for cross-regional infrastructure development, trade and investment. China's Central Asian development goals, such as building oil and gas pipelines from Central Asia to carry energy all the way to China and expanding the Eurasian Railroad to move commodities from China's manufacturing bases in both coastal and inland regions to Europe and Central Asia. How the BRI can transform Central Asia's different national interests, constraints and opportunities. China appears to be in control of how the relative balance of possibilities and impediments for both sides and their bordering states and areas will play out. The enormous number of train lines bound for Europe via Central Asia, as well as a significant geo-economic force that pulls the Chinese economy's gravity westward within China, then pushes its influence in the new market.

Keywords: Central Asia, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Belt and Road Initiative, Infrastructure, Railway lines, Pipelines, Trade and Investment.

1. Introduction

The situation in Central Asia and the surrounding regions have seriously changed in the last few years. There is no doubt that the most significant changes were associated with large scale intensification of China's policy in the Western direction. This circumstance creates a new geopolitical reality in the region. In this new reality China is becoming a determining factor of change, altering the balance of power and becoming a serious challenge to other players in Central Asian political arena. First of all, the great powers – Russia and the U.S that have traditionally played significant role in the area. Their rivalry has been ongoing in the region since the mid- 1990s, largely determining the balance of power around Central Asia. At the same time many regional states (India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and others) and another group of countries (the European Union) were to greater or lesser degree involved in this competition. China was naturally an active participant in the region but mostly outside observer in the post-Soviet period. Beijing's priorities concerned its own economic development as well as the security of western borders (Duarte, 2018).

In 1960s and 1970s, the extensive common border between China and the Soviet Union turned into a confrontation line due to the tensions between the two countries. Both have been investing effort in military training, spending time and resources that could otherwise have been used for economic modernization. Therefore, the development

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of constructive, good-neighborly relations with adjacent countries is a strategic objective of China's foreign policy in Eurasia. In addition, important priorities for guaranteeing peace on the territory of China itself are the fight against terrorism and separatism (a typical example of such forces is the "East Turkistan Islamic Movement"), as well as ensuring stability in the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region. In this format, China is interested in Central Asia as, in the first place, a strategic rear (Wolters, 2018).

Since the beginning of the 2000s, the presence of China in the region has become increasingly marked, which resulted in the establishing of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) along with Russia and other states of the region. In fact, the SCO establishment was a compromise between Russia and China, based on common interests of preventing the extension of the influence of third parties to the Central Asian region that has always been strategically important for both states. In the meantime, with the Chinese influence in the region increased, which happened primarily through the SCO institutions (such as the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure and participation in joint exercises), but the Russian influence, of course, remained more significant (Tian, 2018).

In 2014, a large-scale conflict between Russia and the West over Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea began. As a result of this conflict, Moscow declared the "turning to the East" policy, referring primarily to China. This intention of Moscow coincided with the launch of China's new economic policy in the framework of the project of creating the so-called Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI refers to both the Maritime Silk Road (MSR) and Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB). In early 1980s, China once again opened to the world with the reforms of Deng Xiao Ping. China's increasing interaction with the world has been very evident recently especially throughout Eurasia, which China views as part of its BRI. China's leadership has been taking significant steps to reach out to the global community. Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang made more than 20 visits abroad to more than 50 states and meeting with almost 500 foreign leaders since the 18th Party Congress in 2012 (Sagi & Engelberth, 2018). The objectives of the BRI are to connect China with Asia, Africa and Europe. The focus of the SREB is;

1. To link China with Europe through Russia and Central Asia (Map 1).
2. China's connection with the Middle East through Central Asia (Map 2).
3. To connects China with Indian Ocean (Map 3).

At the same time, the focus of the 21st Century MSR is to use China's coastal ports:

1. China's link with Europe via South China Sea and India Ocean.
2. To link China with the South Pacific Ocean via South China Sea.

