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ФЕДЕРАЛЬНОЕ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЕ АВТОНОМНОЕ ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНОЕ УЧРЕЖДЕНИЕ ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ «МОСКОВСКИЙ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ ИНСТИТУТ МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ (УНИВЕРСИТЕТ) МИНИСТЕРСТВА ИНОСТРАННЫХ ДЕЛ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ»

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INTRODUCTION

Consideration of the system of international relations through the concept of balance of power implies its assessment through two parameters: the number of poles (unipolar world, bipolar world and multipolar world) and the relationship between/among these states. Current global trends regarded through the balancing power structure demonstrate that the world is in the midst of a systemic transition from unipolarity to multipolarity following the rise of China as the US' chief challenger all across the world.

The US-Chinese competition and the transition from unipolarity to multipolarity has naturally seen other players ascending to increased international prominence as well. The EU, the ASEAN states, Turkey, India, and Japan are the main ones with significant regional -- and in some cases, trans-regional and even hemispheric -- reach, while others are endeavoring to find their place in the evolving world order.

The research is focused on the Russian “balancing” strategy in the emerging Multipolar World Order which presumably can be efficiently realized inter alia through strengthening its ties with Pakistan. The study conducted is a form of an academic analysis of global trends with a strong connection to the special case of the Russian-Pakistani possible strategic partnership which is reflected in the title of the work.

Russia's contemporary foreign policy in the emerging Multipolar World Order can best be described as "balancing", whereby Moscow seeks to manage multiple sets of oftentimes competing partnerships (Armenia & Azerbaijan, Syria & Turkey, Iran & Saudi Arabia, China & India, China & Vietnam) in order to retain stability within those triangles for the purpose of encouraging political resolutions to their bilateral disputes while simultaneously receiving tangible economic benefits for its services. This approach is modeled off of the Neo-Realistic paradigm of International Relations and prioritizes pragmatism over ideological or other factors in order to position Russia as the supreme "balancing" force in Eurasia, a much-needed role for stabilizing the supercontinent during this ongoing systemic transition and the resultant friction that's occurring in this part of the world

between the American and Chinese models of global leadership. Although not generally recognized by most observers, South Asia -- because of CPEC's grand strategic significance for China's long-term plans through the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) and the US-encouraged pushback that it is receiving in this respect from India -- has arguably become the geopolitical focal point of the New Cold War, and it is therefore imperative for Russia to play a "balancing" role there through the intensification of its relations with Pakistan.

Pakistan is one such country that stands a credible chance of becoming a key player in the coming future. Its enormous population of over 200 million makes it one of the most populous countries on the planet, and it is also just one of a handful of states with nuclear weapons. Although its economy has never been too impressive, China believes enough in its future potential to have invested over $60 billion[1] in it through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is BRI's flagship project. Seeing as how the New Silk Roads are the engine of China's efforts to transform International Relations towards what its leaders describe as a "community of shared future for mankind"[2] (also described as a "community of common destiny"), this endows Pakistan with unprecedented opportunities to leverage its irreplaceable geostrategic position through CPEC and related projects in order to become more significant of a regional -- and perhaps even one day a hemispheric -- player than ever.

CPEC, however, is not without its controversies, since neighboring India claims that the project transits through disputed territory that it claims as its own through its maximalist approach to the Kashmir Conflict[3], which has created friction between China and its fellow partner in the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) framework and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) that the US is eager to exploit in order to

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[1] Total Investment under CPEC Rises to $60b [Electronic resource] // Radio Pakistan. 2017. 29 November. Mode of access: http://www.radio.gov.pk/28-11-2017/total-investment-under-cpec-rises-to-60b-sartaj.

[2] Xi Meets Pakistani PM, Calls for Forging Closer Community of Shared Future [Electronic resource] // Xinhua. 2019. 9 October. Mode of access: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-10/09/c_138458823.htm.

[3] Bhattacherjee K. India Asks China, Pakistan to End Activities Related to CPEC in PoK [Electronic resource] // The Hindu. 2019. 10 September. Mode of access: https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/china-pakistan-economic-corridor-is-on-our-territory-india/article29382571.ece.

encourage New Delhi to act as its proxy for "containing" China in the New Cold War (the competition between the US and China over the future of the contemporary global system) the same way as it once used China for this same purpose vis-a-vis the USSR during the Old Cold War. China cannot enact any "compromises" on CPEC after investing so much in it already because the project's importance transcends simple economic dimensions and enters strategic ones since it provides the People's Republic with its only reliable non-Malacca access route to the Afro-Asian ("Indian") Ocean free of the US Navy's control over that aforesaid chokepoint and the increasingly militarized South China Sea. The resultant security dilemma that this has created runs the risk of dividing multipolar organizations such as BRICS and the SCO and therefore creating strategic openings for the US to exploit as part of its global competition to undermine its main rival. As circumstances would have it, however, Russia is uniquely positioned to restore balance between all actors and help midwife multipolarity.

Relevancy. The thesis is relevant for several reasons.

Firstly, the world order is transitioning away from unipolarity and towards a multipolar system[4], and this process deserves to be thoroughly analyzed. Systematic study of the process, its essence and its specific characteristics will create a wider understanding of the most effective strategy of maintaining peace and stability in the near future.

Secondly, in a period of change it is of high importance for any state to secure the most strategically advantageous position for itself. Russia has a lot of ambition but only limited means to achieve its grand strategic goals, hence why it is been cost-effectively exploiting the US' missteps across Eurasia for over the past decade in order to advance its interests there. Through the means of this study it is possible to obtain a better appreciation of its current strategy and the prospects that it has for continuing to practice it in the future. As it currently stands, Russia is arguably trying to "balance" between competing pairs of

[4] Khan S. Transition from Unipolar to a Multipolar World: Implications for Pakistan’s Foreign Policy [Electronic resource] // ISSRA Papers 2016. P. 149–164. Mode of access: https://ndu.edu.pk/issra/issra_pub/articles/issra-paper/ISSRA_Papers_Vol8_IssueI_2016/08_RA_Qurat.pdf.

countries[5], especially China and India, not wanting to take sides in any state-to-state dispute and eager to enter into excellent terms with all players. This is admittedly difficult to pull off indefinitely and will require regular readjustments if it is meant to become the guiding precept of Russian foreign policy across the 21st century, though it is entirely realistic for this to happen as long as this vision can be understood in its proper global context in order to inform decision makers of the best way for it to be practiced in the current and most likely future contexts.

Without understanding the most important facets of the ongoing global systemic transition, Russia will be unable to take maximum advantage of this, thus leading to lost opportunities, or even worse, crucial mistakes such as committing too much to one partner and therefore becoming a partisan player in certain disputes when it would otherwise have done better to "balance". The New Cold War is not just about the US and China, though they're the leading actors, but also involves India because of its attempt to at least officially "multi-align"[6] between both of them and Russia at the same time. This unique dynamic is not replicated among any other group of Great Powers anywhere in the world and thus makes this quartet among the most important in determining the direction of the emerging Multipolar World Order. In addition, each of them has crucial interests vis-a-vis Pakistan, albeit to different extents, thus making it more of a quintet by default.

Thirdly, while Russia's relations with the US, China, and India have been extensively studied by scores of researchers, little work has been done covering the contemporary and future state of relations between Russia and Pakistan. The study of bilateral relations between Moscow and Islamabad in the context of world system transit is of high relevance, since Pakistan plays an irreplaceable role in China's global leadership plans by virtue of CPEC being BRI's flagship project and the resultant security dilemma that this project has caused between China and India, both of which are Russia's BRICS and SCO partners.

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[5] Trenin D. it is Time to Rethink Russia’s Foreign Policy Strategy [Electronic resource] // Carnegie Moscow Center. 2019. 25 April. Mode of access: https://carnegie.ru/commentary/78990.

[6] Mishra M. K. India’s Shift toward Multi-Alignment [Electronic resource] // Asia Times. 2019. 13 May. Mode of access: https://www.asiatimes.com/2019/05/opinion/indias-shift-toward-multi-alignment/.

India's drift towards the US in the New Cold War is worrying precisely because it so closely resembles China's own towards the same in the Old Cold War. Unlike then, however, Russia is no longer the object of this triangulation, though it nevertheless can insert itself into the process directly or indirectly in order to influence its outcome and ideally prevent an exacerbation of tensions between its two institutional partners.

For that to happen, Russia must first of all accept that its influence over India has dwindled over the past three decades and that the US comparatively exerts much stronger pull nowadays. Therefore, the Primakov-inspired vision of "balancing"[7] together with China and India against the US might no longer be as sufficient as before for meeting all of Moscow's grand strategic needs because it is proven itself unsuccessful in preventing India from moving closer to the US in pursuit of their joint "containment" strategies against China. What's arguably needed at this time is a creative modification of the existing policy that results in Russia regarding its relations with Pakistan as having the potential to break the proverbial deadlock between the four Great Powers and therefore turning this under-explored bilateral partnership into the grand strategic kingmaker that totally changes the existing paradigm by revolutionizing the balance of interests in this geographically central part of the Eastern Hemisphere. This will be elaborated on more throughout the thesis, particularly with reference to some Russian experts' insight into Primakov's thinking and how it could evolve in light of changing circumstances over the past two decades.

Russian-Pakistani relations are gradually growing into a strategic partnership following their diplomatic cooperation in Afghanistan, their fledgling arms trade, discussions about a trans-Afghan commercial corridor[8], and possible energy deals between the two[9], but a lot more has to happen in order for them to begin confidently coordinating their policies with

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[7] Novikov D. The Knight of Russian Realism [Electronic resource] // Russia In Global Affairs. 2017. No.1. Mode of access: https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/The-Knight-of-Russian-Realism-18581.

[8] Kerimkhanov A. Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Pakistan to Create Financial Consortium for New Railway [Electronic resource] // AzerNews. 2018. 7 December. Mode of access: https://www.azernews.az/region/142250.html.

[9] Pakistan, Russia Sign MoU for $10b Gas Pipeline from Iran [Electronic resource] // Daily Pakistan. 2018. 28 September. Mode of access: https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/headline/pakistan-russia-set-to-sign-10-billion-gas-pipeline-deal-in-moscow/.

a view to the aforementioned end. Even so, that same end is not a definite one, but an indefinite period of "balancing" back and forth in order to influence the balance of interests in such a way that Eurasian stability is not disrupted by developments that would otherwise remain beyond Russia's control in the US-Chinese-Indian triangle[10]. This means that there will be certain limits to how far and fast Russia and Pakistan can go in this respect, as well as the timing of certain decisions, and it is very possible that Russia might use the selective improvement of certain aspects of its relationship with Pakistan as "bait" to get India to reconsider its closeness to the US just like Pakistan might do the same with Russia to get the US to reconsider its closeness to India.

There are many scenarios through which this dynamically promising and forward-looking partnership could play out, which is why it is so urgent that a comprehensive scientific study be commenced for analyzing all of the opportunities and obstacles at play. Russia and Pakistan are in similar positions relative to China's BRI plans, the first being the transit route for the New Eurasian Land Bridge[11] while the second plays that role for CPEC, so their tacit coordination in an economic sense could possibly even help them clinch better Silk Road deals from the People's Republic, to say nothing of the aforementioned balancing between that country, India, and the US in the larger region. In addition, Pakistan is destined to play a more prominent role in Central Asia after peace eventually returns to Afghanistan, so it is important for Russia to become more familiar with it and its long-term geostrategic vision in order to harmonize their outlooks and ensure that this new foreign policy horizon is mutually beneficial for both in the bilateral sense but also the multilateral one relating to Central Asia as well.

***Novelty*.** The emerging Multipolar World is a contemporary trend which is analyzed not only as a global phenomena but as the context of the formation of the Russian foreign policy strategy, in particular through building a strategic partnership with Pakistan. The

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[10] Iwashita A. Primakov Redux? Russia and the ‘Strategic Triangles’ in Asia // Iwashita A. Eager Eyes Fixed on Eurasia. Vol. 1 Russia and Its Neighbors in Crisis. Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2007. P. 165-194.

[11] Backgrounder: Economic Corridors under Belt and Road Initiative [Electronic resource] // Xinhua. 2017. 9 May. Mode of access: http://www.xinhuanet.com//english/2017-05/09/c_136268314.htm.

Russian-Pakistani relations have historically been under-explored by experts in both countries but also third-party ones too, except perhaps during the 1980s Afghan War when they became heated rivals of one another in that conflict. A lot of time has passed since then, however, and the Pakistan of today is not the same as the one of the 1980s under General Zia, just like the Russia of today jointis not the same as the Soviet Union under Gorbachev. Both countries need to reassess their bilateral relations in the contemporary context, especially considering the rapid changes taking place in the international system that affect each of them in powerful ways. Although there has been some recent work on this, particularly the Moscow-based Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies' (CAST) book "Pakistan: Beyond Stereotypes"[12]. This impressive piece nonetheless did not analyze bilateral relations in the same context as the thesis.

So the ***novelty*** of the work is that the beginning of the multipolar era is examined through the lens of Russian strategic interests. The author proposes the unique balancing strategy realization path - through the development of Russian-Pakistani relations in order to revolutionize the balance of interests between Russia, China, India, and the US quartet with an aim to retain state-to-state stability in Eurasia through the formation of a new quintet involving Pakistan as an equal player. In fact, even the very notion of multipolar balancing is extremely new and not universally accepted by Russian experts, so the research is entirely unique in that regard because it covers several enormously wide topics that are of pressing interest for policymakers and observers alike. Such research is the need of the hour as International Relations become much more complex than at any time in recent memory, made even more so by Russia's newfound approach of cooperating with non-traditional partners in areas of shared interest.

To summarize, the dissertation employs a new methodology for investigating Russian-Pakistani relations, and it also does so in a new context too: contemporary international politics, the global systemic transition, and the growing popularity of balancing/hedging

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[12] Пакистан: за рамками стереотипов / под ред. Т.И. Борисова, К.В. Матвиенко. М.: Центр анализа стратегий и Технологий, 2019. 208 с.

strategies against these backdrops. New paradigms of analysis are also utilized, namely the attempt to pair Russia's Greater Eurasian Partnership with what the dissertation's author argues is Pakistan's N-CPEC+ policy for comprehensively expanding its connectivity with the former Soviet Republics, which includes the Central Asian ones as well as Russia of course. In fact, that aforesaid observation about Pakistani policy isn't even universally acknowledged by the expert community.

Another novelty of the work is that it reinforces the notion that mutually beneficial relations can indeed be pioneered between pairs of non-traditional partners like Russia and Pakistan so long as the political will is present by both sides upon them obtaining a proper understanding of how their objective interests converge. This is an emerging development intricately connected with the philosophy that drives Russia's Greater Eurasian Partnership and has thus far been tested to varying degrees of success with other non-traditional partners like China, Germany, Iran, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey up until this point. Pakistan is therefore the last major country in Eurasia that this approach has yet to be applied towards, hence why the research can be described as cutting-edge, which in turn imbues it with outsized importance relative to Russia's grand strategy seeing as how it aims to complete its Greater Eurasian Partnership.

Finally, the dissertation is unprecedented in the sense that the author posits that through its bilateral relations Russia and Pakistan can complement one another's balancing/hedging strategies vis a vis China & India and China & the US respectively, something which has thus far not been seriously countenanced by anyone. The reason for this conspicuous shortcoming is attributable to the fact that these two countries are non-traditional partners of one another, and seeing as how their relations used to be characterized by extreme mistrust during the 1980s, neither's experts or officials paid much thought to this proposal since the historical baggage from that period remained enduring up until recently. As Russia and Pakistan begin putting aside the difficulties of the past in pursuit of pioneering a new mutually beneficial partnership, it's urgent to reconceptualize their relations in the contemporary context in order to sustain the impressive progress of the last decade and

create the basis for imbuing their relations with a strategic nature sometime in the future.

Practical Importance. The research can be put to use in crafting educational programs at the university level and providing a basis from which additional work can be undertaken in fleshing out the various aspects of the system of international relations and of the basic features of the Multipolar World order.

Additionally, the research can be used as a studying material for the courses connected to the contemporary and future nature of Russian-Pakistani relations. Accordingly, decision makers and members of the think tank community in both countries could rely upon the research to become better acquainted with their counterparts and learn about the various commonalities between them that could then be used to enhance bilateral ties even further. Specific examples of this are their diplomatic cooperation on Afghanistan, the prospective N-CPEC+ trade route through Afghanistan and Central Asia, and the possibility of Russia's offshore energy investments in Iran being used to power Pakistan and even end up exported across the country to China too.

Less impactful but no less important is the influence that the research could have on guiding media reports about both countries by their counterparts. The soft power aspect of bilateral ties is sorely lacking, but competent editors in charge of each regional media could read the work in order to better familiarize themselves with the basics of bilateral relations that could then be included into articles as is relevant in order to better educate their readers. This could go a long way towards changing the lingering perceptions that each countries' populations have of the other after the 1980s proxy war in Afghanistan, which can in turn encourage the expansion of their partnership into the socio-cultural domain with time. Of course, the qualifying term is "with time", but after the many years that have already been squandered without anything to show for it, it is better that this happens late than never.

Taken together, the high-level and low-level consequences of the present research could very well place Russia and Pakistan on the path to a strategic partnership with time, which is the most important outcome being pursued through this work. Being aware of both the

opportunities and obstacles in front of them, the two countries could commit to comprehensively enhancing their relations in the most realistic way possible, even capturing the spirit of their relations in the slogan "Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar" ("Russians and Pakistanis are buddies") modeled off of the Soviet-era one of "Rusia-Hindi Bhai Bhai" ("Russians and Indians are brothers"). This would place everyone in the right mindset of not having overly high hopes about the relationship yet still appreciating the friendly benefits that it affords each party, reminding them of the Neo-Realist paradigm of interests-driven policies that first and foremost determines the contours of their ties.

Therefore, the most significant practical importance that the research can have is to open the path to "Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar" in order to give both countries the flexibility that they need to adroitly maneuver through the ever-changing international situation in a mutually beneficial manner with an eye on becoming the decisive players responsible for maintaining the balance of interests between them and especially the US-Chinese-Indian triangle that they're both supplementary parts of in order to stabilize the Eurasian supercontinent in the New Cold War. The developing bipolarity in South Asia between China & Pakistan and the US & India can be broken through Russia's diplomatic "balancing" intervention by expanding its strategic partnerships with China and India to also include Pakistan (albeit to a lesser degree than it has with those two), thus changing the entire paradigm by putting both Russia and Pakistan in the position of jointly shaping strategic outcomes in this pivotal space through the resultant quintet that their strategic partnership would create.

The object of the research is Russian “balancing” role and strategy in the emerging multipolar world, while ***the subject*** is how this is -- and can be -- practiced in the context of Russian-Pakistani relations.

Goals and Tasks. The goal of the research is to analyze Russian strategy in the contemporary system of international relationships in the context of the global transition from the unipolarity to multipolarity which is most pronounced in the US-China competition and in the increased international prominence of other actors. The special

attention is paid to the Russian-Pakistani relations as a key element in revolutionizing the balance of interests between Russia, China, India, and the US quartet with an aim to retain state-to-state stability in Eurasia.

This will be accomplished through the following ***tasks***:

1. Explain the current international context of multipolarity;
2. Describe the contours of Russia's "balancing" act in Eurasia, particularly between China and India;
3. Discover the opportunities and obstacles to Russian-Pakistani relations against the balancing backdrop;
4. Recontextualize Russian-Pakistani relations in the current international context of multipolarity;
5. Provide policy recommendations for improving bilateral relations and creating a strategic partnership.

Chronological Frames

Although most of the work concerns contemporary issues from 2014-2021, two historical perspectives will be relied upon, the general and the specific. The first-mentioned refers to the phased transition of the international system from bipolarity to unipolarity and now multipolarity, while the second relates to the stages of Soviet/Russian-Pakistani relations. It will be seen that their second specific stage is largely shaped by the first more general one, thus showing just how strongly the international system influences Russian-Pakistani relations and complementing the object-subject bifurcation that was early touched upon in the Introduction.

Theoretical and Methodological Basis

The research utilizes the Neo-Realist and Neo-Liberal theories to explain the interplay between the connected goals that Russia's contemporary foreign policy of multipolar

balancing is pursuing, both in general and in the specific context of relations with Pakistan. Moscow is driven by interests to replace Washington's role in various areas of Eurasia through cost-effective and low-commitment means that result in a disproportionate return on strategic investments (Neo-Realism), all with an intent to formalize its newfound influence through the institutionalization of its partnerships in multilateral arrangements (Neo-Liberalism) that ultimately aim to create the Greater Eurasian Partnership.

For instance, the US' troubled relationship with Pakistan creates space for Russia to insert itself as a friendly "balancing" force to China that could prevent the host state from becoming overly dependent on its neighbor, with this growing relationship being justified through their shared membership in the SCO and participation in the Moscow peace process on Afghanistan that was facilitated by Islamabad. Another example relates to Russian-Indian relations whereby the "new Non-Aligned Movement" (Neo-NAM) that two Valdai Club experts proposed that they jointly lead[13] can be balanced if New Delhi fears that its regional security might be negatively impacted if Russia "pivots" to Pakistan should India "pivot" to the US first.

What is described by the Chinese as "Xi Jinping Thought" (XJT) is also touched upon in reference to the importance that this theory places upon Silk Road connectivity as a means of stabilizing International Relations through the creation of a "community of shared future". XJT is the theoretical basis for BRI, which thus makes it relevant for the flagship project of CPEC -- the game-changing initiative that India responded to through a worsening of its security dilemmas between China and Pakistan -- as well. Since the Silk Roads and especially CPEC are so important to this research, it would be a miss not to mention XJT at least once.

Constructivism is also present throughout the work, though not directly but as an intended consequence of the research's completion. The perception that Russian decision makers have of their Pakistani counterparts (more so than the reverse) is still largely determined by

[13] Kupriyanov A., Korolev A. The Eurasian Chord and the Oceanic Ring: Russia and India as the Third Force in a New World Order [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 11 September. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/reports/the-eurasian-chord-and-the-oceanic-ring/.

the stereotypes of their 1980s proxy war in Afghanistan and the influence that India's soft power has had on them throughout the decades, though this should change for the better after the thesis' publication and hopefully contribute to a new era of bilateral relations through the creation of the "Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar" blueprint with time.

As for methodologies, the ones most commonly used in this work are the historical, comparative, and empirical in regards to studying the international system and the legacy of Russian-Pakistani relations, the practice of Russia's balancing act in Eurasia (with an emphasis on managing relations with and between China and India), and contemporary developments (which includes modern-day Russian-Pakistani relations), respectively. These said methodologies might also be used when analyzing other topics as well, though the aforesaid is where they'll most commonly be employed.

Literature Review

The research was based on numerous scientific monographs, books, articles in reputable journals.

The paper is based on classical works in political science and in the history of international relationships, for example, the book of E. Primakov “Russia in the modern world. Past, present, future”[14], books of R. O. Keohane[15], J. J. Mearsheimer[16], R. N. Haass[17], S. P. Huntington[18] . It is also based on the new research devoted to the issue of changing the world order, namely its transit to multipolarity. Among the most important for this paper are: the book of D. Brown and D. Murrey “Power in the Twenty-First Century. Mapping a Multipolar World?”[19], R. Silvius on culture, political economy and civilisation in a

[14] Примаков Е. М. Россия в современном мире. Прошлое, настоящее, будущее. М.: Центрполиграф. 2015. 620 с.
[15] Keohane, R. O. After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy. – Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1984.
[16] Mearsheimer, J. J. The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. – W. W. Norton & Company, 2014.
[17] Haass, R. N. The Reluctant Sheriff. The United States after the Cold War. – N.Y.: Council on Foreign Relations, Inc., 1997.
[18] Huntington, S. P. The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. – Simon & Schuster, 1996.
[19] Brown D., Murrey D. Power in the Twenty-First Century. Mapping a Multipolar World?. Taylor & Fransis. 2017. P. 242.

multipolar world order[20], C. D. Walton's pieces[21] and others.