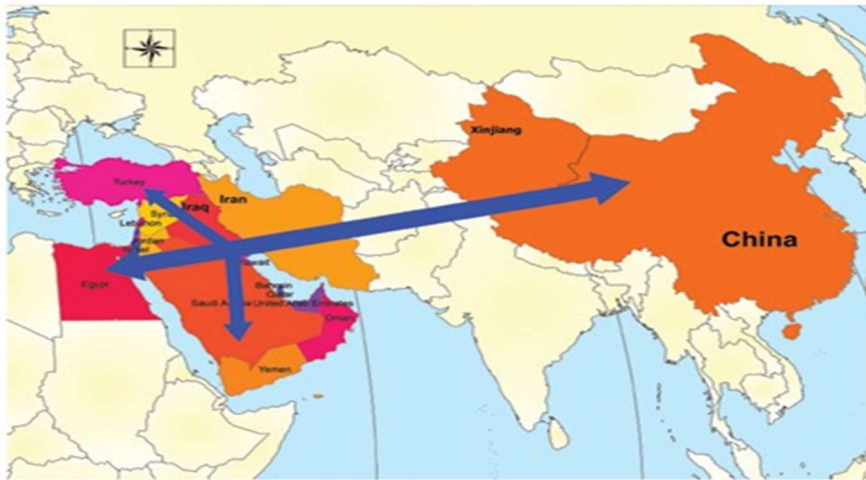
Map 1.



(Tharoor, 2014)

Map 2.

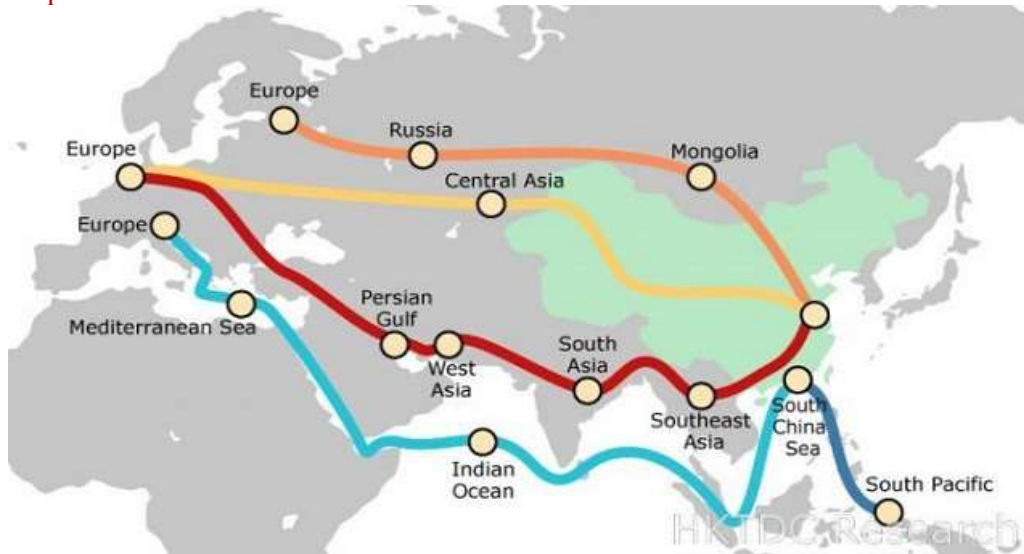
Map 1: The China-Middle East Connections



Source: Produced by Mustafa Ibraheem.

(Kazemi & Chen, 2014)

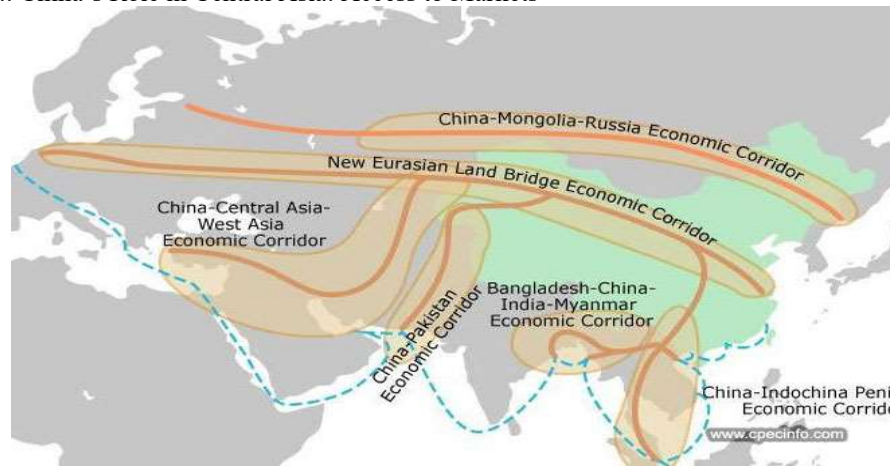
Map 3.



(Leroi, 2016)

The BRI will exploit existing global transport routes as well as strategic seaports and major cities to further strengthening cooperation and construct six international corridors for economic collaboration. These have been recognized as the CPEC, China-Mongolia-Russia, Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar, China-Indochina Peninsula, China-Central Asia-West Asia and New Eurasia Land Bridge (Map 4). According to Chinese perspectives, there are different mechanisms of regional economic cooperation and integration of Eurasia. They all have their own advantages and should be complementary to each other, and not in conflict with each other. Any integration initiative should not be self-contained. As a result, Central Eurasia should be the bridge between the EU and Asia-Pacific, and the close cooperation between Europe, Central Eurasia and the Asia-Pacific region will give a new impetus to the world economy. Actually, China offers a more open form of cooperation for the central mainland of Eurasia, which directly corresponds to its interests. It is obvious that the possible costs such as, for example, partial loss of domestic markets due to the growth of Chinese imports, may be to a certain extent compensated for by infrastructure projects, which should lead to an increase in intercontinental trade (Cau, 2018).

Map 4.



(Korybko, 2017)

The New Eurasia Land Bridge is an intercontinental railway track that runs from Lianyungang in Jiangsu Province, China, through Xinjiang autonomous region to Rotterdam in the Netherlands. The Chinese part of the line includes the Lanzhou-Xinjiang and Lanzhou-Lianyungang Railroad running through western, central and eastern China. After leaving China, the new land bridge reached some coastal ports in Europe through Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus and Poland. China has opened intercontinental cargo railways, the New Eurasia Land Bridge connecting Chongqing (China) with Duisburg of Germany; undeviating cargo trains between Melnik of Czech Republic and Wuhan of China; a cargo railway line from Chengdu (China) to Lodz (Poland); and a cargo railway line from Zhengzhou (China) to Hamburg (Germany). All of these new railway lines not only provide rail to rail cargo services, but also provide the convenience of a single declaration, inspection and cargo discharge for every cargo shipped (Cai, 2017).

The basis of the SREB Initiative accurately reflects the strategic direction of China's peripheral policies since 1991, in which Central Asian Republics (CARs) will assume the main role as a hub of transportation and China will be capable to establish beneficial bilateral affairs and collaboration with all CARs. Since the freedom of the five CARs (Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan) in 1991, China started periphery policy; the strategy of 'Zhubian Zhengce' – aimed for investigating common interests with new neighboring states in the security and economic fields, to establish friendly relationship with them in a modified geo-political situation. Regardless of whether Russia seeks to preserve its traditional impact in post-Soviet Central Asia. In order to ensure regional stability and national security, China is worried that the establishment of an independent republics close to its western border may promote the Uighur people in Xinjiang to support pro-independence tendency and demand freedom from China because of their cultural, ethnic and religious ties with the people of CARs (Jochec & Kyzy, 2018).

The BRI addresses both China's internal problems and its major strategic priorities. A serious concern is China's hold on its main border areas, such as Tibet and Xinjiang autonomous regions. As the influence of the U.S and Russia in Central Asia decreased relatively, China has gained a strategic opportunity for its expansion. Therefore, local state-building and geopolitics tasks are combined with the Eurasian pivot in Beijing. The BRI is to some extent China's reaction to the 'rebalance' or 'pivot' to Asia under the U.S President Barack Obama and to the relative decline of Russia in Central Asia. The BRI is not only an excellent chance for China to further open up and transformation, it also can be used to gain greater social and economic benefits for all states across the BRI by opening up to each other. The economic corridors support to create an effective and uninterrupted Eurasian market and to generate opportunities for the improvement of the "hinterland" of Eurasia (Konings, 2018).