Sufficient group of works that influenced the paper was the group of works devoted to specific questions of the political and economic development of certain countries. The work of L. E. Grinin and A. V. Korotaev on the economy and politics of China, India and Middle East countries in the global world[22] and the work of R. Kanbur devoted to the deep analysis of the evolution of Chinese economy[23] were of high importance for the shaping of the understanding of the global political and economic trends shaping Russian-Pakistani Relations. Worth mentioning are also such authors as V. V. Mikheev[24], S.M. Hali[25], L. Ali[26], L. D. Blackwill[27] and others.

One of the most contemporary comprehensive work in Russia on Pakistan in the context of contemporary international politics is the book "Pakistan: Beyond Stereotypes"[28]. It was published by CAST in early 2019 and covered a wide array of topics from the history of bilateral relations to Pakistan's domestic affairs and military affairs. In author's opinion that remains the closest to an authoritative source of comprehensive relevance cited in this thesis, but others are also pertinent as well, the main ones of which are the book "Soviet-Pakistan Relations and Post-Soviet Dynamics, 1947-92"[29] by Hafeez Malik and the articles "An Overview of Pak-Soviet/Russia Relations" [30] by Sarfraz Khan & Noor Amin,

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[20] Silvius R. Culture, Political Economy and Civilisation in a Multipolar World Order. Taylor & Francis. 2016. P. 196.

[21] Walton C. D. Geopolitics and the Great Powers in the 21st Century. Multipolarity and the Revolution in Strategic Perspective. Taylor & Fransis. 2007. P. 160.

[22] Гринин Л. Е., Коротаев А. В. Ближний Восток, Индия и Китай в глобальных процессах. М: Моск. ред. изд-ва "Учитель". 2016. 496 с.

[23] Kanbur R., Shenggen F.The Oxford Companion to the Economics of China.Oxford University Press. 2014. 448 p.

[24] Михеев В. В. Китай. Мировая экономика: прогноз до 2020. Мировая экономика: Прогноз до 2020 года / под ред. А. А. Дынкина. М. : Магистр, 2008. С. 303–329.

[25] Hali S. M., Shukui, Dr. T., Iqbal, S. One belt and one road: Impact on China-Pakistan economic corridor. One Belt One Road. 2014. No. 34 (4). P. 147–164.

[26] Ali L. et al. The Potential Socio-Economic Impact of China Pakistan Economic Corridor. Asian Development Policy Review. 2017. No. 5(4). P. 191-198.

[27] Blackwill, R. D. The India Dividend: New Delhi Remains Washington's Best Hope in Asia / R. D. Blackwill, A. J. Tellis // Foreign Affairs. – 2019. – September & October.

[28] Пакистан: за рамками стереотипов / под ред. Т.И. Борисова, К.В. Матвиенко. М.: Центр анализа стратегий и Технологий, 2019. 208 с.

[29] Malik H. Soviet-Pakistan Relations and Post-Soviet Dynamics, 1947–92. Palgrave Macmillan, 1994. 383 p.

[30] Khan S., Noor A. An Overview of Pak - Soviet/Russia Relations [Electronic resource] // Central Asia. 2012. No.71. P. 1-28. Mode of access: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2765290.

"Pakistan-Russia Relations Redux: From Estrangement to Pragmatism"[31] by Muhammad Nawaz Khan, and "Russia-Pakistan: Perception Paradigm"[32] by Sarfraz Ahmed Rana. Other supplementary sources include the pieces published by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), which hosted former Russian Ambassador to Pakistan Alexey Dedov for a guest lecture in August 2018[33] and released the article by Col. (retd) Muhammad Hanif about "Pakistan-Russia Relations: Progress, Prospects and Constraints"[34].

Other important contributions to the research subject and related vectors by Pakistani experts include the article "Evolving regional and global dynamics and future of CPEC"[35] by Nalinda Niyangoda, Manoaj Keppetipola, and Anil Bowatte, Dr. Asma Rashid's "Russian tilt towards Pakistan and Indian insecurities"[36], Dr. Moonish Ahmar's "Sino-Russian détente and its impact on Pakistan's foreign policy"[37] and "Transformation of world order: challenges and options for Pakistan"[38], Syed Taimoor Shah's and Ayesha Afgun's "Resurgence of Russia as a great power and its foreign policy orientation towards South Asia"[39], Hassan Farooq's "The 21st century world order and Pakistan"[40], and the article "The trajectory of Pakistan-Russia relations: emerging contours and future

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[31] Khan M. N. Pakistan-Russia Relations Redux: From Estrangement to Pragmatism [Electronic resource] // IPRI Journal. 2019. Vol. 19. No. 1. P. 56–85. Mode of access: http://oaji.net/articles/2019/6784-1553232009.pdf.

[32] Rana S. A. Russia-Pakistan: Perception Paradigm [Electronic resource] // Daily Times. 2019. 27 October. Mode of access: https://dailytimes.com.pk/490006/russia-pakistan-perception-paradigm/.

[33] Dedov A. Ambassador Lecture on 'Pakistan-Russia Relations: Is There a New Trajectory?' [Electronic resource] // Islamabad Policy Research Institute. 2018. 11 August. Mode of access: https://ipripak.org/ambassador-lecture-on-pakistan-russia-relations-is-there-a-new-trajectory/.

[34] Hanif M. Pakistan-Russia Relations: Progress, Prospects and Constraints [Electronic resource] // IPRI Journal XIII. 2013. No. 2. P. 63–86. Mode of access: http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/art4han.pdf.

[35] Niyangoda N., Keppetipola M., Bowatte, A. EVOLVING REGIONAL AND GLOBAL DYNAMICS AND FUTURE OF CPEC / N. Niyangoda, M. Keppetipola, A. Bowatte. // ISSRA Papers. – 2021. – 13(XIII). – P. 163–173.

[36] Rashid D. RUSSIAN TILT TOWARDS PAKISTAN AND INDIAN INSECURITIES / D.Rashid // NDU Journal. – 2021. –35. – P.25–35.

[37] Ahmar D. SINO-RUSSIAN DÉTENTE AND ITS IMPACT ON PAKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY / D. Ahmar // Strategic Thought. – 2021. – 3. P.51–63.

[38] Ahmar D. TRANSFORMATION OF WORLD ORDER: CHALLENGES AND OPTIONS FOR PAKISTAN / D. Ahmar // Strategic Thought. – 2019. – 1. P. 99–113.

[39] Shah, S., Afgun A. RESURGENCE OF RUSSIA AS A GREAT POWER AND ITS FOREIGN POLICY ORIENTATION TOWARDS SOUTH ASIA / S.Shah, A.Afgum // Margalla Papers. – 2020. – 24(2). P.93–103.

[40] Hassan F., Khan Khan M., Khan S. THE 21ST CENTURY WORLD ORDER AND PAKISTAN / F.Hassan, M.Khan Khan, S.Khan // Journal of Contemporary Studies. – 2021. – 9(II). P.19-41.

prospects"[41] by Misbah Arif and Raja Qaiser Ahmed. To briefly review the Pakistani experts' most important contributions to this subject and related research vectors, the author concludes that they correctly assessed their country's promising role in Eurasia that aims to leverage CPEC for the purpose of expanding connectivity with Russia via Afghanistan and Central Asia. They also didn't avoid some of the more sensitive aspects of this subject such as India's perceptions of growing ties between Russia and Pakistan. Moreover, it can also be seen that their interest in Russia starting picking up pace during the time covered in the dissertation, from 2014-2019, and continued into the years afterwards to the present day. The preceding observation reinforces the significance of focusing on their ties during those pivotal years. That said, the Pakistani experts' most common shortcoming is that they struggled to understand the evolving context in which their country's relations with Russia began improving. They also overlook Russia's grand strategic sensitivities with respect to China, which is likely attributable to their country's strategic partnership with it and attendant difficulty in critically analyzing Beijing's ties with Moscow. It's these additional shortcomings that the dissertation does its utmost to correct.

The two issue briefs by the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad's (ISSI) Muhammad Taimur Fahad Khan on "Enhancing Strategic and Economic Relations between Pakistan & Russia in light of recent developments"[42] and "Lavrov's Visit: Taking Pakistan-Russian Bilateral Relations to New Heights"[43] were also very useful, as was his academic article about "Pakistan's Foreign Policy towards Russia: New Directions"[44] and his colleague Uwe Farwa's about "Russia's Strategic Calculus in South Asia and Pakistan's role:

[41] Misbah A., Raja Q. THE TRAJECTORY OF PAKISTAN-RUSSIA RELATIONS: EMERGING CONTOURS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS / A.Misbah, Q.Raja // Journal of Contemporary Studies. – 2018. – 7 (2). P.66-81.
[42] Khan M. Issue Brief on 'Enhancing Strategic and Economic Relations between Pakistan & Russia in Light of Recent Developments / M.Khan. // Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad. – 2021. – 16 Dec.
[43] Khan M. Issue Brief on 'Lavrov's Visit: Taking Pakistan-Russian Bilateral Relations to New Heights / M.Khan. // Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad. – 2021. – 22 Apr.
[44]Khan M. Pakistan's Foreign Policy towards Russia: New Directions / M.Khan. // Strategic Studies. – 2019. – 39(3). P. 89–104.

Challenges and Prospects"[45]. Other relevant works include a joint publication by several Pakistani authors on "Pak-Russia Relations In The Emerging Geo-Strategic Environment" [46] and two of the New Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation's publications about "The Russia-Pakistan Rapprochement: Should India Worry?" [47] and "Russia-Pakistan relations and its impact on India"[48]. There are other pieces that have been published about this topic but these have been selected by the author as the most relevant ones for inclusion in the thesis. Because of the dearth of material and the existing works' inability to place bilateral relations into their contemporary and future context of multipolar balancing, the current research is therefore unique and relevant as a contribution to the growing field of literature on Russian-Pakistani relations.

The Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Oriental Studies published several relevant books on the subject of this dissertation over the years such as "Pakistan: History And Contemporary Problems"[49], "Pakistan, South Asia, The Islamic World, And The East"[50], "A Political History Of Pakistan 1947-2007" [51], and "Strength And Weakness Of Pakistan"[52].

Russian experts have also published pertinent articles that were relied upon by the

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[45] Farwa U. Russia's strategic calculus in South Asia and Pakistan's role: challenges and prospects / U.Farwa. // Strategic Studies. – 2019. – 39(2). P.33-47.

[46] Sultana T., Afshan S., Fatima Z. Pak-Russia Relations in the Emerging Geo-Strategic Environment / T.Sultana, S.Afshan, Z.Fatima. — Electronic resource // Journal Of European Studies. — 2019. — Vol. 35. No. 1. P. 36–53. URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330535327_PAK-RUSSIA_RELATIONS_IN_THE_EMERGING_GEO-STRATEGIC_ENVIRONMENT.

[47] Puroshothaman U. The Russia-Pakistan Rapprochement: Should India Worry? / U.Puroshothaman — Electronic resource // Observer Research Foundation. — 2015. November. URL: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Uma_Purushothaman/publication/305033854_The_Russia-Pakistan_Rapprochement_Should_India_Worry/links/577f8fc908ae01f736e4876c/The-Russia-Pakistan-Rapprochement-Should-India-Worry.pdf.

[48] Kapoor N. Russia-Pakistan Relations and Its Impact on India / Kapoor N. — Electronic resource // Observer Research Foundation. — 2019 —.3 July. URL: https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/russia-pakistan-relations-impact-india-52715/.

[49] Труды Института востоковедения РАН. Вып. 8: Пакистан: история и современные проблемы / отв. ред. С.Н. Каменев. – М.: ИВ РАН, 2018. – 408 с.

[50] Белокреницкий В.Я. Пакистан, Южная Азия, исламский мир, Восток. Избранные публикации 2008–2016 гг. / В.Я. Белокреницкий // Институт востоковедения РАН. – М.: ИВ РАН, 2016. – 712 с.

[51] Belokrenit͡skiĭ V. I͡A, Moskalenko V. N. A Political History of Pakistan 1947-2007 / V. I͡A Belokrenit͡skiĭ, V. N Moskalenko // Oxford University Press, 2013. — 497 p.

[52] Москаленко В. et al. Сила и Слабость Пакистана / В.Москаленко et al. // Московский Центр Карнеги, 2013. — 75 p.

dissertation's author to improve his knowledge of the research subjects. These include David Stepanovich Dadayan's piece on "Modern Russian-Pakistan Relations"[53], Alexander Vorobyev's "Russia and Pakistan: perspectives and problems of the development of bilateral relations" [54], Irina Nikolaevna Serenko's "Prospects of Russian-Pakistani economic cooperation" [55] and "Toward the prospect of expanding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor"[56], and Anna Gennadievna Grigorieva's "Russian Policy in the Context of Sino-Indian Controversy: Past and Present"[57].

Other extremely useful articles about the topic written by Russian experts include Natalia Valerievna Galitscheva's "A look to the East: economic cooperation of Russia and Pakistan" [58], "Pakistani foreign trade as the external factor of the national economic development"[59], "The Central Asian vector of Pakistan's foreign policy: main problems and perspectives" [60], and "Bilateral trade of Russia and Pakistan: main problems and perspectives" [61], Alexei Kupriyanov's "Deconstructing Pakistan" [62], Yulia Roknifard's

[53] Дадаян Д.А. Современные Российско - Пакистанские Отношения / Д.А.Дадаян // Социально-Гуманитарные Знания. — 2020. — Vol. 2. — P. 278–286.
[54] Воробьев А. Россия и Пакистан: перспективы и проблемы развития двусторонних отношений / А.Воробьев // Russian International Affairs Council. — 2020. — 4 Dec. URL:https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/rossiya-i-pakistan-perspektivy-i-problemy-razvitiya-dvustoronnikh-otnosheniy/
[55] Серенко И.Н. ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ РОССИЙСКО-ПАКИСТАНСКОГО ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОГО СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА / И.Н.Серенко // Восточная аналитика. — 2020 —2. P.68-78.
[56] Серенко И.Н. К перспективе расширения китайско-пакистанского экономического коридора / И.Н.Серенко // Восточная аналитика. — 2019 —1.P.68-78.
[57] Григорьева А.Г. Политика России в контексте китайско-индийских противоречий: история и современность / А.Г.Григорьева // Казанский вестник молодых учёных. — 2019 —3(4). P.116-120.
[58] Галищева Н.В. «Взгляд на Восток»: экономическое сотрудничество России и Пакистана / Н.В.Галищева // Азия и Африка сегодня. — 2019. — №2. — P. 17-22.
[59] Галищева Н.В. Внешняя торговля Пакистана как внешнеэкономический фактор развития национальной экономики / Н.В.Галищева // Российский внешнеэкономический вестник — 2018. — №11. — P. 59-71.
[60] Галищева Н.В. Центральноазиатский вектор внешнеэкономической политики Пакистана: основные проблемы и перспективы / Н.В.Галищева // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Международные отношения. — 2018. — №18(2). — P. 328-341.
[61] Галищева Н.В. Взаимная торговля России и Пакистана: основные проблемы и перспективы / Н.В.Галищева // «25 лет внешней политике России»: сб. материалов X Конвента РАМИ (Москва, 8–9 декабря 2016 г.). В 5 т. Т. 1: Внешняя политика России: глобальное и региональное измерения. в 2 ч. Ч.2 / под общ. ред. А.В.Мальгина. — Москва: МГИМО-Университет, 2017. — P. 9-27.
[62] Куприянов А. Деконструкция Пакистана / А.Куприянов // Russian International Affairs Council. — 2019. —6 May. URL:https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/analytics/dekonstruktsiya-pakistana/?sphrase_id=94863368.

“Pakistani-Russian relations: the prospect of transformation into strategic ones”[63], Vladimir Petrovich Kozin’s “Russian-Pakistani relations at 70 years: dynamic development, positive perspectives”[64], Sergey Naumovich Kamenev’s “Russian-Pakistani Relations: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow”[65], “Uncertain rise: problems and prospects for the development of Russian-Pakistani relations in the 21st century”[66], Adam Isaevich Khashkhanov’s “Russian-Pakistani interstate relations: present state and prospects of development”[67], and Alexander Yurievich Lushnikov’s “Political Cooperation between Russia and Pakistan: Peculiarities of Russian Approaches in 1991–2013”[68]. Pyotr Topychkanov, who contributed to the above-mentioned CAST book, also wrote articles about "Russia and Pakistan: Shared Challenges and Common Opportunities"[69] and "Where Does Pakistan Fit in Russia's South Asia Strategy?"[70].

These esteemed Russian experts’ contributions to the dissertation’s research topic and related vectors are very important. They illustrate that these two non-traditional partners had been growing closer to one another over the past decade. Afghanistan, connectivity potential, and energy cooperation were the primary reasons for this. The larger context in

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[63] Рокнифард Ю. Пакистанско-Российские Отношения — Перспектива Трансформации в Стратегические? / Ю. Рокнифард // Russian International Affairs Council. — 2019. —9 Apr. URL:https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/columns/asian-kaleidoscope/pakistansko-rossiyskie-otnosheniya-perspektiva-transformatsii-v-strategicheskie/?sphrase_id=94863368.

[64] Козин В.П. Российско-Пакистанским Отношениям 70 Лет: Динамичное Развитие, Позитивные Перспективы / В.П.Козин. — Текст: электронный // Портал МГИМО.— 2018, 19 Apr. URL: https://mgimo.ru/about/news/experts/rossiysko-pakistanskim-otnosheniyam-70-let/.

[65] Каменев С.Н. Российско - Пакистанские Отношения: Вчера, Сегодня, Завтра / С.Н. Каменев // Свободная Мысль. — 2016. — vol. 2.P.119–130.

[66] Каменев С.Н. Неуверенный подъем: проблемы и перспективы развития российско-пакистанских отношений в начале XXI века / С. Н. Каменев // Свободная мысль. - 2013. - № 3(1639). - P.88-100.

[67] Хашханов А.С. Российско-пакистанские межгосударственные связи: состояние и перспективы развития / А.С. Хашханов // Вестник РУДН. История России. - 2015. №3. URL: https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/rossiysko-pakistanskie-mezhgosudarstvennye-svyazi-sostoyanie-i-perspektivy-razvitiya

[68] Лушников А.Ю. Политическое сотрудничество России и Пакистана: особенности российских подходов 1991–2013 гг. / А.Ю. Лушников // Вестник РУДН. Гуманитарные, социально-экономические и общественные науки. №1. P.265-268.

69 Moskalenko V., Topychkanov P. Russia and Pakistan: Shared Challenges and Common Opportunities / V.Moskalenko, P.Topychkanov // Carnegie Moscow Center. - 2014. - May. URL: https://carnegieendowment.org/files/russia_and_pakistan2014.pdf.

70 Topychkanov P. Where Does Pakistan Fit in Russia’s South Asia Strategy? / P. Topychkanov. — Electronic resource // Carnegie Moscow Center. — 2017. — 16 January. URL: https://carnegie.ru/2017/01/16/where-does-pakistan-fit-in-russia-s-south-asia-strategy-pub-67696.

which their ties gradually began improving concerned their respective balancing acts: Russia's vis a vis China and India, and Pakistan's vis a vis China and the US. Nevertheless, that selfsame context hasn't yet been fully explored, especially not in terms of Russian officials' and think tank experts' assessment of their country's balancing act. Another shortcoming of these experts' research thus far is that it doesn't fully analyze this new non-traditional partnership in the context of Russia's Greater Eurasian Partnership, nor does it explore Pakistan's relatedEurasian strategy all that much either. It's these shortcomings that the dissertation aims to correct throughout the course of the present work.

Additionally, the literature worth considering is the scholarly literature focused on the analysis of the politics and economy of Pakistan. For example, the group of study which is focused on the socio-economic impacts of CPEC on Pakistan. For the most part analytical papers cover such questions as: possible economic gains for the society and for the state in general[71], analysis of economic opportunities using specific data[72], on the concerns about CPEC among both residents and politicians[73].

Review Of Sources

The thesis includes a wide array of sources such as official documents and statistics, think tank materials and reports. The first enable observers to obtain an understanding of how the research subject and related vectors are officially assessed by Russia and Pakistan. The second and third, meanwhile, illustrate how esteemed experts interpret the aforesaid. This draws attention to the evolving thought processes from influential figures that can shape the formulation of relevant policies. It also allows one to identify their shortcomings with a view towards improving them in connection with the tasks set out in this dissertation.

[71] Ali L. et al. The Potential Socio-Economic Impact of China Pakistan Economic Corridor / L.Ali et al. — Electronic resource // Asian Development Policy Review. — 2017. —No. 5(4). P. 191-198.

[72] Jacob Jabin T. Deciphering the Numbers: Employment in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor / Jabin T. Jacob. — Electronic resource // E-International Relations. URL: https://www.e-ir.info/2017/08/22/deciphering-the-numbers-employment-in-the-china-pakistan-economic-corridor/

[73] Ali L. et al. Socio Economic Impacts of China Pakistan Economic Corridor and Local Residents Support Using Structure Equation Modeling Approach. / L.Ali et al. — 3rd International Conference on Psychology, Management and Social Science. 2016.

Russia's Valdai Club and Russian International Affairs Council are heavily relied upon because of the rich variety of views expressed by an assortment of esteemed international experts there about a diversity of topics relevant to each of the research's four primary chapters that will be described in the next section. As for media reports, they inform the reader of those tangential developments that haven't been covered at length by the priority category of sources included in this dissertation. They also bring everyone up to speed about the latest developments that experts had yet to publish their own extensive articles about at the time of this dissertation's submission.

Structure

The research begins with the present Introduction that frames the evolution of the thesis and elaborates on all of the technical aspects related to it, while the subsequent four chapters reflect the main questions that are raised in the previous section, the answers to which are pursued according to the goal and tasks. **The first chapter** focuses on the ongoing global systemic transition from unipolarity to multipolarity and explains the evolution thereof. Emphasis is placed on the US' strategic missteps, China's American-assisted rise, and the fallout between these two superpowers that has culminated in what is described by the author as the New Cold War. That worldwide competition is explored in this part of the work, especially China's Silk Roads and the ways in which the US is trying to disrupt, control, or influence them. This chaotic backdrop sets the stage for introducing Russia's envisaged role in shaping the outcome of these dynamics, specifically the reasons behind its multipolar "balancing" strategy in pursuit of the dual objectives of a "New Detente" with the West in parallel with the creation of the Neo-NAM that it could jointly lead with India, both of which would structurally sustain its "balancing" strategy indefinitely if achieved.

After discussing the global context in which Russian foreign policy is being practiced and the two most important tangible ends that it is pursuing, the research then segues into t**he second chapter** that describes the Russian assessment of the ongoing global systemic

transition. Official statements by President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov are relied upon to present the formal perspective on this topic, after which many works by Russian experts are referenced to explain how they perceive the future of global governance. It becomes increasingly clear that regional and trans-regional integration is the core component of their country's grand strategic goal of creating the Greater Eurasian Partnership, so the subsequent two subsections deal more with these subjects in detail. The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is conceived as being the core of supercontinental integration, though succeeding in this initiative is not sufficient in and of itself to create the trans-continental network that its leadership envisions, hence why it is necessary to explore the modalities through which larger integration processes could be pursued. After obtaining a clearer picture about the path to be pursued, a review of Russian experts' concerns about the security challenges inherent to the ongoing global systemic transition is undertaken for the reader to have a more comprehensive understanding of the many risks that could offset these ambitious plans.