The development of economic and political relations with the CARs, so as to enhance relationships with new borders and develop trade and economic relations with them, as a sort of geo-economic strategy that guarantee the regional stability and security. China mostly established bilateral relations with border states Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, and have resolved the border disputes that had been inherited since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the economies of China and Central Asia are complementary, China's imports minerals, iron, non-ferrous metals and energy in a raw forms. The Central Asian economies that imports Chinese finished goods and consumer products, and provides a broad and alternate market for the land-locked region of Central Asia (Amighini, 2017).

China has been a petroleum importing state since 1993, Beijing can further promote the geographical diversification of energy imports from these states, so it is necessary for China to control oil and gas in Central Asia

as to enhance its energy security. After the inauguration of the geopolitical scheme SREB in 2013, China adopted a comprehensive strategy approach to expand its influence in CARs with the aim of protecting its trade and energy interests and responding to Russia's efforts to curb the expanding power of Beijing in the region. The SREB program envisages the creation of an integrated transport network that includes airways, highways, railways, gas and oil pipelines, power lines, and digital communications infrastructure (Digital Silk Road). Which will pass through CARs that supports China to strengthen its financial integration with the Europe. The core objective was to develop the Eurasian economic corridor by means of 'transport infrastructure diplomacy', monetary collaboration and liberalization of trade — that could contribute to the further development of Central Asian economies and integrating them with the Asian and European markets (Hurley, Morris, & Portelance, 2018).

It is important to emphasize that one of the basic components of the SREB approach is its comprehensive nature. On the other side the initiatives supported by Russia — the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) — all CARs are involved in the Silk Road scheme. Even Turkmenistan, which gradually became the China's key energy partner. For the CARs, the SREB project seems to be more appealing than the EAEU. This is mainly because China's initiative is without imposing membership, nor is it an organization, but an investment plan to promote infrastructure development that can help to the land locked CARs with the international economy. Despite, the EAEU seems to be a strict organization, and Russia frequently recommends to transform it to integrate foreign policy with a single currency into a transnational political organization (Kolpakova & Kuchinskaya, 2015). This idea raises the concerns of CARs and makes China's project more attractive. In addition, Chinese activity in this area has led the CARs to curb Russia's goals in the post-Soviet region, after the relocation of NATO troops from the region, especially from Afghanistan. Strengthening economic collaboration and the execution of China's strategic partnership with CARs have dishonored the Russian EAEU in the field of economics.

In addition, balancing the interests of China and Russia in the region has enabled CARs to gain strategic advantages through multidimensional approach in the foreign policy. The involvement of the CARs in the project of SREB is strategic for different reasons, CARs have been heavily invested in the development of the national infrastructures and linking them inside the Eurasian economic regime. In addition, as transit states between Europe and China they will profit from beneficial transit payments (Indeo, 2017).

The Eurasian trade corridor supported by China and the arranged transport courses from East Asia to Europe will cross China's Xinjiang and after that must cross Kazakhstan or Russia. There are currently eight China-Europe railways operating normally, two of which depart from Manzhouli, China, and travel to Europe via Russia. The remaining six routes depart from Alatau Pass in Xinjiang and cross Russia and Kazakhstan. The port of Aktau in Kazakhstan and the port of Turkmenbashi in Turkmenistan will be connected to the New Baku International Sea Trade Port (NBIST), then connect to Turkey and Europe, to diversify trade corridors and to open alternate route. The Trans-Caspian Sea International Transportation Route (TITR) was launched in August 2015, the Nomad Express transporting goods from Shihezi, China arrived in Baku through Aktau port (Sagi & Engelberth, 2018).

The incorporation of CARs in the Silk Road project also increases the value of their exports, overcome structural barriers related to their status as landlocked states and make it possible to enter the international markets. In addition, the southern railway line from China to Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran and the Persian Gulf, contributing to the diversification of China's transportation routes and developing new markets for exports of Central Asia. The implementation of these schemes obviously emphasizes the job of the region of Central Asia as a transit zone that is fundamental to the achievement of the SREB project. Specifically, the Sino-Kazakh boundary seems to be a strategic doorway to improve the potential of SREB. Many of the cities in Xinjiang — Alatau, Kashgar and Horgos — bordering CARs have been changed into economic zones of free trade and are the largest land ports along the SREB. The trans-continental highway that crosses Kazakhstan from Lianyungang Port to Russia's St. Petersburg. The Lianyungang Port's logistics terminal was jointly constructed by China and Kazakhstan and it transports the products of Central Asia to foreign markets (Bizhanova, 2018).

It is clear that the Silk Road concept and China's involvement in CARs can be seen as a critical geopolitical problem for the Russian integration schemes. The achievement of the China's approach is gradually decreasing Russian impact in the post-Soviet region. Since 2010, it has lost the status of a semi-monopoly in energy exports of Central Asia. China has gradually turned into the major trading partner for all CARs, abolishing Russia's traditional role in the region. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, in 2015 for the first time Russia lost its status as the highest trading partnership with Uzbekistan. In addition, in comparison with Russia, China has fulfilled its commitment to invest in Central Asia and provide loans and to finance the construction of major infrastructures. It contributes to the development of internal links, the promotion of an integrated regional market and the shipment of

Even before the inauguration of the SREB, Beijing offered financial support to CARs. In 2009, Beijing provided a \$10 billion loans to the SCO to help CARs alleviate the impacts of the financial crisis and provided an additional \$10 billion loans in 2012 (Duarte, 2018). In September 2013, President Xi Jinping's visited CARs, trade and energy collaboration between CARs and China was further strengthened. President Xi advanced the SREB idea and marked an expected investment of 48 billion US dollars loan agreements focused on infrastructure, trade and energy (3 billion US dollars with Kyrgyzstan, 30 billion US dollars with Kazakhstan, 15 billion US dollars with Uzbekistan and an unrevealed amounts with Turkmenistan) (Indeo, 2017). China proclaimed the establishment of the 40 billion US dollars Silk Road Fund in November 2014, aimed to promote the construction of transports infrastructural projects fully sponsored by China. The Energy Development Fund is a mutual funds open for international investors, is designed to focus on infrastructure of energy transportation along the land and sea routes of the Silk Road. China have a compelling tools of energy and economic development for the development of the BRI, in accordance with the Charter of the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) (Boros, 2018).

In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, China has funded the advancement of road infrastructure and provided loans for their construction. In Tajikistan, with the help of a 900 million US dollars loan, Chinese firms are constructing highways connecting Dushanbe with other main cities (Wolters, 2018). In Kyrgyzstan, China has put resources in the construction of the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railroad (which will be connected to the ports of Turkmenbashi and Baku), which will enter Andijan in Uzbekistan from Kashgar, Xinjiang, through Kara-Suu and Torugart in Kyrgyzstan and then arrived in Europe through Afghanistan, Iran, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan and Turkey (Lu & Rohr, 2018).

Uzbekistan benefited from China's investments in 2015 and launched the Angren-Pap railroad, a strategically important infrastructure for Uzbekistan. This is a main element of the geopolitical strategy of BRI, which is significant for China due to Angren-Pap railway as it can link the entire national railroad of Uzbekistan. In recent years, China has effectively marked strategic partnerships with five CARs to strengthen trade and economic collaboration as well as military and political collaboration. The strategic alliance between China and Uzbekistan has important geopolitical effect to deter Russia's regional integration projects. Beijing and Tashkent in a joint declaration marked an agreement of Friendship and Cooperation, to strengthen strategic partnership and bilateral relationship. Which expressed that the two states will not participate or enter into any blocs or alliances that may undermine other states territorial integrity, security and sovereignty (Exnerova, 2018).