The first chapter emphasis the role that China's New Silk Roads are playing in catalyzing the emerging Multipolar World Order while the second one describes how Russia's leadership and expert community perceive the progress being made in ongoing global systemic transition and their country's envisaged role within it, so it is only natural for **the third chapter** to explore how all of this is unfolding in the context of Russia's balancing act with China and India. A detailed analysis is conducted about the nature of its relations with both Asian Great Powers, concluding that Russia's fear about becoming too overly dependent on China after its rift with the West following Crimea's reunification in 2014 has led to it reaching out more robustly to India in an effort to counterbalance these concerns. The problem, however, is that Russia's reinvigorated relations with India are dangerously stoking a nascent security dilemma with China, one which is not worth risking in general, let alone since India has proven itself to be so unpredictable given how much it is been leaning towards the US in recent years out of their shared desire to contain China. This means that the proposed plans for jointly leading the Neo-NAM have a very unstable

foundation to begin with since Russia must also balance India within this network on top of balancing China outside of it, all of which must be done in a friendly enough fashion so as to avoid inadvertently worsening relations with either. The solution as suggested by the dissertation's author is to prioritize intensifying relations with Pakistan to the point of a strategic partnership in order to assuage China's suspicions about Moscow's ties with New Delhi in parallel with keeping India's newfound strategic partnership with the US in check, but this is a tricky balancing act that requires diplomatic finesse to pull off.

Therein lays the topic that's extensively covered in the **fourth chapter,** which begins by reviewing the contemporary geostrategic environment in which Russia is practicing its foreign policy and then transitions into discussing the opportunities and obstacles inherent to its pivotal balancing act with the host of BRI's flagship project CPEC, Pakistan. The rest of this chapter serves as a detailed case study of Russian-Pakistani relations, touching a little bit on their past but focusing mostly on their current state and future potential.

The latter two subjects are framed by the unique concepts that the dissertation's author developed across the more than one dozen non-academic articles that he's published over the past half-decade about this, specifically in terms of the integration commonalities between them through his proposed vision of CPEC+, which refers to the expansion (“+”) of the China-Pakistani Economic Corridor (CPEC) from its initial vision along different geographic vectors such as the northern one that's most relevant to the thesis. These preexisting works present an exciting look at the many mutual and even multilateral benefits that could be reaped through a forthcoming strategic partnership between Russia and Pakistan. it is discovered that Pakistan has a much more pivotal geostrategic significance than most observers realize, though one that of course wasn't lost on China this entire time and which is why the People's Republic has invested so heavily in it over the past half-decade and has been strategically partnered with it for several decades prior.

The conclusion results in the author summarizing the key findings of the research, namely that Pakistan has regional, hemispheric, and ultimately global importance because it functions as the geopolitical fulcrum of China's grand strategy in the 21st century through

CPEC and its related projects. Due to that, Pakistan is therefore a pivotal partner for all serious Great Powers, Russia included, which has the unique opportunity to practice its multipolar balancing policy with the country in an attempt for both of them to gain more leverage in shaping the contours of the US-Chinese-Indian competition in this geographically central space of the Eastern Hemisphere that could powerfully influence the course of the ongoing global systemic transition. Whether it is to advance China's BRI-driven mainland integration plans across Eurasia, indirectly put pressure on India to deter it from "defecting" towards the US' "Indo-Pacific" strategy of "containing" China, or a combination of both through the selective practice of the "bait theory", Russia and Pakistan can coordinate their efforts through a prospective strategic partnership in order to jointly compensate for their current supplementary role in the US-Chinese-Indian triangle and therefore greatly increase their influence within it. To facilitate this grand strategic outcome, the thesis ends with several policy recommendations for both to apply.

The main arguments to be defended:

1. There are two approaches to the types of world order - hegemony and the balance of power. The principle of hegemonism implies that within the framework of the order there is a state (or coalition) that surpasses the rest in power and resources. The principle of balance of power assumes that resources are distributed approximately equally among the leading players. Accordingly, a "unipolar world" is an order based on the hegemony of one state or a coalition and a "multipolar world" is an order of balance of power, within which the resources of the great powers will be approximately equal to each other. At the moment politically and economically the world witnesses global transition from the US-led Atlantic to the Chinese-led Pacific. In other words the world order is at the stage of transition and it strongly depends on the politics of certain states whether this transition will end with the multipolar world order.
2. The ongoing global systemic transition has resulted in Russia prioritizing its "Turn to Asia", particularly with China and India, both of whom are its BRICS and SCO partners.

Iit is important for Russia to pay attention to both of these Asian Great Powers and to strengthen its ties with them equally. If Russia is able to find a way to avoid negative consequences while enjoying the benefits of balancing, it will be successfully integrated into the multipolar world order.

3. The intensifying of Russian-Pakistani relations to the point of a strategic partnership is of high significance. Russian balancing power (between China and India) can be seriously enhanced through the improvement of Russian-Pakistani relations.

4. Strengthening of Russian-Pakistani relation is crucially important since Pakistan in the new world order development is getting bigger. Although Pakistan can be considered as a passive participant in the ongoing global systemic transition never really taking the initiative, nowadays the state have an opportunity to become the central component of a larger Chinese-backed trans-regional integration network referred to by the author as CPEC+, with its northern component through post-war Afghanistan and Central Asia (N-CPEC+).

5. Russia-Pakistan relations can be developed in a variety of vectors to achieve a level of strategic partnership. Among those vectors are the following: socio-economic, technical-infrastructural, diplomatic, military and strategic spheres of cooperation.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses will be tested by the thesis:

1. International Relations are transitioning from unipolarity to multipolarity;

2. China's Belt & Road Initiative is the catalyst of change most responsible for shaping the new system;

3. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has turned Pakistan into a geostrategic pivot state;

4. Russia is pursuing a policy of multipolar balancing to make itself the irreplaceable stabilizer in Eurasia;

5. The strengthening of Russian-Pakistani relations will enable both countries to shape the

future world order.

Approbation

The results of the study were tested and published in scientific journals included in the list of the Higher Attestation Commission:

Korybko A., Morozov V. M. Pakistan's Role in Russia`s Greater Eurasian Partnership. Polis. Political Studies. 2020. No. 3. P. 3-22.

Korybko A., Morozov V. M. The Prospects of Russia and India Jointly Leading a New Non-Aligned Movement. 2020. No. 2. Vol. 13. P. 94-122.

Korybko A., Morozov V. M., Shebalina E. O. The Origin, Present State, and Future of Multipolarity from a Connectivity Perspective. Turning Points of World Transformation. 2022. P. 63-68.

CHAPTER 1: Theoretical Framework of Russian-Pakistani Relations in the Evolution of Modern International Politics

1.1 Theoretical Basis

The ongoing global systemic transition and the balancing act that Russia is practicing with Pakistan within it are impossible to understand without some background knowledge of International Relations theory, principally the schools of Neo-Realism and Neo-Liberalism. Constructivism is also important, both as a stand-alone perspective for explaining certain developments and also as a tool, the latter of which most relevantly relates to the dissertation's subject by having the potential to positively shape the perception of Russian and Pakistani decision makers about each other's countries. Some experts might argue that other lesser known theories such as Marxism are also relevant, though the author of this dissertation is of the view that they do not have much to do with the primary topic of Russian-Pakistani relations even if that example in particular could be useful for better understanding the US-Chinese competition over resources and markets in the ongoing New Cold War. Devoting considerable time to elaborating on theories that aren't of direct relevance to the primary purpose of this work could distract the reader from those that are arguably more pertinent to more of everything that's discussed within these pages. That's why the decision was made to concentrate on the three primary International Relations theories instead. As such, this initial part of the first chapter will therefore elaborate on the fundamentals of International Relations thought in order to set the backdrop against which the ongoing global systemic transition is playing out, with the aforementioned being discussed at length in Chapter 1.2.

it is important to have even a basic grasp of theory because, as the noted Neo-Realist thinker Stephen M. Walt wrote in his 1998 article "International Relations: One World, Many Theories"[74], they "make sense of the blizzard of information that bombards us

[74] Walt S. M. International Relations: One World, Many Theories [Electronic resource] // Foreign Policy. 1998. No. 110. P. 29–46. Mode of access:

daily...and disagreements about policy usually rest on more fundamental disagreements about the basic forces that shape international outcomes." His colleague Jack Snyder seconded this explanation and elaborated upon it further over a decade later in his piece about "One World, Rival Theories"[75], in which he asserted that "each theory offers a filter for looking at a complicated picture. As such, they help explain the assumptions behind political rhetoric about foreign policy. Even more important, the theories act as a powerful check on each other. Deployed effectively, they reveal the weaknesses in arguments that can lead to misguided policies." Still, Snyder cautions against relying too heavily on any given framework, concluding that "theories of international relations claim to explain the way international politics works, but each of the currently prevailing theories falls well short of that goal. One of the principal contributions that international relations theory can make is not predicting the future but providing the vocabulary and conceptual framework to ask hard questions of those who think that changing the world is easy. " This is crucial to keep in mind going forward since the theories that will be expounded upon are far from perfect, but are intended to present a perspective through which one can better understand the complex processes that are explored in this dissertation.

Neo-Realism

Having gotten those disclaimers out of the way and beginning with Neo-Realism, this school of thought is increasingly popular nowadays since the election of Donald J. Trump as the 45th President of the US and the seemingly chaotic changes that he's catalyzed in the international system. Kenneth Waltz's 1979 "Theory of International Politics" [76] is considered the first comprehensive expression of this point of view in academia. Neo-Realism is a structural theory and therefore deals first and foremost with the international

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https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/4018694/mod_resource/content/1/Walt 1998.pdf.

[75] Snyder J. One World, Rival Theories [Electronic resource] // Foreign Policy. 2009. 26 October. Mode of access: https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/26/one-world-rival-theories/.

[76] Waltz K. N. Theory of International Politics. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub., 1979. 251 p.

system, which Waltz says is defined by anarchy or the absence of consensual rules and a reliable enforcement mechanism and/or body to make sure that states abide by them. Due to this, he writes, International Relations is a self-help system characterized by inherent distrust between states, which results in several empirical patterns that constitute the basis of Neo-Realist thought.

The first is that the international system of anarchy constraints and influences state behavior, shaping the entirety of International Relations. States are also assumed to be rational, unitary actors. Although contemporary Neo-Realists acknowledge some Neo-Liberal ideas about non-state actors and institutions, they disregard their influence and the predominant role that Neo-Liberalism affords them. Because of this, Neo-Liberalism can be described as being state-centric, in that it does not deal with the decision-making influence of anything other than states in the sphere of International Relations. As states, the examined subject of Neo-Realist thought, struggle to survive, they pursue what they subjectively identify to be their national interests which are ultimately geared towards enhancing their power in one way or another. It can be argued, however, that national interests are influenced by the Constructivist theories spearheaded by Alexander Wendt[77] related to changing perceptions, and that concept will be explored later on in this chapter.

According to Neo-Realists, states are ‘ranked’ according to a hierarchy of strength[78], with hegemons and Great Powers at the top and small and weak states at the bottom. The powerful states balance against themselves via a combination of internal and external measures, which in and of itself leads to the phenomenon described as the Balance of Power. Great Powers and hegemons also engage in alliances and alignments, which peaks the rivalry between them and contributes at times to a security dilemma. This is the idea that one state’s supposedly defensive and reactionary moves are interpreted as offensive and proactive by its rivals, which in turn spurs them to take their own defensive and reactionary moves that are similarly seen as offensive and proactive by the original state or

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77 Wendt A. Social Theory of International Politics. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1999. 433 p.

78 Lake D. A. Hierarchy in International Relations. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2011. 232 p.

bloc thereof that they're responding to. Walt believes that these actions are driven by what he describes as the Balance of Threats theory[79] which differs from the Balance of Power one discussed by Waltz in that it stipulates that states are more defensively concerned about managing threats than being proactively offensive in expanding their power. This division within the Neo-Realist school has given rise to the Offensive and Defensive Realism factions that also accordingly have their own Offensive and Defensive Balancing ideas as well, with John Mearsheimer[80] being one of the most prominent pioneers of the former while Walt popularly represents the latter.

In speaking about security dilemmas, it would be a miss not to talk about their influence on smaller and weaker states. This category of Neo-Realism's hierarchy of strength are sometimes compelled not to balance by seeking the assistance of countervailing Great Powers, but to bandwagon with the one closest to them, though both options nevertheless come at the possible expense of their sovereignty and at the risk of exacerbating the ongoing security dilemma that gave rise to their decision in the first place. Some examples of smaller and weaker states balancing are Syria seeking the assistance of its extra-regional partner Russia in thwarting the regime change plot against it supported by Turkey and the GCC, as well as the countries of the former Eastern Bloc joining NATO out of presumed fear about post-Soviet Russia's long-term strategic intentions. As for bandwagoning, this can be seen through Canada's strategic alliance with its much stronger US neighbor and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) states' one with equally positioned Russia. In each of these four-mentioned examples, none of those relationships are eternal since the changing dynamics of International Relations -- accelerating at a seemingly unprecedented pace as of late -- are leading to a mixture of balancing and bandwagoning whereby US-allied Canada still seeks to strengthen economic ties with China in order to balance American influence in that dimension just as the Central Asian countries are doing the

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79 Walt S. M. The Origins of Alliances. Cornell University Press, 1990.

80 Mearsheimer J. J. The Tragedy of Great Power Politics. W. W. Norton & Company, 2014.

same with the People's Republic vis-a-vis Russia[81].

The subsequently spiraling distrust between actors and the cyclical nature of these processes could destabilize the world if left unchecked. This state of affairs also contributes to the concept of the "zero-sum game", whereby all gains and losses are perceived as being relative to one's rivals, and it is seen as impossible or excruciatingly difficult to reach mutually beneficial solutions between competing parties, or at the very least, not have one actor's moves play a role in undermining any of their peers, whether this is objectively so or only perceived as being this way. The varied movements between balancing and bandwagoning, all in the pursuit of power or defense against perceived threats, do in a sense bring a semblance of relative order to International Relations which counteracts some of the anarchy, though it can also be argued that this simply reinforces anarchy and prevents the world system from stabilizing. A new trend trailblazed by the Chinese is the concept of "win-win", or mutually beneficial actions that supposedly have no negative effect on third parties, though it remains to be seen exactly how convincing this is to those involved in those moves whether directly (the relevant parties) or indirectly (the observing ones) in diminishing security dilemmas between them. Crucially, the Constructivist means of managing perceptions can be weaponized in order to portray win-win solutions as zero-sum ones for geopolitical purposes, as is being attempted by the US' ongoing information warfare against China.

The presence of multiple, near-equal Great Powers and/or hegemons characterizes what has been termed as multipolarity, with the pre-World War II international system serving as a good example of this. The Old Cold War confrontation between the US and USSR superpowers ushered in bipolarity, which some scholars say is the most stable of all forms of Neo-Realist international systems. Lastly, after the 1991 disintegration of the USSR, the world entered a period of unipolarity, which some scholars and observers argue is either in the process of transitioning back to multipolarity or bipolarity, the latter of which would in

[81] Длинные волны, современная экономика и перспективы грядущих трансформаций в XXI веке / под ред. Л. Е. Гринина. – М.: Московская редакция издательства «Учитель», 2019. С. 161-167.

that sense describe the global competition between the US and China and will be discussed more in Chapter 1.2. For now, however, it is useful to talk a bit more about what each superstructural model entails. Multipolarity is seen by some as a "free-for-all" between international players where the most powerful among them compete with one another on a state-to-state level and also between themselves for third-party smaller and weaker states. Bipolarity, meanwhile, continues this trend but instead mostly sees just two main actors whereas all the others are influenced by their global competition in one way or another, even if that category of comparatively weaker (but not necessarily smaller) states come together in a multipolar fashion through what in the Old Cold War was known as the Non-Aligned Movement in a bid to create a third pole of power and one or some of them becomes the leader(s) of that network.

Concerning unipolarity, the global hegemon is oftentimes driven by what's been described as the Hegemonic Stability Theory according to which the solution to international anarchy is an unrivaled hegemon that stabilizes the world system. What's become known as the neoconservative faction of the US' permanent bureaucracy (or "deep state", which also includes academia and media in some definitions). While it is also possible to contend that China has something similar in mind through its Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) but seeks to go about it in a much less conventionally aggressive way (i.e. via intense economic means through what have been criticized as lopsided trade deals instead of kinetic military conflicts like the US' 2003 Iraq War or the unconventional one that it is been waging against Syria since 2011). Assessing the current state of international affairs at the time of writing, it is obvious that the US-led unipolar system is no more given the rise of Great Powers such as the EU, Russia, and China, with secondary ones like Turkey, India, and even Japan also becoming more significant players on the global stage. Therefore, the contemporary system does indeed take on the appearance of multipolarity (the reasons for which will be examined in Chapter 1.2), but it also nevertheless shows strong signs of bipolarity too given that the two most important actors shaping the outcome of the ongoing global systemic transition are the US and China, with their mutual competition resulting in

the rest of the world either balancing or bandwagoning (and sometimes back and forth or even simultaneously) in response.

The relevant takeaways for this thesis from the Neo-Realist school of International Relations are the concepts of balancing and security dilemmas. The work will eventually delve very deep into describing how they relate to the subject of Russian-Pakistani relations, particularly against the broader context of Russia's balancing act in Asia with China and India. As a preview of what's to come, it'll be argued more at length that Russia is striving to retain a pragmatic balance between those two Asian countries, which are among its top strategic partners anywhere in the world despite them increasingly being rivals of one another due to their US-provoked security dilemma which exploits their natural suspicions of each other. On that topic, Russia must also be very careful about how it recalibrates its sensitive balancing act between them in order to avoid inadvertently provoking new security dilemmas with each of those two. The perception of leaning closer towards China might in turn inspire India to accelerate its comprehensive strategic engagement with the US and thus further destabilize that part of Asia even if such an outcome is not its intent. From the opposite site, the perception of leaning closer towards India might make China wary of Russia's strategic intentions, which could reduce trust between them and make cooperation in areas of shared interest such as Central Asia more difficult in the coming future. These concerns make the Neo-Realist theory relevant to the thesis and should be kept in mind by policy makers.

Neo-Liberalism

The Neo-Realist school of thought is rivaled by Neo-Liberalism, which emerged afterwards and attempts to present a model through which its predecessor's systemic international anarchy can be responsibly managed. it is therefore also a structural theory and thus addresses the idiosyncrasies of the international system. It was formally debuted by Robert Keohane in his 1984 book “After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the

World Political Economy"[82], in which he theorized that the international anarchy of Neo-Realism could be partially reversed through international institutions. He strongly believes that institutions present hope for a vague sort of ordering principle to take root in the world and could counteract the chaos of anarchy and thus make the world a more peaceful and stable place.

Commonly criticized for their characteristic idealism, Neo-Liberals assert that institutions formulate rules, values, and commitments that give each participating member a stake in their shared interests, which correspondingly makes it all the more likely that they will voluntarily cooperate out of pursuit of their collective interests. Institutions could be anything from arms control regimes to political systems such as Western-practiced liberal-democracy. The economic model of globalized capitalism is another form of cooperation between states that could lead to forms of complex interdependence taking root between potential adversaries and thus mitigating the chances that they'll ever go to war with one another, at least according to the theory.

Institutions are theorized by the Neo-Liberals as being a platform through which all sides can adjust their national policies and engage in concessions and deal-making. Diplomacy, not militancy, takes preponderance in the Neo-Liberal world view. Ideologues like Keohane sincerely believe that the Neo-Realists' concept of hegemony is not the sole possibility for bringing order to the international system, and in contravention to the Hegemonic Stability Theory, they propose something called the Democratic Peace Theory[83]. This revolutionary idea postulates that because the convincing case can be made that mature Western-modeled liberal democracies do not wage conventional wars against one another, the key to world peace is not for one country to rule the world and preside over a unipolar system, but for all countries to adapt the political framework of the US and Western Europe (interestingly the founding countries of NATO).

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[82] Keohane R. O. After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1984.

[83] Huth P. K., Allee T. L. The Democratic Peace and Territorial Conflict in the Twentieth Century. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

How they come to practice Western-modeled liberal democracy is the disputable question. The neoconservatives advocate that this be brought about by regime change – whether militantly direct like in the 2003 War on Iraq or covertly oblique such as through the theater-wide "Arab Spring" Color Revolutions that began in 2011 – while other more moderate Neo-Liberals believe that the US shouldn't intervene in these processes and should instead encourage the targeted population to come to this choice on their own. In both instances, however, the end goal is the same, which is to proselytize the Western political system of presumed universality all across the world in the hope that this revolutionary crusade will succeed in creating the structural foundations for everlasting global peace.

This is precisely what academic Francis Fukuyama believed had happened in 1992 when he published his famous book about "The End of History and the Last Man"[84]. Overcome with confidence, he wrote that the collapse of the Soviet bloc heralded a fundamentally new era of human history whereby the Democratic Peace Theory would inevitably be actualized and mankind would enter into an unparalleled epoch of prosperity. In hindsight, Fukuyama's wishful thinking never panned out and he is popularly derided for 'jumping the gun' and unrealistically imagining a world that never came to be. Less extreme in his zealotry and much more rational, G. John Ikenberry picked up where Keohane's theoretical writings left off and attempted to adapt them to present-day and forthcoming circumstances of direct relevance to the US. His first significant work on this topic was his 2001 book "After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars"[85].

He explained how the US transformed the international system through American-led institutions after the end of World War II, pointing out that these are critical to implement immediately after victory in order to establish order and reinforce one's hegemony. Strong states, he writes, sustain order, while weaker ones gain security by joining it. These

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84 Fukuyama F. The End of History and the Last Man. 1992.

85 Ikenberry G. J. After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001.

institutions use shared rules, impose limits on the power of their members, and have the flexibility to change as a means of creating order, thus permitting the Neo-Liberal hegemon to dominate via a 'softer', more indirect, and possibly even less costlier approach than the Neo-Realist one could. In his 2006 follow-up work "Liberal Order and Imperial Ambition: Essays on American Power and International Order"[86], Ikenberry warns that Bush's Neo-Realist unilateralism is endangering the world order that his predecessors spent decades to construct, but that all is not lost for the liberal rules-based system and capitalist democracy if the neoconservatives could be successfully countered and the security rivalry that they unleashed reversed through a new Neo-Liberal-driven policy of engagement and accommodation.

This grand vision was outlined in Ikenberry's latest book, the 2011 "Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order"[87]. In it, he continues his refrain from the previous book about how the US' world order is in crisis, but this time he remains more optimistic in stating that the American-led international system will survive and adapt to the present challenges. It has to, he says, because the US is the world's liberal hegemon, and without it, the system of Western-modeled liberal democracy would be existentially threatened. What the reader can draw from all of his works, as well as those of Fukuyama and Keohane, are that a dedicated portion of the American elite ascribe to the Democratic Peace Theory and believe that the US must take the lead in transforming the entire world in order to save it. Cooperation, institutions, and complex interdependence are a first step, but the final goal is and always will be to export the US' governing model to the rest of the world (whether by directly forceful or indirectly mischievous means) in an eerily similar manner to how the USSR sought to spread its own political system.

The Neo-Liberal world order that was painstakingly built by the US over the decades is obviously under threat from Trump, whose administration openly stated in its 2017

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[86] Ikenberry G. J. Liberal Order and Imperial Ambition: Essays on American Power and World Politics. Cambridge: Polity, 2006.

[87] Ikenberry G. J. Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2011.

National Security Strategy [88] that "great power competition has returned", thereby confirming a deeply rooted belief in the Neo-Realist theory of International Relations as opposed to its counterpart. Furthermore, Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and his efforts to pressure NATO members to finally pay their previously agreed-upon share of 2% of GDP towards defense have shaken the economic and military foundations on which America's global power had been taken for granted. The impact that Trump has had on America's role in the world and the ongoing global systemic transition will be explained more in Chapter 1.2, but for now it is important to realize that this conventional and somewhat fearmongering assessment of him is inaccurate. After all, it was none other than Trump himself who attempted to blend Neo-Realism and Neo-Liberalism together into what he termed "principled realism" during his speech to the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly in 2018[89], which he followed up the year afterwards at the same event by talking about "the divide between those whose thirst for control deludes them into thinking they are destined to rule over others and those people and nations who want only to rule themselves."[90]

Trump's supposedly principled interpretation of Neo-Realism naturally includes values-based concepts that are usually associated with Neo-Liberalism, just like his quip about the division between those who thirst for control over others and those who want to only rule themselves strongly alludes to the Democratic Peace Theory. In the same 2019 UN General Assembly speech, however, he also talks about sovereignty, nationalism, and patriotism as being the solution to the problems that he associates with globalism, which is a euphemism for the unreformed Neo-Liberal world order that the US used to lead. Nowadays, however,

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88 National Security Strategy of the United States of America [Electronic resource]. The White House, 2017. Mode of access: https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf.