The Beijing and Astana strategic partnership is the extreme risky activity aimed at diverting Russia's desires to support integration plans in the area, especially considering that Astana (capital of Kazakhstan) is one of the founding members of the EAEU. This strategic partnership involves various areas to improved collaboration such as working together to combat terrorism and security cooperation, development of energy infrastructure, expanding exports of uranium and hydrocarbons resources to China, and bilateral trade enhancement. In addition, the Chinese and Kazakh presidents have decided to incorporate the SREB with the new financial policy of Kazakhstan, called the Bright Road, emphasizing that the two projects are interrelated, concentrated on infrastructure advancements (Callahan, 2016). This kind of strategic partnership demonstrates a strong collaboration between them. Kazakhstan clearly intends to pursue free multi-directional foreign policy, despite of its membership in the EAEU, which challenges the influence of the Russian approach towards the post-Soviet space (Kurbanov, 2018).

Strong energy link between China and Central Asia reflected by the cross-border energy links demonstrate that how the various strategies of development and commitment at the regional and global level of China are encouraged by its internal political and financial circumstances. In the past 30 years, the steady growth of the Chinese economy has produced great demand for imported energy and which has totally changed the equation of global demand and supply. In China, the huge industrial machinery and mega cities have been in operation using a huge amount of coal, oil and natural gas historically unparalleled. Beijing has also significantly increased natural gas utilization. Therefore, China has turned into world's largest energy buyer within last two decades and currently accounts for nearly 20% of the total energy consumption in the world (Blanchard & Flint, 2017)

In 2011, the Middle East (M.E), with Iran, delivered 2.6 million barrels per day (51%) to China, Asia-Pacific region 173,000 barrels per day (3%), Africa in the amount of 1.2 million barrels per day (24%), and others countries 1.1 million barrels per day (22%) (Sadiq, 2016). China relies seriously on many states in Africa and M.E, which are not politically stable. In order to improve this dependency, China has started diversification of global energy supply by financing the construction of Chinese pipelines in Central Asia and Myanmar. In the meantime, China's energy policy in Central Asia has become very important because of relative regional stability and its abundant natural gas and oil reserves. Central Asia represents around 4% of the world's energy reserves. There are two principal reasons,

China has swung to CARs for energy supply. In addition to obtaining more nearer and stable energy resources, China also hopes to actively strive for energy security through the development of energy diplomacy with the area. Besides, the development of close links with CARs through the energy alliance helps China to curb the threats of separatist in Uyghur autonomous region in China. Chinese has repositioned the military in Xinjiang to protect its oil fields assumed the western border of 3300 km with Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan (Kurbanov, 2018).

The origins of the relations between CARs and China dates back to the era of Silk Road. China and CARs have established diplomatic relations since 1991. The trade volume between CARs and China increased from 750 million U.S. dollars in 1990s to 30 billion U.S. dollars in 2016 (Stronski, 2018). China has tried to set up a free trade zone in Central Asia in order to get a hold over the huge energy resources of the region. Currently, China's main energy companies in the region are Petro China, Chemical Corporation and China Petroleum, National Oil Offshore Corporation China, and CNPC (China National Petroleum Corporation). They aligned with local corporations to contest with multinational companies like BP, ExxonMobile, Chevron, and traditional actor such as Russia in the extraction and exploration of gas and oil. CNPC has given several benefits to this partnership from the extraction and exploration of gas and oil like service teams, technical support and specialized engineering (Bedeski & Swanstrom, 2012).

Supplies of oil and gas from Central Asia play an important role in ensuring China's energy security. For China, Kazakhstan's oil is a source to diversify its energy resources as well as alternate energy land route, taking into account that more than 80% of China's oil imports are supplied through tankers. Another important feature of energy cooperation between China and Kazakhstan is that Beijing is the major buyer of uranium in Kazakhstan. In 2005, China and Kazakhstan signed an energy cooperation agreement, which is one of the most important pillars in the context of bilateral partnership including deep commerce and trade relations as well as strong diplomatic and political relations (Bedeski & Swanstrom, 2012).

The establishment of the pipeline of Atyrau-Arashankou, which links Chinese markets with the oil fields in Caspian Sea through Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. For the government of Kazakhstan, the Atyrau-Arashankou pipeline, currently producing 400,000 barrels of oil a day (Javaid & Rashid, 2015). This pipeline is a strategic corridor for the Kazakh government that allows effective diversification of export routes. The Atyrau-Alashankou land-based oil pipeline that does not pass through Russia — not like the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) and Atyrau-Samara pipelines from oil field of Tengiz in Kazakhstan to the Novorossiysk port of Russia in Black Sea. The oil exports from Kazakhstan through the pipeline of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) are carried out from the port of Aktau in Kazakhstan to the port of Azerbaijan in Baku by oil tanker over the Caspian Sea. The CNPC invests billions of dollars in the energy sector of Kazakhstan, getting exploration contracts in key areas, as well as providing modern equipment's (Bizhanova, 2018).

After the visit of President Xi Jinping to CARs in September 2013, China has secured a share of 8.3% stake in the North Caspian Operational Company to develop the huge oil field in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan and China aims to construct a new pipeline in parallel with the existing oil pipeline to increase the production of the Caspian oil field to the Chinese markets, thereby enhancing its energy security. Turkmenistan is the key partner of China in the gas field of Central Asia. China imported almost half of the imported natural gas from Turkmenistan's natural gas (27.7 bcm) in 2015 (Konings, 2018). In 2009, the development of the CACP (Central Asia-China Pipeline) became a strategic factor in energy cooperation between China and Turkmenistan. The pipeline passes through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, which ends the Russia's traditional monopoly on the exports of Turkmen gas. As per assessments of British Petroleum (B.P), that Turkmenistan has the world's fourth largest natural gas reserves (17.5 tcm). China became the major investor in the development of gas fields in Turkmenistan (Javaid & Rashid, 2015).

China has invested 4 billion U.S. dollars in the past few years, to develop the gas field of Bagtyyarlyk (estimated reserves of 1.3 trillion cubic meters) — a major source of Central Asia-China gas pipeline (Javaid & Rashid, 2015). The investment indicates a magnificent achievement in energy foreign policy of China. The China's CNPC is the only national corporation that has signed a production sharing agreement with promising land based gas fields, which is easier to calculate gas reserves than the offshore gas field in the Caspian Sea. Accordingly, China has invested 8 billion U.S. dollars in the first stage of production to develop the huge Galkynysh gas field in Turkmenistan, and funded the unidentified amounts for the second stage. When President Xi visited Turkmenistan in September 2013, the strategic partnership between China and Turkmenistan was strengthened with the new natural gas pipelines and allowing the expansion of Turkmenistan's gas exports to China (Wolters, 2018).

At present, the Central Asia-China gas pipeline consists of three lines (A, B and C) with a total capacity of 55 bcms per year. After several rounds of negotiations and feasibility studies, China and Turkmenistan reached a consensus on China's long-term natural gas supply framework in 2006. The first pipeline (line A) was completed in 2009 and

the second pipeline (line B) completed in 2010. After two years of construction, the third pipeline (line C) became operational in 2015 (Aliyeva, 2019). The expected implementation of line D, which passes through Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan – will enable China to incorporate all CARs in its network of natural gas pipelines including transit and suppliers' states (Map 5). However, at this time, the interesting model of this regional energy collaboration is facing an unpredicted obstacle as the pipeline segment of Uzbekistan was interrupted and the segment of Kyrgyzstan was delayed (Aliyeva, 2019). Both states provided technical explanations, even if the major motive is an attempt to force Beijing to increase its funds for the full construction of the infrastructure. The enhancement of the Eurasian trade corridor must need the essential requirements for security and political stability. Currently, Afghanistan and Central Asia seem incapable and vulnerable to counter the serious threats posed by Islamist uprising and global terrorism. These threats may spread on the common borders, extremely influence the western region of China that may promote the creation of safe headquarters for foreign terrorists and Uighurs separatists (Exnerova, 2018).

Map 5.



(Kohler, 2016).

Geographically Xinjiang is situated in a strategic location as an important gateway for commerce and trade affairs as well as for the imports of oil and gas from Central Asia. It plays a significant role in the SREB and linking China with the European markets. From Chinese point of view, the security aspect is closely linked to development and economic problems. Central Asia's economic development will improve the stability of the surrounding regions and China due to close trade relations with the CARs will guarantee prosperity and to prevent political insecurity and spreading to Western territory. However, China worries that financial support and economic interference for CARs may not be enough to stop explosive crises in order to influence border security, which may have a dangerous effect on trade and energy corridors. China's involvement in the regional security affairs is directly connected to the strategic interests of China. Beijing needs military cooperation with CARs because it is necessary to ensure high-cost investments in transportation and energy infrastructure of Central Asia. In addition, this new direction may also depend on a modification of its foreign policy approach based on the philosophy of non-interference and non-intervention in internal affairs (Bizhanova, 2018).