89 Trump D. J. Remarks by President Trump to the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly | New York, NY [Electronic resource] // The White House. 2018. 25 September. Mode of access: https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-73rd-session-united-nations-general-assembly-new-york-ny/.

90 Trump D. J. Remarks by President Trump to the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly [Electronic resource] // The White House. 2019. 25 September. Mode of access: https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-74th-session-united-nations-general-assembly/.

it is more accurate to say that China has inherited that system after co-opting it from within and then wresting control of this structure from its creator by masterfully playing mostly by the same rules that the US itself originally created in order to build what the People's Republic describes as its "community of common/shared destiny (for mankind)". Beijing is able to do this through the key role that it plays in the globalized economy (hence Washington's reactive so-called "trade war" under Trump) and the initiatives that it is undertaken to create rival institutions such as the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to support its worldwide BRI activities in parallel with becoming an influential actor in existing structures such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). Faced with this systemic threat that it is partially responsible for creating, the US was left with the choice of either submitting to the rising hegemon (like Obama and his envisaged successor Hillary Clinton's critics allege were planning) or challenging it by chaotically breaking the same rules that it established in order to retain its global hegemony. This will be elaborated upon in Chapter 1.2, but it was relevant to introduce these ideas at the present time given their pertinence to the discussed topic.

As a more detailed hint of what's to come, though, the reader should expect Neo-Liberalism to play a prominent role throughout the rest of this thesis. Building upon the prior theoretical observations and arguments about Russia's balancing act between China and India that were introduced in the prior section about Neo-Realism, Moscow can recalibrate its strategy by engaging with them more robustly through Beijing's Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) and the proposal to assemble a New Non-Aligned Movement (Neo-NAM) with New Delhi (even if only informally for the time being). It should also be noted that the US is trying to court India to its side through the Quad by appealing to this emerging group's supposed democratic credentials, which is a direct play on Neo-Liberal rhetoric. BRI is more about shared economic interests though while the Neo-NAM is more strategic, so each represents a different angle to this theory. As for Pakistan, it'll later be argued that it has a grand strategic vision similar to China's geo-economic one via CPEC+, which refers to expanding BRI's flagship project northward towards Central Asia (the cardinal

direction of which is most relevant for Russian interests), westward towards West Asia, and southward towards Africa. In theory, Russia can simultaneously engage with each of them without doing so at any of its partners' expense, whether objectively speaking or even in terms of perceptions, but it must be very careful about how it practices this policy as well as presents it to its partners.

Constructivism

The last of the three main schools of International Relations thought to be discussed is Constructivism, which was principally developed through the writings of Alexander Wendt[91] and expanded upon by Ted Hopf[92]. The novel concept postulated by these two theorists and others is that a state's ever-changing perceptions of itself and others influence the formulation of its policies. This approach is rather unorthodox and extremely difficult to quantify, but the argument put forth is convincing enough to be taken very seriously because of its relevance as a tool for explaining developments that do not neatly correspond with the Neo-Realist and Neo-Liberal schools. For instance, the Soviet Union wasn't much of an objective military threat to the US in the early days of the Old Cold War prior to its successful nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) tests, but the perception of communism is what scared the Americans enough to prioritize the containment of their former World War II ally immediately after that conflict ended. Likewise, as communism began to crumble within the Soviet Union in the late 1980s, the US wasn't regarded by the country's leadership as much of a threat anymore even though it still had the world's second-largest nuclear weapons stockpile, which facilitated the end of the Old Cold War.

What's so interesting about Constructivism is that it is not only a theory in and of itself, but could also be weaponized as a tool for catalyzing change. Foreign and domestic interest groups, both those operating at the state level (including intelligence agencies) and outside of it (e.g. grassroots movements), work to change the perceptions of their targeted audience

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91 Wendt A. Social Theory of International Politics. Op. cit.

92 Hopf T. The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory // International Security. 1998. Vol. 23. No. 1. P. 171–200.

in order to facilitate a change in policy. The inter-elite struggle in the US centered on President Trump is a perfect example of state-level interest groups working hard to change the perceptions of the American people about the incumbent as a manufactured form of grassroots pressure ultimately intended to remove him from office, whether through impeachment or by contributing to his possible loss in the 2020 elections. From the opposite angle, his opponents accused Russia of surreptitiously sowing discord in American society through social media prior to the 2016 election in order to shape an environment conducive to Trump's election, which they allege was in the interests of Moscow because of the candidate's previous pledges to improve bilateral relations if he won unlike the hardline stance taken by his competitor[93].

In a sense, the weaponization of Constructivist theory as a force for political change can be simplified in most cases as the use of "propaganda", not exactly like how the word is commonly understood by the average person as something crude and expressly false, but in terms of its clever employment by Edward Bernays. He wrote a book in 1928 titled "Propaganda"[94] and a 1947 essay on "The Engineering of Consent"[95] that saw him memorialized by The New York Times as the "father of public relations" in his obituary[96]. To summarize his work, Bernays basically developed multiple methods through which targeted audiences can be guided by unseen forces towards reaching certain conclusions that they otherwise never would have thought of on their own. This certainly has relevance for the commercial economy, but also for state strategy as a whole, especially if put to use against an adversary's population. One of the most effective ways in which the latter has been applied is through the Color Revolution technology devised by Gene Sharp, whose

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93 Mueller R. S. Report On The Investigation Into Russian Interference In The 2016 Presidential Election [Electronic resource] // U.S. Department of Justice. 2019. March. Mode of access: https://www.justice.gov/storage/report.pdf.

94 Bernays E. L. Propaganda [Electronic resource]. 1928. Mode of access: http://www.whale.to/b/bernays.pdf.

95 Bernays E. L. The Engineering of Consent [Electronic resource]. 1947. Mode of access: http://classes.design.ucla.edu/Fall07/28/Engineering_of_consent.pdf.

96 Edward Bernays, 'Father of Public Relations' And Leader in Opinion Making, Dies at 103 [Electronic resource] // The New York Times. 1995. 10 March. Mode of access: https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/98/08/16/specials/bernays-obit.html.

works "The Politics of Nonviolent Action" (Parts 1[97], 2[98], and 3[99]), "From Dictatorship to Democracy"[100], are "There Are Realistic Alternatives"[101] resulted in him being regarded as "The Machiavelli of non-violence"[102] who some also believe was the spiritual inspiration[103] behind the 2011 "Arab Spring" events that Chief of the Russian General Staff Valery Gerasimov considered to be a theater-wide Color Revolution manipulated by the US for geopolitical ends[104].

Of present pertinence, the US is weaponizing Constructivist theories through its ongoing information warfare campaign against China to encourage its targeted audience across the world to doubt the fairness of its rival's BRI deals, just as it is doing the same against Russia vis-a-vis what it misportrays as Moscow's secret strategic intentions in order to justify its more muscular military presence along that country's western border. The instrumentalization of Constructivist thought is not just a force of aggression and subversion, but can also be applied towards much more positive goals such as improving bilateral relations and strengthening regional integration processes. China's international messaging strategy is focused on emphasizing the win-win nature of BRI agreements, just like Russia's is based upon presenting itself not as a threat to the world order that the US accuses it of being, but as a principled defender of the UN Charter that consistently

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97 Sharp G. Power and Struggle (Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part 1). Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973.

98 Sharp G. Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part Two: The Methods of Nonviolent Action. Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973.

99 Sharp G. Dynamics of Nonviolent Action (Politics of Nonviolent Action, Part 3). Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973.

100 Sharp G. From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation [Electronic resource]. The Albert Einstein Institution, 2010. Mode of access: https://www.aeinstein.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/FDTD.pdf.

101 Sharp G. There Are Realistic Alternatives [Electronic resource]. Albert Einstein Institution, 2003. Mode of access: https://www.aeinstein.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/TARA.pdf.

102 Flintoff J.-P. Gene Sharp: The Machiavelli of non-violence [Electronic resource] // New Statesman. 2013. 3 January. Mode of access: https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/your-democracy/2013/01/gene-sharp-machiavelli-non-violence.

103 How to start a revolution [Electronic resource]. Dir. Ruaridh Arrow. Media Education Foundation, 2011. Film. Mode of access: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqrRdQtsRhI.

104 Cordesman A. Russia and the "Color Revolution": A Russian Military View of a World Destabilized by the US and the West (Full Report) [Electronic resource] // Center for Strategic and International Studies. 2014. 28 May. Mode of access: https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/140529_Russia_Color_Revolution_Full.pdf.

opposes America's destructive meddling abroad. Moreover, Russia and China both utilize Constructivist means to convince one another's publics and their own that the other is no longer the threat that they were considered to be during most of the Old Cold War, which is meant to explain their strategic partnership to the average person who might not otherwise understand why these two former adversaries are so closely cooperating nowadays.

All told, Constructivism is a curious theory that also doubles as a tool for catalyzing political change as well as justifying it, whether proactiely or retroactively. The US has a history of weaponizing it through Color Revolutions and other subversive actions in order to geopolitically undermine its rivals, whereas China and Russia most commonly employ it to strengthen their mutual relations and support their foreign policies in a much more peaceful manner. That's not to say that the US has exclusive ownership over the weaponized techniques that it is utilized just like China and Russia do not have the same when it comes to their more constructively conditioned use of these methods, but just that this dynamic will probably remain more or less constant given their strategic positions relative to one another. The US has much more experience wielding Constructivism as a weapon to protect its global hegemonic dominance by exploiting preexisting identity conflicts in the ultra-diverse countries of the Eastern Hemisphere (Hybrid War, which was elaborated upon by the author of this dissertation in his 2015 book[105] on this topic as well as a long-running online article series that was published as an e-book[106] in 2017), while China and Russia have more of an impetus in applying these means defensively to strengthen their respective positions.

As with the other two theories, this one will also figure prominently throughout the thesis, but it is useful to give the reader an idea of how this will all unfold in order for them to retain their focus and better understand how everything fits together. Perceptions are intangible and difficult to discern, hence the importance of analyzing works by influential

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[105] Korybko A. Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach To Regime Change. Moscow: People's Friendship University, 2015.

[106] Korybko A. The Law Of Hybrid War: Eastern Hemisphere [Electronic resource]. Mode of access: https://www.amazon.com/Law-Hybrid-War-Eastern-Hemisphere-ebook/dp/B07124QCZH.

experts across the coming pages of this dissertation. This will help reveal their countries' perceptions to the best of the author's ability, after which certain conclusions can be made for formulating the most effective policy proposals. In particular, Russia must be careful to avoid having China and India perceive of it as unreliable, hypocritical, or as being too much under their rival's influence. In practice, Moscow can avert those scenarios by comprehensively expanding ties with Beijing's partners in Pakistan (which will be argued is objectively in Russia's interests even without the Chinese angle) simultaneously with pioneering the Neo-NAM with New Delhi in order to not provoke suspicions from India. This is the most basic summary of what the rest of the thesis entails, which will elaborate more in detail on the contours and dynamics involved with this after demonstrating each of those two's changing perceptions about Russia's balancing act between them and their rival. The author of this dissertation acknowledges that constructivism is controversial in the academic community specifically because some experts regard it as too subjective and therefore unreliable, but the most sincere efforts will be undertaken in this work to argue that it is one of the most relevant perspectives through which to assess everything.

Summary

The three main theories of International Relations are extremely relevant for the research at hand and especially in explaining the ongoing global systemic transition because they place the worldwide US-Chinese competition in its proper perspective. Both superpowers are stuck in a security dilemma from which neither of them is able to extricate themselves (Neo-Realism) as they seek to either retain or take control of the world system (Neo-Liberalism), helped along as they are through their employment of perception management methods (Constructivism) to shape domestic and international opinion about their own activities and that of their chief adversary. Despite being in a relationship of complex economic interdependence (Neo-Liberalism), the US and China are still pursuing their own interests (Neo-Realism) despite the adverse effect that this is having on both of them,

though they're portraying everything (Constructivism) in a different light. It seems unlikely that their threat-centric (Neo-Realist) perceptions (Constructivism) of the other will change anytime soon and allow them to return to their golden era of relations in cooperating with one another through the same institutions and arrangements (Neo-Liberalism). Given this present state of globally destabilizing affairs, it is now important to explore how the situation got to this point to begin with and then to elaborate more on the competition between these two superpowers.

1.2 Historical Development After The Old Cold War

Having reviewed the fundamentals of International Relations theory, it is now possible to better understand the historical development of the ongoing global systemic transition since the end of the Old Cold War in 1989-1991. The dissolution of the Soviet Union led to a situation where the US was finally able to become the world's unparalleled superpower, which in turn gave it the opportunity to apply the Hegemonic Stability Theory in practice. The 1991 Gulf War that was launched just before the USSR's erasure from the map was an important exercise that demonstrated how Neo-Liberal coalition-building could be leveraged for Neo-Realist gains in enabling the US to become the undisputed hegemon of the geostrategic and energy-rich tri-continental region of the Mideast.

Moreover, the 1990s was a period of time when the USA had no real obstacles in aggressively promoting their commercial interests. With the crouch on competitiveness and a broad political consensus the United States were able to achieve trade agreements with key players which guaranteed the US leadership on the multilateral trading system, with profound implications for economic and foreign policy. The collapse of the USSR, economic decline of Japan together with the “Washington consensus” as a “universal” recipe for economic growth being adopted by many countries helped to ensure American

dominance in the international economy[107].

The grand strategic outlook that seemed poised to be advanced by America at the time was somewhat similar to the one later described by Ikenberry in his work about the Liberal Leviathan whereby shared economic networks and values were supposed to undergird the US' leadership over the post-Old Cold War global system.

It should be noted that as a result of Deng Xiaoping's reforms China radically moved its economy away from its fundamentally dogmatic Marxism towards state capitalism. The billions of dollars of American investment flooded into its borders both as part of the then-incipient trend of economic globalization but also due to the US' strategic imperative in strengthening China as an intra-communist competitor to the USSR across the world. A collection of authors argued that this state of affairs actually made the world "tripolar" in their 1994 book "China, the United States and the Soviet Union: Tripolarity and Policy Making in the Cold War"[108]

This is a curious observation but one that nevertheless deserves some further thought since it presents what is technically a model of multipolarity yet one in which three main players powerfully influenced the course of global affairs instead of the one associated with unipolarity, the two associated with bipolarity, and the many usually associated with multipolarity. At the time, the world was still overwhelmingly bipolar, but the idea that a tripolar one was emerging with American assistance is an interesting concept, though it also fails to account for the rise of Western Europe at the same time which later led to the creation of the European Union (EU) as a separate pole of power in the contemporary multipolar world order. Still, the key takeaway of relevance to the research is that the US contributed to China's rise as part of its geostrategic calculations in the Old Cold War, hoping as it was that it could eventually co-opt the country into the American-led unipolar world order if that global competition ended in its favor as a partial result of such a gambit.

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[107] Brainard L. Trade Policy in the 1990s. Brookings. 2001. URL: https://www.brookings.edu/research/ trade-policy-in-the-1990s/.

[108] China, the United States and the Soviet Union: Tripolarity and Policy Making in the Cold War / eds. Ross R. S. Routledge, 1994.

While the US won the Old Cold War, it failed to succeed in its efforts to control China over the long term, which Trump touched upon in his 2019 speech at the UN General Assembly when he said that "in 2001, China was admitted to the World Trade Organization. Our leaders then argued that this decision would compel China to liberalize its economy and strengthen protections to provide things that were unacceptable to us, and for private property and for the rule of law. Two decades later, this theory has been tested and proven completely wrong. Not only has China declined to adopt promised reforms, it has embraced an economic model dependent on massive market barriers, heavy state subsidies, currency manipulation, product dumping, forced technology transfers, and the theft of intellectual property and also trade secrets on a grand scale."[109] The question therefore becomes one of wondering how and why that plan did not succeed, but the answer can only be discovered after analyzing the missteps that the US made during what Charles Krauthammer described as the unipolar moment[110] which enabled China to take maximum advantage of the American-led system[111].

Before proceeding, however, the Constructivist theory should be kept in mind the entire time since it is believed to have played a disproportionate role in shaping the strategic situation. China wasn't regarded as a threat, let alone any credible challenger, to the US for most of the quarter-century after the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991 until Trump's election in 2016. As Trump himself asserted in the previously cited passage from his 2019 speech at the UN General Assembly, the theory that China could be co-opted into the US' global system of leadership "has been tested and proven completely wrong." In hindsight, the US had a false sense of security in relation to China, wrongly underestimating the Communist Party's dedication to correcting the wrongs of what it describes as the "Century of Humiliation" in the 1800s and regaining its self-professed role as "Chung-Kuo — the

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[109] Trump D. J. Remarks by President Trump to the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Op. cit.

[110] Krauthammer C. The Unipolar Moment [Electronic resource] // The Washington Post. 1990. 20 July. Mode of access: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1990/07/20/the-unipolar-moment/62867add-2fe9-493f-a0c9-4bfba1ec23bd/.

[111] Гринин Л. Е., Коротаев А. В. Ближний Восток, Индия и Китай в глобальных процессах. М: Моск. ред. изд-ва “Учитель”. 2016. С. 211-243.

middle kingdom, the center of the universe and the world's oldest culture and society."[112] It also did not help any that the US failed to realize that its indirect support of the unsuccessful Tiananmen Square Color Revolution attempt in 1989 -- coinciding with the same support that it gave to the countries of the former Eastern Bloc as their citizens toppled communism there -- forever changed the Chinese leadership's perception of it and its intentions towards them, after which the country committed itself to undermining the US system from within long enough to take control of it at a future opportune moment that could have prospectively been during Hillary Clinton's presidency had she not lost to Trump.

The Unipolar Moment

The US' unipolar moment saw its strategists divided between two largely Neo-Liberal camps, the humanitarian interventionists (usually Democrat) and the neoconservatives (usually Republican), who drastically differed in their approach to sustaining American leadership across the world but nevertheless tacitly agreed upon the need to maintain that end one way or another. The crucial first decade of the post-Old Cold War unipolar world order was characterized by the absence of an adversary akin to the Soviet Union who posed a visible threat to the American-led system, which therefore influenced President Bill Clinton's support of the humanitarian interventionists' plans to intervene in Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia, and Yugoslavia instead of paying attention to thwarting the rise of future competitors before they ever had a chance to pose a credible threat to the US per the precept outlined in the 1992 Wolfowitz Doctrine[113] promulgated at the end of Bush, Sr.'s presidency. That Neo-Realist outlook strongly channels the Hegemonic Stability Theory by

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[112] Lewis R. Why China Considers Itself The Center Of The World [Electronic resource] // Business Insider. 2014. 9 July. Mode of access: https://www.businessinsider.com/understanding-chinese-perspectives-2014-7.

[113] Taylor P. E. 1992 Wolfowitz U.S. Strategy Plan Document [Electronic resource] // The New York Times. 1992. 8 March. Mode of access: https://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/08/world/us-strategy-plan-calls-for-insuring-no-rivals-develop.html.

decreeing that the US should take all necessary measures to prevent the emergence of a state-level adversary before the potential challenge became unmanageable, something that the Clinton Administration failed to do because of its belief that no such challenger was anywhere near the horizon to justify such an approach against anyone.

The priority focus was instead placed on expanding NATO, not necessarily because of any prediction that Russia would reemerge as a threat, but in order to transform that institution into the "core" for gradually absorbing what Thomas P. M. Barnett[114] later described as the "non-integrating gap" and his spiritual predecessor Immanuel M. Wallerstein called the "semi-periphery" and "periphery"[115]. The prevailing concept was that the US' political and economic models of Western Democracy and free trade would eventually disseminate all throughout the world, tying other countries closer to the core prior to their formal institutionalized relationship with it through various political, military, and economic agreements, even if the end result contradicts the purity of the Neo-Liberal theory by creating a Neo-Realist hierarchy within this envisaged global system. The neoconservatives, meanwhile, believed in the importance of geopolitics -- not institutions, even though the (sometimes militant and subversive) proselytization of democracy could stabilize American leadership per the Democratic Peace Theory -- as the foundation for sustaining American power abroad. They recoiled with revulsion at what they believed to be the wasted opportunity under Clinton to exploit the unipolar moment and indefinitely sustain the US' global systemic leadership, which influenced the obsessive zeal with which they later sought to implement their agenda upon coming to power after Bush, Jr.'s election.

The most powerful neoconservative platform was the Project for a New American Century (PNAC) that was co-founded by William Kristol and Robert Kagan, who published "Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy"[116] in

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[114] Barnett T. The Pentagon's New Map. War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004.

[115] Wallerstein I. M. The Modern World-System. New York: Academic, 1974.

[116] Kagan R., Kristol W. Present Dangers: Crisis and Opportunity in American Foreign and Defense Policy.

2000 and whose organization released "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces, and Resources For a New Century"[117] in the same year in an attempt to raise awareness about their much more proactive and alternative paradigm to "The Reluctant Sheriff"[118] proposed by Richard Haas in 1997. PNAC's work made it clear that Iraq should be at the forefront of American foreign policy because of the supposed threat that its members said it poses due to its alleged chemical and nuclear weapons programs. Although their writings did not influence the American masses, they did have a noticeable impact on individuals who would later go on to serve in the Bush Administration, chief among them Cheney. It was through this manner that Constructivist means disproportionately influenced the outcome of American foreign policy during that time in ways that will soon be explained, but before touching upon that, the work of former President Carter's National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski deserves to be mentioned in this context.

The late Polish-American thinker published his famous book "The Grand Chessboard"[119] in 1997 the same year that Haas released his work about "The Reluctant Sheriff". Unlike the latter, however, Brzezinski believed that a proactive foreign policy must immediately be implemented and that it should concentrate on the demographically diverse swath of resource-rich land stretching between the Mideast and Central Asia that he called the "Eurasian Balkans" in order to prevent the strategic collaboration between Russia and China which he feared could pose the greatest threat to American leadership. This trans-regional space would later be described as the "Greater Middle East"[120] by Bush-era experts and importantly includes what the 20th-century "father of geopolitics" Halford

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San Francisco, CA: Encounter, 2000.

[117] Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century [Electronic resource] // Project for the New American Century. 2000. September. Mode of access: http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/pdf/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf.

[118] Haass R. N. The Reluctant Sheriff. The United States after the Cold War. N.Y.: Council on Foreign Relations, Inc., 1997.

[119] Brzezinski Z. The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives. New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1997.

[120] Wittes T. C. The New U.S. Proposal for a Greater Middle East Initiative: An Evaluation [Electronic resource] // The Brookings Institution. 2004. 10 May. Mode of access: http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2004/05/10middleeast-wittes.

Mackinder termed the Eurasian "Heartland" [121], control over which he theorized is indispensable for dominating the Eastern Hemisphere's Afro-Eurasian landmass. In other words, Brzezinski advocated a classic divide-and-rule approach to keep the Eurasian Balkans in a state of controlled chaos that would therefore prevent Russia and China from uniting to challenge the US, which was somewhat successful during the Bush and Obama presidencies until the West's US-led anti-Russian sanctions imposed after Crimea's 2014 reunification pushed Moscow towards Beijing out of strategic necessity at the time[122].