Meanwhile, the SCO can become a major regional security system that allows China to maintain stability in CARs and its frontiers, even if China favors the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) as a free trade zone for economic development. Likewise, Russia seems to be the major security provider of CARs, engaged in bilateral military collaboration and the activities of the CSTO. In terms of military collaboration with the CARs, China in term of military influence cannot contest with Russia in the region because China have not a single military base in the area, because of strong opposition from public opinion in Central Asia, fearing that China may have expansion in its territories (Tian, 2016).

The contemporary geopolitical scenario hinders the development of China's military bases in CARs. As a member states of CSTO such as Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan Cannot accommodate foreign military installations in their own land without the approval of all other partners of the CSTO. Similarly, Russia can easily veto any future negotiations on the establishment of the Chinese military installations in Central Asia. In 2012, Uzbekistan

withdrew from CSTO. According to present foreign policy of Uzbekistan, which refused to participate in any military bloc and to deploy foreign military bases in its soil (Tian, 2018). This approach ruled out the chances of Chinese military installations. The establishment of a military installation in Turkmenistan (not a member of CSTO), which can be the most suitable option for China to protect its energy interests in the region. To consider the significance of Turkmenistan's natural gas supply for internal energy security, but this major geopolitical change needs to rethink the deep-rooted neutrality in the foreign policy of Turkmenistan, with this action the regional security will dramatically reshape the chessboard (Tian, 2018).

China has conducted bilateral military collaboration with CARs; however China has focused on neighboring Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan as these states are on the border of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China. China provides millions of dollars of military equipment's and assistance were provided to maintain their security and prevent instability (Kolpakova & Kuchinskaya, 2015). According to China's perspective, the military collaboration with Tajikistan aims to ensure stability and security of the Sino-Tajik border and to avoid the possibility of invasion by terrorists and militants from Afghanistan because the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan is poorly patrolled. In 2016, China and Tajikistan participated in five days counter-terrorism drills in the Sholshim region of Tajikistan bordering Afghanistan (Callahan, 2016). As the SREB initiative grew the significance of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, not only did China strengthen military collaboration with them. China would have provided advanced air defense systems to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, which allowed them to reduce the role of Russia as a major supplier of military equipment to CARs (Tian, 2016).

In a nutshell, the history of the world politics is characterized by the gradual rise and fall of various powers. In recent years, China has shown great achievements in the economy and played an important role in the economic and political fields of the surrounding regions. The growing Chinese influence in CARs seems to be unstoppable. Such as economy, energy, infrastructures, culture and security issues; there is nothing to possibly escape from the influence of the 'Middle Kingdom'. The growing Chinese influence in the region seems to be unavoidable and indicating a serious geopolitical concern for Russia (Bedeski & Swanstrom, 2012). Furthermore, Russia and China are equally worried that CARs will fall under the military, economic and political power of the USA. Even if there is an economic basis for BRI, Beijing aims to achieve geopolitical and energy goals in a safe and stable environment. These interconnected aspects support China's objectives to expand its influence in CARs. The massive investment in the development of transport and energy infrastructure in CARs means that Beijing is trying to change the region in accordance with its strategic requirements. According to Chinese perspective, CARs represent the land-based energy and trade corridor, enabling China to diversify its trade and energy routes and decrease the significance of maritime corridors. Despite the joint statement on the Cooperation of Coordination of BRI and EAEU, which President Xi and President Putin signed in May 2015 to establish a "common economic space" in Eurasia. Moscow and Beijing are aspired to attain contradictory and conflicting goals, which makes it challenging to form a common framework for collaboration in CARs or reaching an agreement on the separation of functions — Beijing in the economic sphere and Moscow in the field of security — because both of the benchmark strategies are focused on the economy.

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