Brzezinski wasn't the only thinker considering divide-and-rule paradigms in the Eastern Hemisphere, as Samuel P. Huntington's 1996 book about "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remarking of World Order"[123] made clear. Although it wasn't popular at the time, it later became a much-sought-after reference material in the post-9/11 world after the US dove head-first into the Mideast and began applying the policies lobbied for over the prior decade by the neoconservatives. Unlike Brzezinski, Huntington's approach was more reactive than proactive, but he nevertheless advocated a policy of intensified engagement within and between civilizations in order to manage the fundamental differences that he outlined and which he believed could give rise to large-scale conflict in the future. He did not pay as much attention to China as Brzezinski did, but both of them should be credited with at least countenancing the potential challenge that this civilization-state could pose to American leadership, since most of the humanitarian interventionists and neoconservatives did not regard it in such a way at the time. They were, to cite Trump, deluded into thinking that their theory of Neo-Liberal engagement would succeed in co-opting the East Asian country, being much more distracted by either liberal interventions in the previously mentioned countries or the thought of invading Iraq one day.

That said, the American military was apparently aware of just how credible of a long-term

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[121] Mackinder H. The Geographical Pivot of History [Electronic resource]. The Royal Geographical Society, 1904. Mode of access: http://stoa.usp.br/danilousp/files/-1/16432/Geographical+Pivot+at+History+%28Mackinder%29.pdf.

[122] Dolan C. J. Obama and the Emergence of a Multipolar World Order. Redefining U.S. Foreign Policy. London: Lexington books. P. 43-44.

[123] Huntington S. P. The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. Simon & Schuster, 1996.

threat China could become and thus felt compelled to implement the Wolfowitz Doctrine against it before becoming distracted by events in the "Greater Middle East" after 9/11. This is evidenced by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld urging Bush in March 2001 to undertake a concerted effort to confront China following a defense review that was conducted at the time and which concluded that preventive action was absolutely necessary in order to thwart the future challenge that it represents[124]. Less than a month later, the Hainan spy plane incident occurred when the Chinese intercepted an American surveillance aircraft and forced it into making an emergency landing on the southern Chinese island. Although the crisis was eventually resolved after the US apologized and China subsequently released its crew, this only strengthened America's resolve to contain the People's Republic, which was demonstrated by Rumsfeld "cut[ting] off virtually all of the Pentagon's contacts with the Chinese armed forces" in the months afterwards[125]. The US veritably seemed to be on the path to the New Cold War with China that later began in earnest under the Trump Administration but which stood a comparatively much better chance at crippling its adversary at that time had it not been for the unprecedented strategic interruption of the 9/11 terrorist attacks that kicked the PNAC's plans for the Mideast into action and forced America to all but forget about its grand strategic ambitions in East Asia for over a full decade.

Harry J. Kazianis, the executive editor of The National Interest, was likely thinking about Trump's promised hard line against China in January 2017 when he wrote an article wondering what would have happened had Bush been tougher on that country during the Hainan spy plane incident and its aftermath, though he ultimately concluded that "sadly, in the final analysis, a tougher line would have done little to stop the one event that would turn America’s eye away from Asia for almost a decade. Still, one wonders what could

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[124] Langton J. Rumsfeld to Tell Forces to Train Guns on China [Electronic resource] // The Telegraph. 2001. 25 March. Mode of access: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/1327936/Rumsfeld-to-tell-forces-to-train-guns-on-China.html.

[125] Gordon M. R. Rumsfeld Limiting Military Contacts with the Chinese [Electronic resource] // The New York Times. 2001. 4 June. Mode of access: https://www.nytimes.com/2001/06/04/world/rumsfeld-limiting-military-contacts-with-the-chinese.html.

have been if Bush had pushed back harder, and at least set a marker that a belligerent and defiant Beijing would not be treated as a 'responsible stakeholder'. China would have had at least some reason to think twice, over the last several years, in its march to re-order the status-quo in Asia in its favor."[126] Alas, such thinking is purely speculative since it is impossible to know what effect that could have had seeing as how the 9/11 terrorist attacks unexpectedly changed the world order and unleashed America's military wrath against the "Greater Middle East", which conveniently served to distract the US from China for long enough that Russia was able to replace its brief role as Washington's chief state-level adversary in two instances (after the 2008 Georgian Conflict and then the 2014 reunification with Crimea, interspersed with the failed so-called "Reset") once Mideast fatigue finally began to set in and prior to Trump's election. After the latter, it was a fait accompli that the billionaire businessman's economic outlook on International Relations would lead to China once again being seen as the greatest challenge to the US, though not before the game-changing BRI was unveiled.

The Mideast And Russian Distractions

As the research leaves the last century and crosses further into the present one, it is time to more thoroughly discuss the two largest distractions in the intervening period between 9/11 and Trump's election that prevented the US from paying proper attention to China's rise, and these are the Mideast and Russia. 9/11 was truly a paradigm changer and redirected the US' focus towards the "Greater Middle East", beginning with Afghanistan and then proceeding westward to Iraq and later Libya, even though those latter two countries had nothing to do with that terrorist attack. The Afghan War is especially relevant in the context of this dissertation because it placed the US smack dab in the center of the tri-regional crossroads of South, Central, and West Asia, thereby enabling it to straddle this strategic

[126] Kazianis H. J. What If Bush Had Taken a Tougher Line with China in 2001? // The National Interest. 2007. 18 January. Mode of access: https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/what-if-bush-had-taken-tougher-line-china-2001-19092.

space between Pakistan and Russia further afield. It'll later be revealed in Chapter 4 how the unforeseen consequences of this campaign, specifically the opening that it later created for ISIS/Daesh, compelled those two countries to enter into an historic and fast-moving rapprochement with one another that continues to this day and forms the subject of the present research. In terms of the grand strategic perspective, the US' military involvement in Afghanistan provided it with the opportunity to exert various degrees of influence on each of the neighboring countries, though it ultimately failed to yield anything of significant benefit from this position, especially after Central Asia narrowly averted two possible proto-"Arab Spring" scenarios following the 2005[127] and 2010[128] Kyrgyz Color Revolutions that could have dangerously spread throughout the region had they not been responsibly contained at the time in Uzbekistan. That harrowing experience, however, had an impact on the regional countries' threat perceptions and ultimately compelled them to intensify their collective cooperation through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in pooling their efforts to fight against the shared threats of terrorism, separatism, and extremism (which includes Color Revolutions).

Had the 2005 and 2010 events in Central Asia turned into their own "Arab Spring" (or what might have been described by the media in that anachronistic scenario as a Central Asian Spring instead), then Brzezinski's stratagem of dividing and ruling Russia and China through the exacerbation of Central Asia's many fault lines (first and foremost among them ethnic ones and those related to its peculiar Soviet-drawn borders) would have succeeded. That obviously wasn't the case, though once again, it cannot be emphasized enough just how important of an impression that feared scenario left among all pertinent decision makers, but it wasn't until the 2011 "Arab Spring" theater-wide Color Revolution attempt that they began to take the threat as seriously they should have all along. Prior to that, there was the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, which was the apotheosis of everything that the

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[127] Spencer R. Quiet American behind Tulip Revolution [Electronic resource] // The Telegraph. 2005. 2 April. Mode of access: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/kyrgyzstan/1486983/Quiet-American-behind-tulip-revolution.html.

[128] Uzbek Refugees Flee Kyrgyzstan Violence [Electronic resource] // BBC. 2010. 14 June. Mode of access: https://www.bbc.com/news/10307406.

neoconservatives had been planning for the past decade. Bush himself even believed that the war would be an epochal event catalyzing change throughout the entire region by eventually inspiring the Mideast's people to agitate for democracy against their mostly authoritarian governments after seeing how successful the Iraqi experiment was supposed to be[129]. In turn, the US would more easily be able to expand its Neo-Liberal influence throughout this geostrategic region that also not-coincidentally figures prominently in Neo-Realist calculations by virtue of its enormous energy reserves and pivotal location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa. For as grandiose of a plan as this was, it spectacularly failed in the end.

Instead of improving American soft power, it worsened it and only provoked more hatred for the US as a result. In addition, it also created a strategic opening for Iran to expand its influence over the territory of its former nemesis after the US inadvertently did it a favor when it deposed Saddam[130], which was a predictable scenario that the US nevertheless failed to anticipate. The Pandora's Box that the US opened up in the Mideast as a result of that conflict reinforced the confirmation bias of the neoconsevatives that their country's involvement in the region was indispensable to sustaining the unipolar moment. For instance, the mission creep that quickly set in during the occupation of Iraq dragged the US even deeper into what eventually became a proxy war between it and Iran. As the Islamic Republic's perceived power grew throughout the course of its successful support for Iraq's anti-American insurgents, the US' regional threat perception shifted from Iraq to Iran and its goal was no longer to spread democracy through the region but to carry out regime change in Tehran. As time went on and the financial costs of the Iraq War continued to rise to dizzying proportions, the US eventually decided to withdraw, though this created a security vacuum that later -- whether purposely[131] or unwittingly -- gave rise to Daesh,

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129 Donovan J. U.S.: Bush Envisions 'Global Democratic Revolution,' Starting In Iraq [Electronic resource] // Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 2003. 7 November. Mode of access: https://www.rferl.org/a/1104932.html.

130 Maloney S. How the Iraq War Has Empowered Iran [Electronic resource] // The Brookings Institution. 2008. 21 March. Mode of access: https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/how-the-iraq-war-has-empowered-iran/.

131 Hoff B. Defense Intelligence Agency: ‘Establish a Salafist Principality in Syria’, Facilitate Rise of Islamic State ‘In Order to Isolate the Syrian Regime’ [Electronic resource] // Centre for Research on Globalization. 2015. 22

which quickly grew to become the most pressing security threat in the Mideast from 2014-2018.

Without any doubt the wide range of internal factors was among the most important reasons for the Middle East region destabilization. However in the context of this paper it is important to highlight the destructive role of the USA in the process. The US completed its withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, the same year that the "Arab Spring" theater-wide Color Revolution was sparked. It is not within the scope of this thesis to explain the ins and outs of those interconnected regime change attempts, but just to point out that they most immediately triggered the NATO War on Libya in 2011 and the US-led Hybrid War on Syria. The argument can also be made that these events were a delayed[132] yet externally encouraged reaction to the Iraq War tacitly supported by some (though crucially, not all) of the American Establishment with the intent of replicating the 1989 "Autumn of Nations" scenario of a regional regime change campaign driven by Color Revolutions, albeit replacing mostly secular authoritarian states with Muslim Brotherhood-led ones that would have in that case been under the influence of then-US-allied Turkey just like the formerly communist nations of the Eastern Bloc were under the USSR's during the Old Cold War. If one connects the attempted scenarios of region-wide regime changes in Central Asia and the Mideast, it can be concluded that Hybrid War means (made possible through the conventional wars in Afghanistan and Iraq) were relied upon as part of a game-changing gambit to indefinitely sustain America's global hegemony through its indirect control of the majority of the world's energy resources and by geostrategically re-engineering the Eurasian Balkans in a manner that was supposed to forever keep Russia and China apart.

In a theoretical sense, Neo-Realist means (conventional wars) were supposed to promote Neo-Liberal ends (democracy) with Constructivist assistance (Color Revolutions), but that plan did not succeed. Instead, this risky approach served to distract the US from focusing

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May. Mode of access: https://www.globalresearch.ca/defense-intelligence-agency-create-a-salafist-principality-in-syria-facilitate-rise-of-islamic-state-in-order-to-isolate-the-syrian-regime/5451216.

[132] Husain E. Did Iraq War Give Birth to the Arab Spring? [Electronic resource] // CNN. 2013. 18 March. Mode of access: https://edition.cnn.com/2013/03/17/opinion/iraq-war-arab-spring-husain/index.html.

on its pre-9/11 efforts to contain China, as did the distraction posed by Russia from 2008 until the "Reset" and then once again from 2014 onward, which will now be discussed.

Most of the Color Revolutions of the early 2000s took place in the former Soviet Union (2003 Georgia, 2004 Ukraine, 2005 Kyrgyzstan), with the first of them creating an opportunity for NATO to extend its influence across the Black Sea to the Caucasus during the leadership of Mikhail Saakashvili. To make a long story short, he launched a sneak attack against Russian peacekeepers in the disputed region of South Ossetia in 2008 that ended up provoking a militant response from Moscow that instantly catapulted the US' Old Cold War rival back to the forefront of American decision makers' attention. The neoconservatives' formative years were during the Old Cold War, so they were already preconditioned to regard post-Soviet Russia as a latent threat of sorts, with Moscow's reactive moves only feeding into their confirmation bias just like Iran's expansion of influence in post-Saddam Iraq did the same. The brief spike in tensions between these two countries was temporarily smoothed over through the Obama Administration's "Reset" with Russia, which is now regarded in hindsight by the Americans as a failure[133] because it did not prevent Moscow from reunifying with Crimea in 2014 after the EuroMaidan Color Revolution succeeded in overthrowing the Ukrainian government and unleashing a wave of Neo-Nazi violence that threatened the mostly Russian people of the peninsula.

About that, the lingering distrust that some American strategists had of Russia's long-term ambitions and its potential to restore its lost Great Power status after the 2008 Georgian War influenced their plans to prepare for regime change in Ukraine in the event that then-President Yanukovich did not go through with his promise to sign an Association Agreement with the EU. It can be argued that this was a modification of the Wolfowitz Plan in that it aimed to prevent Russia's restoration of influence in the former Soviet Union through the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) that then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

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[133] Zygar M. The Russian Reset That Never Was [Electronic resource] // Foreign Policy. 2016. 9 December. Mode of access: https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/12/09/the-russian-reset-that-never-was-putin-obama-medvedev-libya-mikhail-zygar-all-the-kremlin-men/.

condemned in 2012 as "a move to re-Sovietize the region"[134]. The Neo-Liberal means of gradually absorbing Ukraine into the Western economic fold through its planned EU Association Agreement was supposed to promote the Neo-Realist end of indirectly containing Russia, but it ended up having to resort to Constructivist support through the EuroMaidan Color Revolution (planned and prepared for years in advance as a backup plan) after Yanukovich balked at signing the agreement at the very last minute. The chain reaction of events that unfolded afterwards led to the US leading the Western nations in an anti-Russian sanctions campaign and therefore promoting the perception of Russia as the greatest systemic threat to American hegmeony (portrayed by the US as a "threat to the rules-based international order"). Suffice to say, this also distracted the US from focusing more forcefully on containing China instead, once again giving the People's Republic much-needed time to increase its national strength as it geared up to challenge America for control of the international system.

China's Rise And US Containment Efforts

Having described how the US squandered close to a quarter-century of opportunities to contain China since the end of the Old Cold War in 1991, it is now time to talk about that country's surreptitious rise to its present status as the world's second superpower. China took maximum advantage of the US' distractions after the end of the Old Cold War to improve its economic and military strength. The priority focus was on continuing with economic reforms, albeit in a controlled manner that avoided the destabilizing consequences of unregulated free trade. it is for this reason why the country continued its protectionist policies despite its admission to the WTO in 2001, much to the US' consternation and something that Trump regularly reminds the world about. The US and China built upon their Old Cold War trade relationship after Nixon's "opening" of the early

[134] Clinton Calls Eurasian Integration An Effort To 'Re-Sovietize' [Electronic resource] // Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 2012. 7 December. Mode of access: https://www.rferl.org/a/clinton-calls-eurasian-integration-effort-to-resovietize/24791921.html.

1970s and Deng Xiaoping's reforms to enter into a system of complex economic interdependence that Neo-Liberals expected to be sufficient for eventually co-opting the People's Republic into the American-led world order[135]. As was touched upon earlier in this chapter, the failed Tiananmen Square Color Revolution attempt of 1989 at the high point of US-encouraged anti-communist regime changes in the Eastern Bloc forever changed the Chinese's perception of the US and galvanized the resolve of its leadership to one day take control of the global system that the US was shaping instead of jointly leading it through the "Chimerica" model[136].

This intent was largely unknown to most American decision makers at the time even if the Pentagon eventually caught wind of its military dimension around 2001 per the previously mentioned defense review that Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld concluded must result in a more concerted effort to stop China's rise, which was an unstated application of the Wolfowitz Doctrine that nevertheless failed to materialize given the black swan event of 9/11 that took place just several months afterwards and distracted the US for the next decade. China continued to be the recipient of large-scale foreign investment from American businesses that enabled it to carry out the greatest poverty alleviation program that the world has ever seen through the skillful management of these newly acquired financial resources by the Communist Party. Furthermore, China is accused of also stealing intellectual property and trade secrets from the US during this time as well[137], which might have contributed to the meteoric rise of its domestic production capabilities that came to form a crucial component of its "Made in China 2025" plan[138] unveiled in 2015 to become

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[135] Kanbur R., Shenggen F.The Oxford Companion to the Economics of China.Oxford University Press. 2014. P. 201-204.

[136] Karabell Z. Superfusion: How China and America Became One Economy and Why the World's Prosperity Depends on It. Simon & Schuster, 2009.

[137] Clark G. What Is Intellectual Property, and Does China Steal It? [Electronic resource] // Bloomberg. 2018. 5 December. Mode of access: https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-12-05/what-s-intellectual-property-and-does-china-steal-it-quicktake.

[138] McBride J., Chatzky A. Is ‘Made in China 2025’ a Threat to Global Trade? [Electronic resource] // Council on Foreign Relations. 2013. 13 May. Mode of access: https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/made-china-2025-threat-global-trade.

the world's leading economic power across the next decade[139]. Before discussing everything else that happened in that influential year, though, it is important to talk a bit about the systemic consequences of the 2008 global financial crisis.

That unforeseen event threw the world economy into panic and showed just how vulnerable other countries were to unexpected shocks coming from the US financial market, which served to inspire the leading economies to focus more on multilateral responses through the first-ever G20 heads of state meeting held that year than the measures usually relied upon by the elite G8[140]. The 2008 financial crisis thereby led to an increase in China's international economic standing because it wasn't as adversely affected as most major economies and it also recovered a lot sooner than the rest of them too. The center of economic gravity therefore began to shift from the US to China, thus drawing the attention of the rest of the world and making them more eager to expand trade and investment ties with the People's Republic as a sensible form of diversification from their erstwhile dependence on the US. Basically, China was able to skillfully advance its interests through this Neo-Liberal platform to accelerate its domestic development strategy and prepare itself for the global one that was soon to be unveiled in 2013 through BRI[141]. About that, BRI envisages the provision of no-political-strings-attached low-interest loans to developing countries in order to build infrastructure that's portrayed as providing a stimulus to their economies by more closely connecting them with China's massive market, which is supposed to guarantee their own economic growth for years to come through the complex system of interdependence that would then be formed with China (similar to how the US contributed to China's growth during the Old Cold War).

The prevailing concept is that BRI will function as the catalyst for facilitating the ongoing

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[139] Михеев В. В. Китай. Мировая экономика: прогноз до 2020. Мировая экономика: Прогноз до 2020 года / под ред. А. А. Дынкина. М. : Магистр, 2008. С. 303–329.

[140] Bradford C. I., Linn J. F. The G-20 Summit: Could the Financial Crisis Push Global Governance Reform? [Electronic resource] // The Brookings Institution. 2008. 24 October. Mode of access: https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/the-g-20-summit-could-the-financial-crisis-push-global-governance-reform/.

[141] President Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech and Proposes to Build a Silk Road Economic Belt with Central Asian Countries [Electronic resource] // The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. 2013. 7 September. Mode of access: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpfwzysiesgjtfhshzzfh_665686/t1076334.shtml.

global economic transition from the US-led Atlantic to what was slated to become the Chinese-led Pacific[142], though American strategists wisely foresaw what was in the process of happening and attempted to preempt it per a variation of the Wolfowitz Doctrine before it was too late. Secretary of State Clinton announced the US' "Pivot to Asia"[143] in late 2011 just as her country was preparing to complete its withdrawal from Iraq, which would have returned America's focus to East Asia just like it was supposed to have been since 2011 had it not been for the 9/11 terrorist attacks distracting it with the Mideast during that time[144]. As it has a history of doing, however, the US once again became distracted with the Mideast and Russia following the rise of Daesh during the War on Syria and the return of Russia as perceived threat to American interests following is reunification with Crimea and anti-terrorist intervention in Syria, which resulted in the Pivot to Asia stumbling and not amounting to much during the Obama Administration. There was one important development, though, and it was the attention that the US gave to China's island-building activities in the South China Sea from 2014 onward[145], which coincided with the anti-Russian sanctions after Crimea's reunification and inadvertently pushed those two neighboring countries closer to one another out of strategic necessity given the pressure that they both came under from the US. The unintentional outcome was that Brzezinski's "Grand Chessboard" stratagem of dividing Russia and China had dramatically failed due to these uncoordinated miscalculations.

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that China's island-building activities began a year after the 2013 announcement of BRI, so they might have been a preemptive means of thwarting the US from doing the same through its Pivot to Asia in order to contain the country's trade through the South China Sea. In other words, Clinton's late-2011

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[142] Гринин Леонид Ефимович Китайская модель и перспективы лидерства Китая в мире // Век глобализации. 2012. №2. С. 378-394.

[143] Clinton H. America's Pacific Century // Foreign Policy. Op. cit.

[144] Brown D., Murrey D. Power in the Twenty-First Century. Mapping a Multipolar World? Taylo r& Fransis. 2017. 123-125 p.

[145] Thuy T. T. Land Reclamation: a South China Sea Game Changer [Electronic resource] // Center for Strategic and International Studies. 2014. 10 December. Mode of access: https://amti.csis.org/land-reclamation-a-south-china-sea-game-changer/.

announcement that the US would shift its strategic focus to East Asia after withdrawing from Iraq triggered a security dilemma between it and China, after which the People's Republic took an uncharacteristically bold decision to build islands in the waterway before the US could do the same, though that move unintentionally worsened their security dilemma and gave the US the proverbial ammunition needed to shape the regional states' perceptions (and especially Vietnam's) in such a way that they began to regard China as a threat that must be balanced against per the Neo-Realist model. The obviously predictable militarization of the South China Sea then influenced China to undertake the fateful decision to build the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) the year after in 2015[146], which has since become BRI's flagship project after over $60 billion was invested in it over the past half-decade. CPEC is irreplaceably important for China's grand strategy because it provides the People's Republic with its only reliable non-Malacca access route to the Afro-Asian ("Indian") Ocean that is not under the control of the unparalleled US Navy like that Southeast Asian chokepoint and the South China Sea increasingly are. Put another way, CPEC is truly the game-changer that it is portrayed by its proponents as being because it allows China to break out of the US' containment noose.

2015 was also hugely significant because that was when Pakistan and India were invited to join the SCO, as well as the year that the US signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action (JCPOA) with Iran and Russia intervened in Syria. In addition, China also unveiled its "Made in China 2025" plan to become the world's leading economy, all of which contributed to the perception among some in the US that their country was on the decline in a similar way as it was thought to have been in 1979-1980 during the Carter Administration. Just like back then, the domestic American response was the election of a nationalist leader who promised to restore his country's greatness and take on its chief adversary across the world, which in the contemporary context is regarded by Trump to be China, not Russia, unlike the assessment of some members of the "deep state" that he

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[146] Houreld K. China and Pakistan Launch Economic Corridor Plan Worth $46 Billion [Electronic resource] // Reuters. 2015. 20 April. Mode of access: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-china/china-and-pakistan-launch-economic-corridor-plan-worth-46-billion-idUSKBN0NA12T20150420.

inherited from Obama. In fact, it can even be said that Trump's promised peacemaking outreaches to Russia were made with the intent of shifting the US' state's full focus away from that country and towards containing China instead[147], since he as a businessman understood more than many career bureaucrats how the trade deficit with the People's Republic was endangering American national security. That's why he immediately committed to waging the trade war in order to rectify this mismatch and also put pressure on his adversary to reform its economy in a way that would work out to America's zero-sum strategic advantage.

China had hitherto been mostly successful in retreating into the background of American consciousness and avoiding the attention of its hawks, helped along as it was by the Mideast and Russian distractions that occupied their focus instead for the first decade and a half of the 21st century. This enabled the country to call upon its national reserves of economic and military strength in order to prepare for what in business is called a "hostile takeover" of the US-led system through BRI, though in a gentler, more gradual way than the term dramatically implies. Having immensely profited from its economic partnership with the US in the post-Old Cold War era of globalization and its exploitation of the American-created rules which built that system, China had a better chance than any other country to pose a latent threat to the unipolar order, something that the Pentagon picked up on but was unable to adequately respond to in the preventive sense that it originally wanted as a result of the previously mentioned distractions. China therefore set out to quietly expand its economic influence in a way that would eventually make it the new center of global trade just as the US was after World War II and the end of the Cold War, with BRI being its modus operandi and CPEC its flagship project for ensuring the long-term reliability of this initiative.

Framed in a theoretical way, China is pursuing the Neo-Liberal end of tying all other countries into its trade system through the creation of BRI's geostrategic trade corridors

[147] Gray F. Steve Bannon: ‘We Have to End the Cold War with Russia’ [Electronic resource] // Spectator USA. 2018. 18 July. Mode of access: https://spectator.us/steve-bannon-we-have-to-end-the-cold-war-with-russia/.

influenced by Neo-Realism and supported by the Constructivist perception management efforts of portraying this effort as creating a more just and equitable global order that contrasts with the unjust and hierarchical one led by the US. BRI is intended to function as the bridge for connecting the Chinese "core" with the what Barnett termed the "non-integrating gap" and Wallerstein conceptualized as the "semi-periphery" and "periphery", but Beijing lacks the military muscle that Washington does to protect all of its projects. Therefore, the US' response is to strike at the fundamentals of the Chinese economy through the trade war in parallel with waging Hybrid Wars against the most important Silk Road corridors such as CPEC in order to compel China's strategic capitulation and its subserviance to a reformed American-led order that could be described as the New Washington Consensus that Trump is endeavoring to build. Referring back to theory, the US is reforming its Neo-Liberal approach (New Washington Consensus) after realizing that its shortcomings created space for others to seek out the Chinese alternative of BRI's no-political-strings-attached low-interest loans as well as accelerate the trend towards multipolarity after the financial costs of the Afghan and Iraq Wars reduced the strength of its unipolar hegemony. In response, the US has decided to delegate leadership responsibilities to regional partners with whom it has a shared interest through the "Lead From Behind" stratagem[148] for containing China in the economic, geopolitical, and military spheres.

Of supreme importance for the dissertation, this also pivotally includes the US' efforts to co-opt China's fellow BRICS and SCO member India into the Pentagon's "Indo-Pacific" strategy[149] for containing the People's Republic through the 2016 Logistics Exchange Memorandum Of Agreement (LEMOA)[150] with the South Asian state and its designation as

[148] Korybko A. Lead From Behind: How Unipolarity Is Adapting To Multipolarity [Electronic resource] // Sputnik. 2015. 29 January. Mode of access: https://sputniknews.com/columnists/201501291017517136/.

[149] Indo-Pacific Strategy Report [Electronic resource] // The Department of Defense. 2019. 1 June. Mode of access: https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF.

[150] Peri D. What Is LEMOA? [Electronic resource] // The Hindu. 2016. 18 October. Mode of access: https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/What-is-LEMOA/article15604647.ece.

America's first-ever and thus far only Major Defense Partner (MDP)[151] in the same year because of the security dilemma created between these two neighboring states by Beijing's rapid rise. The Trump Administration also envisages turning India into a re-offshoring destination for foreign companies that leave China throughout the course of the trade war, which could eventually tilt the economic balance between them in the long-term and thus reinforce India's role as the US' main proxy partner for containing the People's Republic. Furthermore, India is adamantly opposed to BRI on the grounds that its flagship project of CPEC transits through Pakistani-controlled territory that New Delhi claims as is own per its maximalist approach to the Kashmir Conflict, and the country is also accused of using its intelligence agents such as Kalbhushan Jadhav[152] to wage a Hybrid War on CPEC[153], so these two interconnected factors must figure into any discussion about the US and India's strategic commonalities. As such, India is understandably the US' perfect partner in the 21st century, which is why former Secretary of State Tillerson spoke at length in October 2017 at an event dedicated to "Defining Our Relationship with India for the Next Century"[154] elaborating on the promising prospects for bilateral relations across the next eight decades.

Simply put, China cannot be fully contained without disrupting, controlling, or influencing CPEC because of the geostrategic importance that this project affords the People's Republic by providing it with its only reliable non-Malacca access route to the Afro-Asian ("Indian") Ocean away from that Southeast Asian chokepoint and the increasingly

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[151] Joint India-United States Statement on the Visit of Secretary of Defense Carter to India [Electronic resource] // Department of Defense. 2016. 8 December. Mode of access: https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/1024228/joint-india-united-states-statement-on-the-visit-of-secretary-of-defense-carter/.

[152] Transcript of RAW Agent Kulbhushan's Confessional Statement [Electronic resource] // Dawn. 2016. 30 March. Mode of access: https://www.dawn.com/news/1248786/transcript-of-raw-agent-kulbhushans-confessional-statement.

[153] Korybko A. #Indian Hybrid War on CPEC - Andrew Korybko [Electronic resource] // YouTube. 2016. 15 October. Mode of access: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ebh-SamuhM.

[154] Tillerson R. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on 'Defining Our Relationship with India for the Next Century' [Electronic resource] // U.S. Embassy & Consulates in India. 2017. 18 October. Mode of access: https://in.usembassy.gov/secretary-state-rex-tillerson-defining-relationship-india-next-century/.

militarized waters of the South China Sea where the unparalleled US Navy can assert control over Chinese maritime trade in the event of a crisis. India supports the US in both of these efforts, however, it is still also practicing its policy of "multi-alignment"[155] in maneuvering between the world's most influential players in a bid to obtain maximum benefits through this Neo-Realist balancing act, which is why it reinvigorated its stalled relations with Russia over the past few years and especially following Prime Minister Modi's visit to the 2019 Eastern Economic Forum as President Putin's guest of honor where the two agreed to establish the Vladivostok-Chennai Maritime Corridor (VCMC)[156]. Moreover, India is defying the US' CAATSA sanctions threats to purchase Russia's S-400 anti-air missile defense system, proving the existence of its balancing strategy however imperfect it may be in practice. it is also relevant to mention that India, just like China, is Russia's BRICS and SCO partner, so it is interesting that the South Asian state is cooperating with both it and the US, albeit to completely different ends. The same can be said of Russia vis-a-vis its relationship to China since President Putin committed to integrating the EAEU with BRI during his keynote speech at the 2019 Belt & Road Forum[157] but is also closely cooperating with US-friendly India which is working with Washington to contain the People's Republic.

Interestingly, none of these grand strategic imperatives visibly changed since Joe Biden replaced Trump as the American President following the 2020 election. His administration retained its predecessor's policy of maximally pressuring China on all fronts, including the economic one through Trump's infamous trade war. Biden also agreed to go ahead with Trump's February 2020 deal with the Taliban to withdraw all American forces from Afghanistan by 2021[158], though he extended the deadline from 1 May to 31 August. The

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[155] Mishra M. K. India’s Shift toward Multi-Alignment // Asia Times. Op. cit.

[156] India, Russia Sign Pact to Open Maritime Route Between Chennai and Vladivostok [Electronic resource] // News18. 2019. 4 September. Mode of access: https://www.news18.com/news/india/india-russia-sign-pact-to-open-maritime-route-between-chennai-and-vladivostok-2297059.html.

[157] Putin V. Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation [Electronic resource] // Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia. 2019. 26 April. Mode of access: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60378.

[158] Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan Which Is Not Recognized by the United States as a State and Is Known as the Taliban and the United States of America

only discernible difference between him and Trump is that Biden prioritizes more multilateralism in his public rhetoric through his talk about bringing together the world's democracies to confront what he perceives to be shared threats such as China. Nevertheless, this appears mostly to be superficial in practice since he still unilaterally decided to withdraw from Afghanistan and retain his 31 August deadline despite the US' allies being largely against this. It therefore seems as though Biden's team either silently accepted the supposedly wisdom of Trump's strategic priorities or might have been caught up in the strategic momentum that they inherited and decided that the costs of changing course so drastically far outweighed the expected benefits. With this in mind, for all intents and purposes, Biden's policies remain practically identical to Trump's with respect to the topics covered in this thesis.

All of this places Russia in the very unique position to apply the Neo-Realist concept of balancing towards India and China in pursuit of closer Neo-Liberal cooperation, therefore maintaining stability in their multilateral relations in order to strengthen the global trend towards multipolarity despite its two partners' evident differences with one another and in contrast to the US' efforts to turn India against China in the New Cold War just like it did by turning China against the Soviet Union during the Old Cold War. The proverbial elephant in the room is Pakistan, which hosts BRI's game-changing flagship project of CPEC that's indispensable to China's grand strategic plans, which naturally makes it worthwhile to explore the contours of Russia's rapid rapprochement with that country in recent years and discover the relevance that it has to Moscow's contemporary balancing act that's being practiced in the global context that was described in the current chapter. Accordingly, Chapter 2 will discuss the Russian perspective on modern-day International Relations and the country's envisaged role within it, which includes pioneering ambitious trans-regional integration initiatives, while the third chapter will cover the nature of Russia's balancing act between China and India. Finally, the fourth chapter will talk about

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[Electronic resource] // U.S. Department of State. 2020. 29 February. Mode of access: www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Agreement-For-Bringing-Peace-to-Afghanistan-02.29.20.pdf.

the importance of Russian-Pakistani relations within his larger framework given the importance that the South Asian country's CPEC holds in determining the course of the New Cold War competition between China and the US (alongside America's new Indian partner in this shared effort).

1.3 Implementation of Theory To Russian-Pakistani Relations

The three primary theories of International Relations are relevant paradigms through which to understand the evolution of Russian-Pakistani relations, both in general as well as in the context of the historical development of International Relations after 1991. Beginning with Neo-Realism, the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 revolutionized the way in which this model can be applied towards understanding post-independence Russia's relations with Pakistan. During the Old Cold War, the Soviet Union and Western-backed Pakistan fiercely fought for influence in Afghanistan. Each side was driven by their own perception of the security dilemma that they were arguably caught in vis-à-vis the other. The Soviet Union feared that Afghanistan could become the West's Pakistani-backed bridgehead for destabilizing the majority-Muslim Central Asian Republics while Pakistan feared that Afghanistan's Soviet-backed communist government could become Moscow's bridgehead for destabilizing it in collusion with India following the example of the erstwhile East Pakistan's (now Bangladesh's) Mukti Bahini during the 1971 War[159].

The Soviet Union's dissolution resulted in the constitutional de-ideologization of post-independence Russia, the relevance of which will be elaborated on later in this subchapter when discussing Neo-Liberalism and Constructivism, and the formalization of its former Soviet Republic borders as the new international frontier. Of pertinence to relations with Pakistan in the context of Neo-Realism, the second-mentioned meant that there was no longer any fear in Islamabad that Moscow could destabilize it from nearby Central Asia since its borders were pushed back to Siberia after 1991 with the Soviet

[159] Iqbal M. INDIA AND THE 1971 WAR WITH PAKISTAN / M. Iqbal // Pakistan Horizon — vol. 25, no. 1 — 1972 — pp. 21–31.

Union's dissolution. Likewise, post-independence Russia also had no related fears about Pakistan destabilizing its southern periphery since it was now pushed back to Siberia instead of remaining in nearby Central Asia like it was during the Soviet period. This geopolitical development therefore resulted in neutralizing their long-running security dilemma with one another that turned into a vicious proxy war in Afghanistan all throughout the 1980s. A new period of relations could thus begin.

It's here where Neo-Liberalism comes into play since Russia and Pakistan were now both capitalist countries, or more accurately, neither officially followed communist dogma like the former Soviet Union was forced to do via its constitution. Each did their utmost to more closely integrate themselves into the US-led capitalist system via their participation in globalization processes, albeit to different extents and with differing success. The point, however, is that Cold War-era ideologies no longer served as an impediment to seriously exploring the creation of mutually beneficial partnerships. To be sure, they also didn't impede the brief era of positive ties during the 1970s, but it can be argued that former Pakistani leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was at the very least sympathetic towards socialism much more than capitalism and thus pragmatically overlooked ideologically differences between his country and the Soviet Union in pursuit of shared interests. That short-lived perspective ended with his execution and the rise to power of General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, who was criticized by many at home and abroad as a radical Islamist[160].

Neither Russia nor Pakistan successfully integrated into the US-led capitalist system, however, with each remaining on the periphery of globalization for a variety of reasons that are beyond the scope of this dissertation. What's important in this context is simply to draw attention to their shared peripheral status vis-à-vis that aforesaid system, which continued into the 21st century and up until the present day. Instead of prioritizing integration into the US-led post-Cold War order like each sought to do during the 1990s, they started seriously reorienting towards China two decades later beginning around the

[160] Herring, R. J. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the "Eradication of Feudalism" in Pakistan. / R.Herring // Comparative Studies in Society and History, 21(4), 519–557.

2010s. Beijing's BRI was seen by both as a much fairer form of globalization, especially since Russia and Pakistan were afforded crucial roles within this paradigm: the first via the Eurasian Land Bridge to the EU and the second via CPEC to the Indian Ocean.

Moreover, unlike the US, China envisages a world order that aligns with the principles enshrined in the UN Charter instead of arbitrarily implementing selective standards in pursuit of its own interests like America does through its so-called "rules-based order" concept. China's worldview is shared by Russia and Pakistan, which served to further catalyze each of their plans to comprehensively expand ties with the People's Republic, particularly through BRI via the respective connectivity corridors that they were expected to host. Pakistan's inclusion in the SCO in the mid-2010s then brought that country and Russia into the same regional integration organization, which further accelerated their hitherto glacial rapprochement since the Cold War. The combined effect of their newfound relations with China vis-à-vis Beijing's envisaged BRI-driven world order and Pakistan's membership in the SCO that Russia co-founded is that Islamabad and Moscow began to realize that their interests rest not just in expanding ties with China, but in expanding ties with one another as well due to their shared goals.

Their participation in the same institution via SCO, economic model via BRI, and worldview as it relates to the one that China has the greatest chance out of any non-Western country to advance explains the relevance of Neo-Liberalism in the context of Russian-Pakistani relations, especially as they began to take shape during the years explored in this dissertation. To summarize, Neo-Liberalism used to be yet another impediment to their bilateral relations on top of Neo-Realism due to their participation in rival Cold War blocs and polar opposite ideologies, yet this model eventually came to bring them together after the Soviet Union's dissolution and the rise of China as the US' only peer/systemic competitor from the mid-2010s into the present day.

The analysis that was shared so far regarding the roles of Neo-Realism and Neo-Liberalism in the improvement of Russian-Pakistani relations helps explain the role of Constructivism, which focuses a lot on perceptions. Each of their views of one another

were affected by the geopolitical earthquake of the Soviet Union's dissolution, their shared peripheral status with respect to US-led globalization and central one when it comes to China's BRI-led alternative, and the constitutionally enshrined de-ideologization of Russia. India's drift towards the US after 1991 due to the necessity of compensating for its de facto Soviet ally's dissolution also contributed to eroding Pakistani fears of Moscow and Delhi double-teaming it like they did in the former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1971, and with this dimension of their prior security dilemma being resolved in the minds of policymakers in Islamabad, the rest eventually followed regarding the Neo-Liberal and Constructivism parts. It also deserves mentioning that India's drift towards the US during that time coincided with the US distancing itself from Pakistan, which became unstable during the 1990s due to the ideological and security blowback from its support for Islamist militants in Afghanistan over the past decade. With the US no longer seen as reliable as it once was while Russia was now no longer seen as the security threat that it once was, the conditions were in place for reforming Pakistani policymakers' views of Russia.

Constructivism also played a role in accelerating their ties due to these two realizing that they broadly share the same worldview upon both independently moving closer to China for that reason from the 2010s onward. Russia began to realize that the Pakistan of the present isn't the same as the Pakistan of the past during the last decade of the Cold War, just like Pakistan began to realize that the Russia of the present isn't the same as the Soviet Union during that same time. While it's true that each began to open their eyes in this way during the 1990s, it arguably took their shared embrace of China, BRI, and its associated view of the emerging world order to seriously build upon these growing commonalities between them, which speaks to the lingering legacy of their prior security dilemma during the 1980s, especially regarding the way that Pakistan's influential military-intelligence structures might have still perceived everything to a certain extent.

Had it not been for China's rapid rise since the end of the Cold War, which was earlier assessed as the most important geopolitical development in International Relations over the past three decades, then it's unlikely that Russia and Pakistan would have moved

as close to one another as they did during the period covered in this dissertation. There'd still likely be some socio-economic, political, and security cooperation, but it probably wouldn't be anywhere near the level that they started discussing during this aforementioned timeframe. This observation speaks to the importance of structural factors on shaping their bilateral relations. Had the world order remained Western-centric, then there wouldn't be much of an impetus to consider exploring the comprehensive expansion of their ties. Each would have continued prioritizing the US to different extents and with differing success, but with China's rise, they began looking eastward and eventually towards the Afghan-Central Asian space between them regarding the possibility of more directly connecting with one another via new logistical and trade corridors.

It can therefore be concluded that the three primary International Relations theories and the historical evolution of International Relations from 1991 onward are indeed very relevant for understanding Russian-Pakistani relations. Each theory adds more insight into the reasons behind the erosion of what many had previously considered to be their insurmountable security dilemma that turned into a fierce proxy war that they fought throughout the 1980s in Afghanistan. Furthermore, China's rapid rise since the end of the Old Cold War created the structural conditions that reshaped their respective policymaking priorities in the grand strategic, regional, and bilateral sense. The resolution of Neo-Realist obstacles paved the way for resolving Neo-Liberal ones, which ultimately contributed to the reassessment of their bilateral relations through the Constructivist paradigm that helps keep those two together during the tumultuous events of the present decade.

CHAPTER 2: The Global Context of Contemporary Russian-Pakistani Relations

The ongoing global systemic transition is being driven by the competition between the US and China whereby the former is attempting to retain its hegemony while the latter is

seeking to replace it. This dynamic is commonly compared to the Thucydides Trap[161], a theory postulated by Harvard professor Graham Allison in 2017 which claims that rising powers are bound to clash with established ones, using the example of ancient Athens and Sparta as the first real case of this idea in practice. Allison's work has gone on to greatly influence many minds since it was first published several years ago, and it currently forms the frame of reference through which many experts are analyzing the New Cold War. Although many of them assumed that he concluded that both sides are "destined for war" like the title of his book provocatively states, Allison actually believes that such a scenario can still be averted so long as the US and China enact certain compromises in order to manage their growing security dilemma. it is important to accept that the Thucydides Trap is not inevitable, since it is this cautious optimism which forms the basis of Russia's contemporary assessment of the global systemic transition.

2.1 Official Russian Views on Global Context of Contemporary Russian-Pakistani Relations

The most authoritative source on Russian foreign policy is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' concept paper approved by President Putin at the end of 2016[162], and a reading of this official document enables one to better understand Moscow's approach to the multipolar world order. As the name implies, this report shares the fundamental guidelines that are expected to shape the practice of Russian foreign policy, and accordingly, it touches upon a host of issues relevant to International Relations. Some are more pertinent to this dissertation than others, however, so only some of the paper will be referenced in this context. The General Provisions relate to the thesis by emphasizing the need "to create a favourable external environment that would allow Russia’s economy to grow steadily and

[161] Allison G. Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap? Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017.

[162] Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (Approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on November 30, 2016) [Electronic resource]. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Mode of access: http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/2542248.

become more competitive", as well as to "to consolidate the Russian Federation’s position as a centre of influence in today’s world." Taken together, one of the most tangible goals of Russian foreign policy is to enhance the country's international influence in order to stimulate economic growth, which will be elaborated upon more thoroughly in Chapters 2.3 and 2.4 but is useful to keep in mind throughout the rest of this one. "Establishing a fair and democratic international system" is expected to facilitate this primary objective, which will then be upheld by "the development of constructive dialogue and partnership with a view to promoting harmony and mutual enrichment among various cultures and civilization." In other words, the pursuit of multipolarity is a structural means towards the tangible ends of sustainable economic development and inter-civilizational cooperation for stabilizing the outcome of the ongoing global systemic transition.

That's a lot easier said than done, however, since the foreign policy concept recognizes some tough truths about the present world order. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs regards the international environment as being characterized by rising multidimensional tensions and is alarmed by the increasing use of force to settle disputes. It believes that cross-border challenges and threats are growing, but that existing military and political alliances are incapable of properly addressing them. Accordingly, "the universal principle of equal and indivisible security" should take prominence during these uncertain times, with international law being the foundation upon which all potential solutions to these many problems are formulated. it is important to bear in mind that "global power and development potential is becoming decentralized, and is shifting towards the Asia-Pacific Region, eroding the global economic and political dominance of the traditional western powers ", which is heralding a new era in International Relations, albeit one that's fraught with the risk of inter-civilizational discord unless such relations are properly managed. People and states are becoming increasingly interconnected, so it is only natural that regional integration processes be pursued by the independent centers of power that are emerging at the dawn of the multipolar world order. Crucially, Russia is seen as playing a special role in all of this because its foreign policy "is characterized by consistency and

continuity and reflects the unique role Russia has played for centuries as a counterbalance in international affairs and the development of global civilization." Emphasis should be placed on the self-professed role of serving as a "counterbalance", since the dissertation will later argue that Russia's 21st-century grand strategy is to become the supreme balancing force in Eurasia, uniquely positioned to stabilize the ongoing global systemic transition and indefinitely sustaining its envisaged multipolar outcome.

Russia regards the overall priority of its foreign policy to be the "shaping a fair and sustainable world order", which its concept paper says also involves "expanding its ties with its partners within the Group of Twenty, BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and the Republic of South Africa), the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization), RIC (Russia, India and China) alongside other organizations and dialogue platforms." China and India are members of each of the aforementioned international bodies, further underscoring the importance of managing Russia's relations with both in a bilateral and multilateral sense, ergo the importance of strengthening relations with Pakistan (which is China's top international partner and India's main foe) as the most pragmatic way to gain more strategic leverage in this Great Power triangle for the balancing reasons that will be expounded upon in Chapters 3 and 4. For now, it is enough for the reader to remember that the aforementioned shift of global power and development potential to the Asia-Pacific means that it is inevitable that Russia will seek to expand its influence all throughout this trans-regional space, including South Asia and specifically with Pakistan, with a view towards balancing the rise of its Chinese and Indian partners and thus guaranteeing a role for itself between them which could then lead to tangible economic benefits as a result.

Of relevance, the foreign policy concept states that Russia "advocates the promotion of bilateral and multilateral cooperation of States, primarily nuclear weapons States, with a view to resolving issues related to strategic stability, ensuring common security in the spirit of openness", which directly relates to the nuclear triangle of China, India, and Pakistan. Although Russia is of the formal position that India and Pakistan's issues with one another

must be solved bilaterally[163], this does not necessarily preclude its possible role (whether openly or not) in attempting to de-escalate tensions between them during crisis situations, such as what it proposed to do in February 2019 during the brief spike in hostilities at that time if both parties had agreed[164]. Similarly, it could also gently insert itself in a diplomatic fashion into the issues that pop up between China and India, or at the very least encourage their ongoing bilateral efforts to resolve the slew of problems that plague their relations but have yet to lead to a repeat of their 2017 Donglang/Doklam standoff[165]. For as much as Russia accepts bilateral solutions to international disputes in practice such as the approach that it has towards the issues between India and Pakistan and India and China, it nevertheless is officially in favor of multilateral ones that involve "collective action by the international community", or at least as the starting point for negotiations. This is proven by the part of the foreign policy concept that unambiguously asserts that "Russia facilitates the resolution of regional conflicts by political and diplomatic means through collective action by the international community, believing that such conflicts can only be resolved through inclusive dialogue and negotiations involving all sides rather than by isolating any of them." That specific clause, as well as the previously mentioned one about Russia's historical "counterbalance" role, can be interpreted in such a way as to justify its balancing strategy during and after the ongoing global systemic transition.

Recalling what was written at the beginning of this chapter, Russia's foreign policy concept aims to achieve concrete economic benefits for the country. The document says that Russia "contributes to the efficiency of the multilateral trade system with the WTO at its core, and promotes regional economic integration in line with its priorities", as well as "creates favourable conditions for expanding Russia’s presence on global markets, primarily by

[163] Our Views Exactly the Same: Russia Backs India’s Kashmir Stand [Electronic resource] // India Today. 2019. 28 August. Mode of access: https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/our-views-exactly-the-same-russia-backs-india-kashmir-stand-1592518-2019-08-28.

[164] Russia Set to Propose Hosting India-Pakistan Talks to Defuse Conflict [Electronic resource] // TASS. 2019. 28 February. Mode of access: https://tass.com/politics/1046856.

[165] Referred to as Donglang by the Chinese and Doklam by the Indians, this platEAEUis located at the tri-national juncture between China, India, and Bhutan and was the scene of a months-long face-off between the Chinese and Indian militaries during summer 2017, which was eventually resolved in a peaceful manner and set the basis for the tradition of yearly informal summits between their two leaders in Wuhan in 2018 and Mamallapuram in 2019).

diversifying its exports, and specifically by increasing the volume of non-resource-based exports, and expanding the geography of foreign economic ties." Another important point is that it also "provides governmental support to Russian organizations seeking to tap new markets and gain a larger foothold in traditional ones, while countering discrimination against Russian investors and exporters." All three of these guidelines are extremely relevant for the dissertation because they form the economic impetus for Russia's intensified engagement efforts with Pakistan, which hosts BRI's flagship project of CPEC. It is impossible for Russia to adequately fulfill the aforementioned tasks without playing some sort of role in CPEC, to say nothing of the CPEC+ corridors that could prospectively stretch throughout the hemisphere, the modalities of which will be explored at length in Chapter 4. Nor, for that matter, can Russia succeed unless it is involved with the joint Indo-Japanese Asia-Africa Growth Corridor[166] (AAGC[167]) too, which is those two countries' incipient attempt to fill the global economic fields that China has overlooked through BRI's focus on "hard" infrastructure such in human resources, healthcare, education, and other "soft" sectors. it is therefore imperative for Russia to simultaneously enhance its economic relations with Pakistan (CPEC, CPEC+) and India (AAGC) in parallel with its efforts to integrate the EAEU and BRI, which understandably involves the practice of a delicate balancing act between these competing interests (China/BRI and Pakistan/CPEC vs. India/AAGC).

"Information support for the foreign policy activities of the Russian Federation" is another goal outlined in the concept paper because "Russia seeks to ensure that the world has an objective image of the country, develops its own effective ways to influence foreign audiences, promotes Russian and Russian-language media in the global information space, providing them with necessary government support, is proactive in international information cooperation, and takes necessary steps to counter threats to its information

[166] Asia Africa Growth Corridor: Partnership For Sustainable And Innovative Development (A Vision Document) [Electronic resource]. Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia. 2017. Mode of access: http://www.eria.org/Asia-Africa-Growth-Corridor-Document.pdf.

[167] Singh G. India, Japan and the Asia Africa Growth Corridor [Electronic resource] // Gateway House: Indian Council on Global Relations. 2019. 17 January. Mode of access: https://www.gatewayhouse.in/japan-aagc/.

security." The document also states that "greater participation of Russia's academics and experts in the dialogue with foreign specialists on global politics and international security is one of the areas of public diplomacy development." All of this is already happening in regards to relations with China and India, but is sorely lacking when it comes to Pakistan, a serious shortcoming to Russia's soft power that will be addressed in Chapter 4. In any case, it is reassuring to see that the country understands the importance of information support and cooperation, but it is also disappointing that this aspect of foreign policy has been neglected in relations with Pakistan. If there's any silver lining to this unfortunate situation, it is that both countries can start from a clean slate if the political will is present on both sides, something that Pakistan has repeatedly signaled but which has only received a lukewarm response from Russia. Without the crucial assistance that information support provides to the practice of Russian foreign policy towards Pakistan, Moscow will be unable to maximize the mutual benefits that this partnership promises for both of their regional strategies, though once again, this will be explained more in depth in Chapter 4 but is being introduced at this moment because it falls within the context of the foreign policy concept.

Altogether, the regional implementation of these policies takes the form of a multifaceted approach to Russia's various partners. The concept paper highlights the priority that Russia places on regional integration processes in the former Soviet space, specifically the EAEU, CIS, and CSTO. It also warns against the negative consequences of the US' anti-Russian containment policy, which it regards as "undermining regional and global stability" and thus being "detrimental to the long-term interests of all sides". Instead, Russia proposes a "common space of peace, security and stability based on the principles of indivisible security, equal cooperation and mutual trust" with the Euro-Atlantic region. "Russia's strategic priority in its relations with the EU is to establish a common economic and humanitarian space from the Atlantic to the Pacific by harmonizing and aligning interests of European and Eurasian integration processes, which is expected to prevent the emergence of dividing lines on the European continent" and is advanced through

cooperating with leading Western European countries like France and Germany. Russia also wants "mutually beneficial relations" with the US, so it can be said that it seeks the normalization of ties with both sides of the Euro--Atlantic space through what the dissertation's author calls a "New Detente", which implies a series of compromises by all parties on issues of multilateral concern such as Ukraine and Syria for instance.

As for the non-Western majority of the world, "Russia views strengthening its positions in the Asia-Pacific Region and stepping up relations with its States as a foreign policy area of strategic importance", and the spirit of this vision can extend throughout the reaches of what the US describes as the "Indo-Pacific" and the author conceptually expands as the "Afro-Pacific" in order to include all the countries of the Indian Ocean Rimland to account for China's increased influence in the body of water that's already made it Africa's top trading partner[168]. This reconceptualization of the Asia-Pacific as the Afro-Pacific places Pakistan and India smack dab in the geographic center of this massive trans-regional space. India's role of aspiring to become the hegemonic of its eponymous ocean is well known, though few have paid attention to the importance that Pakistan plays in this larger framework through CPEC and CPEC+, especially in the sense of serving as China's only reliable non-Malacca access route to the Indian Ocean, which is a total geostrategic game-changer. Since "strengthening its positions in the Asia-Pacific Region and stepping up relations with its States [is] a foreign policy area of strategic importance", it follows that doing so with Pakistan should fall within the ambit of this ambitious goal as well if one accepts the existence of the Afro-Pacific concept formulated upon the geostrategic basis that was just explained above.

The foreign policy concept also talks about how "Russia is interested in participating proactively in the integration processes in Asia-Pacific, using the possibilities it offers to implement socioeconomic development programmes in Russia’s Siberia and Far East, and creating an inclusive, open, transparent and equitable collective security and cooperation

[168] Shijia O., Changsha L. China-Africa Trade Ties to Blossom [Electronic resource] // China Daily. 2019. 5 July. Mode of access: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201907/05/WS5d1ea816a3105895c2e7bd60.html.

architecture in Asia-Pacific", which cannot happen unless Russia diversifies its regional investment and integration strategy beyond its current dependence on China. Therein lays the relevance of participating in the AAGC in order to court Indian and Japanese investment into these underdeveloped regions, something that has become much more realistic after Prime Minister Modi's trip to the 2019 Eastern Economic Forum and the joint agreement for both sides to establish the Vladivostok-Chennai Maritime Corridor (VCMC)[169]. Still, without involving Japan -- which might not be possible to the extent that Russia needs without first signing a peace treaty with Tokyo -- this strategy will be incomplete, though it'll nevertheless be more balanced even if India is invited to play more of an important role in this part of the country than it currently is. This vision is important to keep in mind for Chapter 3 where Russian-Indian relations will be discussed more in detail.

Moving forward, the foreign policy concept emphasizes the significant role that Russia's relations with China and India play, which again adds credence to the proposal of prioritizing ties with Pakistan in the coming future seeing as how events in that South Asian state are capable of shifting the balance of power between Moscow's two BRICS partners. Pakistan also figures into Russia's larger vision for Eurasian integration because it is a member of the SCO, which thus makes it party to Moscow's plan to "establish a common, open and non-discriminatory economic partnership and joint development space for ASEAN, SCO and EAEU members with a view to ensuring that integration processes in Asia-Pacific and Eurasia are complementary." Not only is Pakistan just another one of the countries within these three-mentioned organizations, but it is China's top BRI partner through CPEC, thus making it indispensable to what Russia is trying to achieve. it is therefore all the more surprising that the Russian-Pakistani rapprochement hasn't proceeded more rapidly, though that might be due to the sensitivities of Russia's Indian partners, but in that case Russian decision makers should ask themselves whether their counterparts in New Delhi really have mutually beneficial interests in mind or if they're

[169] India, Russia Sign Pact to Open Maritime Route Between Chennai and Vladivostok // News18. Op. cit.

simply replicating the same zero-sum attitude as their new American partners by pressuring Moscow to slow down the pace of its engagement with Islamabad. This question forms one of the themes running throughout Chapter 3.

Beyond the Asia-Pacific, it should be noted that the concept paper states that "Russia will continue making a meaningful contribution to stabilizing the situation in the Middle East and North Africa, supporting collective efforts aimed at neutralizing threats that emanate from international terrorist groups, consistently promotes political and diplomatic settlement of conflicts in regional States while respecting their sovereignty and territorial integrity and the right to self-determination without outside interference." It also believes that the threats emanating from Afghanistan as a result of that land-locked country's long-running instability pose serious risks to the CIS, therefore necessitating Russia's attention which later manifested itself in the bold Pakistani-facilitated initiative to host the Taliban for peace talks in Moscow several times in 2019[170]. Africa is also mentioned in the document too (as is Latin America, though it is outside the scope of this dissertation), but just a few general words were said about improving cooperating with the many countries of those regions. Therefore, it can be said that the regional foci of the foreign policy concept paper are two-fold and concern normalizing relations with the West ("New Detente") while finding ways to reap tangible economic benefits from the East (which the dissertation's author argues lay in joining the AAGC to balance China while intensifying relations with Pakistan to balance India's recent geostrategic shift towards the US' "Indo-Pacific" anti-Chinese containment strategy).

Russia's top officials have their own official views towards the practice of their country's foreign policy, with the dissertation now moving along to describing some of the most pertinent ones expressed by President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov. The current uncertain state of International Relations did not catch Russia by surprise, but was presciently predicted to a large degree by Putin in his 2007 speech at the Munich

[170] 'Intra-Afghan' Talks Under Way In Moscow Amid Continuing Violence [Electronic resource] // Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. 2019. 5 February. Mode of access: https://www.rferl.org/a/afghan-taliban-moscow-talks/29751787.html.

Conference on Security Policy[171] where the head of state warned about the forthcoming destabilizing consequences of the US' unrestrained use of force in aggressively trying to defend its leading position in the world order. Putin also described the contours of the emerging multipolar world order in the subsequent question and answer session that followed, remarking on the role of BRICS in constructively shaping the future. it is regrettable that the US and its allies did not heed the Russian leader's advice, but the point in talking about that past speech is to show that Russia was prepared to flexibly adapt to what it predicted was one of the possible scenarios that could foreseeably transpire, which it evidently did as proven through the foreign policy concept of 2016 that demonstrates a keen understanding of contemporary international processes influenced by the factors that Putin talked about in Munich.

In the present day, Putin's speech at the Valdai Club in late 2019[172] and the follow-up answers that he gave to the various questions that were posed to him represent an up-to-date take on International Relations. The president clearly has a civilizational perspective on matters after remarking that countries such as China and India "are heirs to great ancient civilizations", and that "the Asian nations still preserve their unique features and traditions. They remember their roots and prove in their forward progress that the principles of state sovereignty do not contradict openness and globalisation, that sustainable development can be based on independence and self-sufficiency rather than their mandatory renunciation, and that growing national economic and humanitarian potential requires political identity." This is somewhat of an anti-liberal stance, but it importantly shows that Putin understands the need to preserve traditional values and appreciates the world's diverse civilizations, which is why he later spoke about how "with regard to the world in general, since all nations are obviously different, uniformity and universalisation are impossible by default. A system is required whereby different values, ideas and traditions can co-exist, interact

[171] Putin V. Speech and the Following Discussion at the Munich Conference on Security Policy [Electronic resource] // Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia. 2007. 10 February. Mode of access: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034.

[172] Putin V. Valdai Discussion Club Session [Electronic resource] // Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia. 2019. 3 October. Mode of access: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/61719.

and mutually enrich one another while retaining and highlighting their peculiarities and differences." Chapter 4 will describe why Pakistan can be regarded as the Convergence of Civilizations through its CPEC+ corridors, the role of which perfectly correlates with Putin's aforementioned civilizational vision.

Putin proclaimed that "the world has become multi-polar and, hence more complicated largely owing to the Asian countries. But, as I have said, multi-polarity as such is not a cure-all. Nor does it mean that urgent problems will disappear by themselves." The solution, he said, lies in collective security initiatives that are relevant for what he described as today's "unprecedentedly interconnected" world system. Adding an economic dimension to them through the creation of complex interdependence between states can stabilize this unprecedentedly interconnected multipolar world system, which is why Putin proceeded to talk about transport interconnection initiatives such as the North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC) between Russia and India and the Eurasian Land Bridge that will connect Europe and China across his country's territory. Interestingly, Putin also talked about "one more prospective route, the Arctic-Siberia-Asia", which he envisions linking up with the Eurasian Land Bridge but also with the Indian Ocean through a new North-South economic corridor. The northern expansion of CPEC through post-war Afghanistan and Central Asia (N-CPEC+) could perfectly facilitate these plans and will be discussed in Chapter 4.

It is "impossible" to "contain China", Putin said in response to a question about the US' attempts to do so through its "Indo-Pacific" strategy, and moreover, he believes that it is "un-Asian to begin with" and "at odds with the current state of affairs in Asia" to even attempt to create any such bloc-based organizations. Instead, Putin said that the international community "should focus on joining efforts to create an environment of friendly cooperation and to search for common security systems. This is something we should work on together, including, of course, India, which is one of the countries closest to us in the world and especially in Asia." He had previously talked about the Russian-led initiative to create a collective regional security organization in the Gulf, so this

interestingly suggests that something of the sort might be replicated elsewhere in Asia -- perhaps even in South Asia between India and Pakistan and India and China -- in the future using the precedent of the Syrian settlement that he also mentioned earlier in his speech as the means to encouraging all parties to reach pragmatic compromises. In addition, Putin said that "the time has come to talk in terms of a global 'concert' of development models, interests, cultures and traditions" modeled off of the 19th-century "Concert of Powers", of which Russia, China, and India would naturally be a part. If Russia is successful in reaching a strategic partnership with Pakistan characterized with the same level of trust that it currently has with China and India, then it could propose mediating a series of meetings that combine the Astana format, collective security, and a modern-day "Concert of Powers" between its three partners for resolving their disputes and therefore stabilizing South Asian affairs.

For a more comprehensive take on the contemporary state of international affairs, it is worthwhile reviewing some of the views expressed by Russia's top diplomat Lavrov in 2019. Speaking at the Primakov Readings International Forum[173] in June of that year, he paid homage to his 1990s-era predecessor on the 90th anniversary of his birth and recalled his "contribution to the creation of the conceptual foundation of Russia’s current foreign policy, consolidation of its international positions and comprehensive interpretation of the processes that are unfolding in the world". Primakov's foreign policy principles include "self-sufficiency, independence, multi-vector approach, openness and predictability", and "all of these have been tested by time and are reflected in yet another version of the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation that was endorsed by President Putin." In addition, "Primakov was never an advocate of isolationism or confrontation", instead pursuing balanced approaches towards international issues that take into account everyone's interests. Of relevance to the dissertation's subject, Primakov is also known for

[173] Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s Statement and Answers to Questions at the Primakov Readings International Forum, June 11, 2019 [Electronic resource] // The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 2019. 11 June. Mode of access: http://www.mid.ru/web/guest/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/3681351.

pioneering Russia's post-Old Cold War re-engagement of China and India as counterbalances to the West, thus making him the godfather of the country's current geopolitical balancing act that is now poised to include a pivotal Pakistani component for better managing relations between Moscow's two BRICS partners.

Lavrov was critical about the current international situation that he described as being characterized by a decreasing level of strategic trust, mostly due to the US' "attempt to secure unilateral geopolitical advantages and preserve its status as the single decision-making centre" that "delivered powerful blows to the international security architecture formed after World War II." "To reverse it," Lavrov said, "it is necessary to remove ideology bias from foreign policy, to abandon the archaic methods of military-political, economic, and information deterrence, to stop reinventing the wheel, and to begin to make full use of the huge potential of universal mechanisms of global governance such as the UN and its Security Council, as well as the G20." Seeing as how "the ongoing globalisation is increasing the interdependence and complementarity of the national economies", Lavrov proposed that "practical efforts to harmonise integration projects should become a vital unifying element of the global agenda", with the progress being made on doing this with the EAEU and BRI in pursuit of the Greater Eurasian Partnership being the prime example of this that he mentioned. Concluding his speech, Lavrov declared that "Russia is an independent centre of global politics and a guarantor of cooperation with anyone who is ready to reciprocate. Russian diplomats will continue working to transform futile rivalry into constructive collaboration. These efforts also take into account Yevgeny Primakov’s legacy and his numerous seminal works."

The key takeaways from his remarks at that symbolic event are that Primakov's legacy of geopolitical balancing is still alive today but has been modified to account for contemporary international conditions. Looking forward, there's no reason why Russia shouldn't prioritize improving its relations with Pakistan since the South Asian state hosts BRI's flagship project of CPEC and is a key player indirectly influencing Chinese-Indian relations. Furthermore, like it is been said several times before in this dissertation, it is

impossible to integrate the EAEU and BRI without Russia playing some role in CPEC with time, even if its participation does not extend to the Pakistani-controlled regions of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan through which this corridor traverses and which India claims as its own per its maximalist approach to the Kashmir Conflict. After all, like Lavrov said, Russia is "a guarantor of cooperation with anyone who is ready to reciprocate", and there's certainly interest on the Pakistani side to see this happen. Not only that, but it would go a long way towards enhancing Russian-Chinese relations as well since Moscow has yet to invest in BRI's flagship project, likely owing to New Delhi's concerns. It'll become more difficult to refrain from doing so in the coming future, however, if the EAEU and BRI succeed in integrating with one another, which is why it is important for Russia to consider its plans at this point so that it can better prepare for more effectively executing its policies when that moment arrives.

This theme is also returned to in the article that Lavrov published with the "Russian In Global Affairs"[174] on the eve of his trip to the UN General Assembly that September. Titled "World at a Crossroads and a System of International Relations for the Future", it begins with Lavrov lamenting the revival of fascist sentiment in Europe and the failure of the post-Old Cold War period "to bring the triumph of a unifying agenda." Instead, the "end of history" was popularly talked about, which he interpreted as referring to the notion that "from now on there would be only one global decision-making center." As it turned out, however, "it is obvious that the efforts to establish a unipolar model have failed", which has resulted in the irreversible transformation of the world system and "a growing demand for a more just and inclusive system" to replace it. This future system of International Relations cannot be based upon the Western interpretation of "liberalism", though, since Lavrov extensively criticized its many hypocrisies in practice and spoke out against it

[174]'World at a Crossroads and a System of International Relations for the Future' by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov for 'Russia in Global Affairs' Magazine, September 20, 2019 [Electronic resource] // The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 2019. 20 September. Mode of access: http://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/3792556?fbclid=IwAR2A8L5wUhPhqOEsLGz6RSkMIR1yq9PX14KJV2qB02t7ancInmbzi7MDjYs&p_p_id=101_INSTANCE_cKNonkJE02Bw&_101_INSTANCE_cKNonkJE02Bw_languageId=en_GB.

being imposed on the rest of the world as its only option. Showing a balanced approach, Lavrov did say that "liberalism, or rather its real undistorted essence, has always been an important component of political philosophy both in Russia and worldwide", but that "the multiplicity of development models does not allow us to say that the Western 'basket' of liberal values has no alternative." Furthermore, the "rules-based order" upheld by the US is only selectively enforced, thus making it inherently unstable and very unfair.

Lavrov is especially concerned about how his "American colleagues...do not conceal their wish to sow discord between Moscow and Beijing and undermine multilateral alliances and regional integration projects in Eurasia and Asia-Pacific that are operating outside of the US oversight." This development, and everything else over the past two and a half decades, has led to global systemic disorder. Specifically, "in politics, erosion of the international legal basis, growth of instability and unsustainability, chaotic fragmentation of the global landscape and deepening mistrust between those involved in the international life. In the area of security, blurring of the dividing line between military and non-military means of achieving foreign policy goals, militarization of international relations, increased reliance on nuclear weapons in US security doctrines, lowering the threshold for the use of such armaments, the emergence of new hotbeds of armed conflicts, the persistence of the global terrorist threat, and militarization of the cyberspace. In the world economy, increased volatility, tougher competition for markets, energy resources and their supply routes, trade wars and undermining the multilateral trade system." Astoundingly, the US has tried to blame Russia for all of this by labeling it a "revisionist power", though Lavrov's retort is that it is actually the defender of the international order envisaged by the UN Charter and has been since the time of Primakov, who he again credits for formulating "the concept of multipolarity in International Relations that accurately reflects emerging economic and geopolitical realities".

For as bad as the situation may seem, Russia has several proposed solutions, all of which refer back to the founding principles of the UN Charter and the recognition that "the emergence of a polycentric world architecture is an irreversible process". The most

relevant to this dissertation are his thoughts on how "it is our common interest to ensure that multipolarity is not based on a stark balance of power like it was at the earlier stages of human history (for example, in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century), but rather bears a just, democratic and unifying nature, takes into account the approaches and concerns of all those taking part in the international relations without an exception, and ensures a stable and secure future." In other words, a balance of converging interests should take precedence over a divisive balance of power. Lavrov also refutes "some people in the West who often speculate that polycentric world order inevitably leads to more chaos and confrontation because the 'centers of power' will fail to come to terms among themselves and take responsible decisions", rhetorically asking why the world shouldn't try anyhow. Apart from utilizing multilateral organizations like the G20, BRICS, and the SCO, he repeats what's since become the common theme of Russian foreign policy to assemble the Greater Eurasian Partnership between the EAEU, SCO, ASEAN, and even the EU. He adds that "consistent movement towards this constructive goal will allow us not only to keep up the dynamic development of the national economies and to remove obstacles to the movement of goods, capital, labor and services, but it will also create a solid foundation of security and stability throughout the vast region from Lisbon to Jakarta."

It goes without saying that Pakistan will obviously be part of the Greater Eurasian Partnership even if it is not explicitly stated, and CPEC -- as BRI's flagship project -- will also play a prominent role. Although India will probably have some heightened sensitivities about this inevitable development which could feed into the security dilemma between it and Pakistan, Lavrov said that "Russia will continue to promote a positive and unifying agenda aimed at removing the old dividing lines and preventing the appearance of new ones", so it can be assumed that Moscow will proactively seek to reduce Indian-driven zero-sum tensions in pursuit of this mutually beneficial outcome for all of Eurasia. A lot of work still has to be done in order to realistically place Russia in a position where it can credibly do so, hence the need for a comprehensive strategic partnership with Pakistan in the coming future which will be talked about a bit more in Chapter 3 and then discussed at

length in Chapter 4. As the reader should realize by now, Russia's officially articulated trans-regional integration vision of the Greater Eurasian Partnership and its core component of EAEU-BRI integration necessitates closer Russian-Pakistani relations by default because of CPEC's importance in serving as the most significant Silk Road project anywhere in the world, though Russia has thus far neglected this crucial bilateral partnership and therefore urgently needs to make up for lost strategic time over the decades.

What certainly hasn't been neglected during that time is bilateral relations with China, which Lavrov celebrated in an article that he published in Rossiyskaya Gazeta and Renmin Ribao[175] in the run-up to the 70th anniversary of the People's Republic. The Foreign Minister wrote about how their "cooperation is rooted in the universally recognised norms of international law that are free from any ideology" and "has its own inherent value and is not directed against anyone." This purely pragmatic approach to International Relations is the recipe to their success, and makes their ties "actually more advanced than some formal alliances, judging by the level of mutual trust, the resilience and depth of [their] cooperation", which also includes "close foreign policy coordination" as an "inherent part" of the Russian-Chinese strategic partnerships that altogether makes this bilateral relationship "a major stability factor in global and regional affairs." Still, Lavrov emphasized that "amid growing interdependence in the age of globalisation, and as new global centres of gravity emerge and gain ground, there is a need for non-conventional, innovative approaches" such as "the steady advancement of various integration processes" most prominently marked by the increasing "complementarity" between the EAEU and BRI as they "harmonise their operations". This will in turn "lay the ground for building a new inclusive geopolitical framework in Eurasia that would be open to all countries and integration associations without exception" and will be advanced "in the spirit of the

[175] Sergey Lavrov's Article ‘A Forward-Looking Partnership’ for Rossiyskaya Gazeta and Renmin Ribao, September 26, 2019 [Electronic resource] // The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 2019. 26 September. Mode of access: http://www.mid.ru/en/web/guest/maps/cn/-/asset_publisher/WhKWb5DVBqKA/content/id/3806960.

'integration of integrations' concept" that will described later on in this chapter.

Lavrov did not really say anything new in his article, but the importance lies in the fact that he was directly addressing the Russian and Chinese domestic audiences to articulate his country's vision of the supercontinental-wide future of bilateral cooperation with China. Given what was previously cited about Russia's foreign policy concept, Putin's Valdai speech, and the other two works by Lavrov, the reader can better understand how Russia's top diplomat came to formulate the policies that he laid out in this specific article. The non-exclusivity of Russia and China's joint approach to Eurasian integration through the Greater Eurasian Partnership's core component of EAEU-BRI integration leaves open the obvious possibility of Pakistan playing a greater role in this framework, again, because CPEC is BRI's flagship project. Lavrov's reminder that bilateral ties with China and their multilateral impact on the rest of Eurasia are "not direct against anyone", which is a signal not only to the West, but also to India, whose security dilemma has peaked from time to time whenever China makes progress on expanding BRI like it is poised to do through the initiative's impending integration with the EAU. Although India might not ever participate in BRI owing to concerns about its sovereignty and lopsided trade arrangements, to say nothing of its maximalist approach to the Kashmir Conflict that makes its impossible to accept CPEC, that does not mean that Russian-Indian ties would necessarily have to suffer if -- or rather, when -- Russian-Pakistani ties improve to the point where Moscow starts playing some role or another in CPEC because it is BRI's flagship project.

The last official work to be cited in this part of the dissertation is Lavrov's speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2019[176], the contents of which will be extremely familiar for the reader after reviewing the previously mentioned works in this chapter. Just like in his article written for Russian and Chinese media, he did not say anything new, but rather repackaged the earlier examined concepts for a larger audience. One of the most

[176] Statement by H.E. Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly, New York, September 27, 2019 [Electronic resource] // The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 2019. 27 September. Mode of access: http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/3822351.

pertinent points to this dissertation that he made in his speech was that "it is dangerous to yield to the temptation and divide [the Asia-Pacific region] into conflicting blocs" like the US is attempting to do through what Lavrov must be implying about its "Indo-Pacific" policy, so the solution to avoiding that scenario is the "harmonization of integration processes" through the Greater Eurasian Partnership that he envisages as bringing together the EAU, SCO, ASEAN, "and which is open to all other Eurasian states, including the EU countries." Just like he wrote in his article for Russia In Global Affairs, "consistent implementation of these endeavors will contribute not only to increasing economic growth but also to laying a solid foundation in order to form the territory of peace, stability, and cooperation from Lisbon to Jakarta." As such, it is impossible to deny the existence of Russia's grand strategic vision of trans-regional integration via the Greater Eurasian Partnership which by extension necessitates the improvement of Russian-Pakistani relations as one of its most important, albeit currently underdeveloped, vectors.

Summarizing Russia's official assessment of the global systemic transition, the country basically believes that it was triggered by the US' refusal to accept the inevitable multipolar world order that was destined to follow the end of bipolarity. America's aggressive defense of the short-lived "unipolar moment" accelerated global destabilization processes and led to many of the contemporary problems that the world is facing. Russia, however, can play a central role in stabilizing the world system, and will even go as far as working with all countries that want to reciprocate and also respect the founding principles enshrined in the UN Charter. No longer beholden to the bloc-based mentality that dominated its decision making during the Old Cold War, Russia is perfectly positioned to balance between all of Eurasia's actors, both big and small, and intends to encourage their multilateral cooperation in pursuit of the Greater Eurasian Partnership that its leadership is convinced will function as the most sustainable model of future multipolar development for the hemisphere. Importantly, unlike the US, Russia accepts the existence of diverse socio-economic and political systems that do not necessarily conform to the Western interpretation of liberalism, which ingratiates it much more with the non-Western world. All the while,

Russia is doing its utmost to reach a "New Detente" with the West in parallel with tweaking the balancing act between its top two non-Western Chinese and Indian partners, with details about the latter initiative being elaborated more in Chapter 3.

2.2 Russia's expert community on Regional and Trans-Regional Integration Strategy as factors shaping Russian-Pakistani Relations

Russia's expert community, especially those members associated with its top think tanks, the Valdai Club and the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), greatly contributes to the formulation of state policy, so it is imperative to review their assessment of the international state of affairs in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of how the country regards its role in the changing world order and bilateral relations with other countries, namely, Russia and Pakistan. There are several themes that predominate the current discussion, with global governance being one of the most pressing, which is why it is being addressed first out of all the others. Ivan Timofeev, programme director at the Valdai Club and also director of programs at the similarly influential RIAC, published an analysis in early 2019 about "Political Multipolarity vs. Economic Unipolarity: 2018 Results and 2019 Intrigues"[177], in which he shared his observation that while political and military multipolarity is a reality nowadays, the world is still largely unipolar in the economic sense. He drew upon two key events in 2018, the US' reimposition of sanctions against Iran and its promulgation of sanctions against Russian companies such as Rusal, in making his determination. He also forecast that the US' threatened sanctions against Huawei in 2019 would represent a third piece of evidence supporting his theory. Timofeev's short article is extremely thought-provoking because he also mentions that the Neo-Realist paradigm that shapes the outlook of many of his fellow Russian experts leads to them failing to see this projection. His two main takeaways are that this "generates a

[177] Timofeev I. Political Multipolarity vs. Economic Unipolarity: 2018 Results and 2019 Intrigues [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 5 January. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/political-multipolarity-vs/.

much more complicated structure of power relations in the modern world" and that "the main political question is how long the key players will accept the situation where economic globalization is used in the political interests of the leading power and the main currency of international settlements is 'weaponized.'"

Yaroslav Lissovolik, programme director at the Valdai Club and member of the Government Expert Council (among his many other accolades), and Mark Uzan, Executive Director of the Reinventing Bretton Woods Committee, jointly published a report at the Valdai Club in June 2018 about "The New Global Governance: Towards A More Sustainable Framework"[178]. These experts wrote about the ongoing "crisis of transition" between three models: Trump's "economic nationalism", China's "shared future for mankind", and the Canadian and French calls to "double down on the current liberal order." They noted how China is establishing new institutions that are necessitating the reform of the Bretton Woods monetary system. Some of the large-scale changes occurring in today's world which they wrote about in their report concern Global South integration platforms, specifically the possibility of what's described in the text as the Trilateral Intercontinental Alliance (TRIA) formed by the African Union (AU), SCO+, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), which are also boosted by BRICS+. The TRIA vision represents the culmination of the three interconnected trends of regional integration, pan-continental integration, and trans-continental integration. Lissovolik's visionary views on each of these three trends will be described more in detail later in this chapter when discussing Russia's regional and trans-regional integration plans because he's already published plenty of articles elaborating on how these could realistically play out in practice, and his ideas are pertinent to the dissertation in that they lay the integration basis for justifying the furtherance of Russian-Pakistani relations through the CPEC+ model that will be form a core component of Chapter 4.

On the topic of BRICS, which was touched upon in the above-mentioned joint report, the

[178] Uzan M., Lissovolik Y. №88The New Global Governance: Towards a More Sustainable Framework [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2018. 29 June. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/valdai-papers/new-global-governance/.

Valdai Club hosted an event in August 2019 about "BRICS: Towards a Common Vision of the World Order"[179] where a discussion concerning "BRICS: Development Goals 2030" was held. A summary of the discussion is available on the think tank's website and revealed that the member countries' representatives declared that their states "are ready to form a common front amid uncertain global conditions", especially to collectively advance the three components of sustainable development: "economic growth, environmental protection and social progress." In spite of intra-bloc disagreements over Venezuela or even the sharp differences of outlook between its Chinese and Indian members, one of the participants strongly affirmed that "the glue that holds us together in BRICS is far greater than the divergences. And that glue is the recognition that we are living in a changing world, we are very uncertain about what kind of world is going to emerge, but we are very certain about one thing: that we want our voices heard in whatever the rules for a new world are." This is a pragmatic assessment largely rooted in the shared interest that the BRICS countries have in gradually reforming the global economic and financial systems in order to make them more equitable, which underscores the economic basis of this bloc and dispels the false notion among some that it is pursuing a unified political agenda. Frankly speaking, it cannot, even if its members wanted to, since there are too many asymmetries between them, not even counting the growing security dilemma between China and India. Nevertheless, BRICS is still an influential global governance platform because its members could prospectively pool their potentials in order to weaken the US' economic unipolarity that Timofeev wrote about and thus make the world more multipolar as a result.

In order for Russia to properly tap into the prospective benefits related to its experts' views on global governance, it must first prioritize regional integration through the EAEU and then transition to trans-regional integration soon thereafter once the post-Soviet consolidation project has been completed. Putting aside the national prestige and nostalgia that some foreign commentators claim is driving this process, the primary impetus behind

[179] BRICS: Towards a Common Vision of the World Order [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 29 August. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/brics-towards-a-common-vision-of-the-world-order/.

it is for Russia to more sustainably compete with the rising countries of the Asia-Pacific and to eventually find a way to integrate with them in the interests of developing its long-neglected Siberian and Far Eastern regions. This goal was made clear by the Valdai Club's 2012 report titled "Towards the Great Ocean, or the New Globalisation of Russia"[180], whose authors urged decision makers to begin paying more attention to this trend. The report was published around the time that Russia was establishing its customs union within the EAEU and more than half a decade prior to Putin launching the National Development Projects (NDP) that Lissovolik considers to be his country's application of the Asian "Big Push" theory[181] of economic modernization through large-scale public investment efforts, the combination of which can be said in hindsight to have been influenced by the Valdai Club experts' proposal to prioritize a program for the "New Globalisation of Russia".

The frame of reference shaping Russia's regional integration plans is the Greater Eurasian Partnership in what the former Secretary of State for European Affairs in Portugal and Valdai Club expert Bruno Maçães described as "Supercontinent Eurasia"[182] in his eponymous piece written for that think tank in 2018. He explained how China's BRI (officially launched a year in 2013, a year after the Valdai Club's aforementioned report about "New Globalisation") "is a mammoth project for organizing the supercontinent", but that it is "only part of the story" since other complementary projects are bound to emerge from it as a result. Of pertinence, he believes that Russia can take maximum advantage of this unprecedented opportunity. In his words, "it now looks in four directions at once, a marked improvement upon the double-headed eagle of its state emblem. Traditionally, Russian elites tended to see their task as that of bringing about a gradual but complete integration with a more advanced Europe. That vision is now being replaced by a new self-image: as the center and core of the Eurasian supercontinent, Russia can reach in all

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[180] Karaganov S., Barabanov O., Bordachev T. Report: Toward the Great Ocean, or the New Globalization of Russia [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2012. 5 July. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/reports/toward_the_great_ocean_or_the_new_globalization_of_russia/.

[181] Lissovolik Y. Russia's 'Big Push' Paradigm [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 8 October. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-s-big-push-paradigm/.

[182] Maçães B. Supercontinent Eurasia [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2018. 15 October. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/supercontinent-eurasia/?sphrase_id=1034017.

directions and provide a bridge between Europe and China on both ends. In fact, Moscow is also looking south to the Middle East, and to the north, as global warming transforms the Arctic into the main trade route linking Europe and Asia." This outlook, especially the southward-facing one, complements what the author of the dissertation has been hinting at when it comes to N-CPEC+ as the vehicle for realizing Putin's vision of an Arctic-Indian Ocean corridor that will be expanded upon more in Chapter 4.

Without the integration of the former Soviet core that's geographically situated in the pivotal Eurasian Heartland, however, none of what Maçães wrote about would be possible, hence the importance of the EAU, most members of which overlap with the SCO that Valdai Club expert Timofei Bordachev wrote about in 2018 as being "the foundation of Greater Eurasia"[183]. The SCO's creation was the first real trans-regional integration project in Eurasia since the end of the Old Cold War and its membership remained static until India and Pakistan were invited to join in 2015, but that body still mostly operates as a discussion club that occasionally carries out joint military exercises so its functions are drastically different than the more comprehensive integration ones of the EAU. According to Lissovolik in his 2015 piece about "Russia's Eurasian Model of Modernization"[184], that post-Soviet project is influenced by the Eurasianist school of thought and can fulfill the goals of "integration into the world economy", "Eurasian integration in the 'near abroad'", "'open regionalism' and prioritizing multilateralism", emulating an "Asian industrial policy" and "European stabilization instruments/anchors", and constructively instrumentalizing the "oil and gas sector". The successful completion of Russia's Eurasian integration "will dovetail the Chinese efforts to forge ties with Europe via the Silk Road project."

For as promising as the EAEU is, however, it is not without its faults, of which there are

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[183] Bordachev T. The SCO as the Foundation of Greater Eurasia [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2018. 3 July. Mode of access: https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-sco-as-the-foundation-of-greater-eurasia/.

[184] Lissovolilk Y. Russia’s Eurasian Model of Modernization [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2015. 2 December. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-s-eurasian-model-of-modernization/.

many. Lissovolik and fellow Valdai Club expert Vyacheslav Sutyrin jointly published a report in October 2017 about "The Geography of the Eurasian Economic Union: From Challenges to Opportunities"[185], in which they acknowledged that the historical limitation of economic geography within the trading bloc created some serious obstacles to further integration between its members. All of them except for Russia are landlocked, which leads to high import and export costs that make it difficult for them to compete on the global market. Furthermore, inefficient transport and logistical systems multiply this problem. The solution, they believe, lies in eliminating spatial and interstate barriers to trade, improving financial and monetary policies, promoting exports, and achieving access to the high seas in order to reduce overall costs. Until these issues are properly resolved, the EAEU won't be able to operate at its full potential, thus slowing down the Greater Eurasian Partnership. There are more problems to the EAEU than just geographic ones, though, as Bordachev made clear in his piece a month afterwards titled "What Went Wrong with Eurasian Integration and How to Fix It"[186].

He believes that the EAEU can learn a lot from the EU as developments concerning both structures at the time were "cause for alarm". The EAU, he writes, "is far less internally stable than the EU" and is bedeviled by "internal skepticism and external rivalry". The EAEU lacks "strong institutions, primarily intergovernmental institutions", which has "periodically thrown (it) into disorder". All of its members are also "proving incapable of meeting all of their commitments under the EAEU Treaty and subsidiary regulation", which is why, "in a sense, EAEU activities sometimes resemble a growing snowball of unfulfilled commitments and decisions." In Bordachev's view, "it is only the governments appointed by the elected heads of state that can assume responsibility for addressing this important task (of unfulfilled obligations and mutual grievances) that is crucial to the

[185] Lissovolik Y., Sutyrin V. Report: The Geography of the Eurasian Economic Union: From Challenges to Opportunities [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 13 October. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/reports/report-the-geography-of-the-eurasian-economic/.

[186] Bordachev T. What Went Wrong with Eurasian Integration and How to Fix It [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 14 November. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/what-went-wrong-with-eurasian-integration/.

survival of Eurasian integration and its continued existence as a tool for implementing national development priorities, the only objective of any integration project. It makes sense to accept this understanding of the substance of integration as central under the current circumstances. It is not the states for integration but integration for the states and the entire EAEU institutional structure should be adjusted to this approach." Finally, he's of the opinion that "it is important to competently inscribe Eurasian economic integration into the context of Greater Eurasian Partnership" in order to provide it with a sense of geostrategic vision.

A year later in October 2018, Bordachev wrote an analysis about "EAEU: Integration Junction"[187], where he at first praised the bloc for "becoming the first case in history of the voluntary, peaceful and rational association of states on the main part of the planet", but then immediately proceeded to warn that "it is no less important to understand that integration is now at risk of falling into a state of stagnation, a kind of 'sclerosis'". The key question at this junction is the vision and form that future integration takes. He writes that "the major participants in the integration process also tend to see it at the center of their efforts to ensure their strategic independence in the face of even more powerful states. Germany in the EU, or Russia in the EAEU, are compelled to build institutions with smaller partners. Also, they have to give them, of their own accord, the mandate that seems incommensurable with the contribution provided by smaller partners, if thinking in the categories of the classic alignment of forces." The outcome is that regional integration is oftentimes pushed to the periphery of national affairs as a result of this integration dilemma whereby "a subjective assessment of the place held by integration in a series of national priorities can be motivated by the need to justify the inevitable choice before the subjective desire to maximize sovereignty in its most conservative terms." The solution, in his opinion, is to create an intergovernmental component for managing all of this in order to "eliminate the institutional integration holes that appeared during the period of its political

[187] Bordachev T. EAEU: Integration Junction [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2018. 26 October. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/eaeu-integration-junction/.

and legal execution."

Bodachev came together with several other fellow Valdai Club experts to co-author a report in May 2019 about "Eurasian Economic Integration: Between Absolute and Relative Benefits"[188]. The gist of their findings is that the "sovereignty trap" continues to slow down the pace of the integration process, compounded by the continued lack of "effective mechanisms for solving customs and trade disputes" that have only served to tip the balance towards relative benefits and away from absolute ones. Worryingly, the authors write that "although, at first sight, relying on immediate relative benefits is a rational approach, an integration project is doomed to collapse if absolute advantages (often implying deferred benefit) are not taken into consideration. In the game theory, this is a classic example of how maximizing benefits at the moment ultimately leads to an irrational result, with all participants gaining fewer benefits at the end of the entire decision-making cycle." They continued by warning that "the problem for the participants in Eurasian integration is that in a situation where the international economic system is rapidly falling into regional megablocs, the putative failure of the Eurasian integration project will put all countries, even large countries like Russia, in an extremely vulnerable position." Other than the creation of the much-needed intergovernmental mechanisms previously talked about by Bordachev, salvation can potentially be found by "balancing for profit" between a "'partnership of necessity' vs 'partnership of choice'" and "voluntary institutional binding" to transformation "rational maneuvering" into "rational strategies".

Despite these prevailing issues, the EAEU still has a lot of potential to function as the core of the Greater Eurasian Partnership[189], especially if Russia is successful in reaching a "grand bargain" with the US (which the dissertation author describes as a "New Detente")

[188] Bordachev T., et. al. Eurasian Economic Integration: Between Absolute and Relative Benefits [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 14 May. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/reports/eurasian-economic-integration-report/.

[189] Shakhmatov V. The EAEU: A Core Element of the Greater Eurasian Partnership [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 14 March. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/eaeu-a-core-element-of-the-greater-eurasian/.

simultaneously with pursuing the vision of an "integration of integrations", as talked about by three Valdai Club experts (including Lissovolik) at a discussion event in April 2019 titled "Grand Bargain or Integration of Integrations: What Does It Take to Create a Regional Order for the Post-Soviet Space?"[190] The "integration of integrations" concept, which Lavrov also cited in his earlier mentioned piece later that year commemorating the 70th anniversary of the People's Republic of China, refers to inter-bloc cooperation between the EAEU and its international counterparts such as the EU and even other integration structures like the SCO and BRI. Although there are certainly some obstacles to this, especially regarding BRI and specifically pertaining to "different procedures, business culture and absence of clear dispute settlement mechanism" as identified by Valdai Club expert Piotr Dutkiewitz in his October 2019 piece titled "Russia Facing the Challenges of Eurasian Regionalization"[191], that same expert believes that the centripetal forces of "common goals and common threats" enable both to surmount any disagreements that might arise, though he's still cautious about the principle challenge posed by "Russia's domestic economic development". He ominously warns that "without improvement in that area, Russia’s grand vision and grand Eurasian development schemes may be stopped at the current – what we can call as – 'enhanced networking cum free economic space' level. The stakes are high as either Eurasian projects will reinvent Russia’s regional and global position as a moderator and stabilizer in the emerging continental system, or signify her status as an important but lonely power."

Summing up Russian experts' assessments of the country's regional integration plans, it is obvious that some hurdles still remain and that some previous goals remain unfulfilled, but the overall trajectory remains positive and decision makers must be aware by now of the main problems that the EAEU is facing. The stakes are definitely high, as emphasized by

[190] Grand Bargain or Integration of Integrations: What Does It Take to Create a Regional Order for the Post-Soviet Space? [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 25 April. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/post-soviet-europe-eurasia/?sphrase_id=1033903.

[191] Dutkiewitz P. Russia Facing the Challenges of Eurasian Regionalization [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 2 October. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-facing-the-challenges-of-eurasian-regionali/.

Dutkiewitz, but piecemeal progress appears to have been made over the years and has thus resulted in observers being able to speak seriously about the EAEU and its future prospects. This is of crucial significance for the dissertation since the EAEU forms the core of the Greater Eurasian Partnership and is the Russian-led institutional body that can most greatly benefit from trans-regional integration with Pakistan through the N-CPEC+ corridor that will be discussed in Chapter 4. The next subsection will thus talk about Russia's trans-regional integration plans so that the reader can realize that it is inevitable that Russia will have to improve its economic relations with Pakistan (and thereafter the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, SAARC, of which it is a part) if it hopes to add substance to its Greater Eurasian Partnership because the South Asian state forms a crucial component of this vision by virtue of integration momentum.

The background against which Russia's trans-regional integration plans can be seen is best described by RIAC expert Zachary Paikin in his April 2019 analysis about "Orders Within Orders: A New Paradigm For Greater Eurasia"[192]. He opens up by talking about Moscow's dilemma, which he describes in the following way: "As long as relations with the West remain in the doldrums, Moscow has no choice but to make its strategic partnership with Beijing the lynchpin of its plans to maintain great power status. Russia is but a secondary actor in Asia’s regional order, which casts significant doubt on the ability of the EAEU minus Ukraine to become major pole at the global level on its own. But at the same time, failure to mend ties with the West will result in growing dependence on China, thus undermining the very aim that Russia seeks to achieve — preserving its status as an independent great power." The author of this dissertation believes that the solution to both is a "New Detente" with the West and the formation of a new Non-Aligned Movement (Neo-NAM) for balancing relations with China, both of which fit within Paikin's paradigm of "conceptualizing EU-Russia relations as forming a regional international order within the broader Greater Eurasian order, operating according to its own principles and initiating

[192] Paikin Z. Orders Within Orders: A New Paradigm for Greater Eurasia [Electronic resource] // Russian International Affairs Council. 2019. 24 April. Mode of access: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/orders-within-orders-a-new-paradigm-for-greater-eurasia/.

its own separate bilateral dialogue on global ordering practices" since this can also be applied towards China as part of Russia's regional compartmentalization policy in pursuit of better managing the Greater Eurasian Partnership. Paikin cites another expert who believes that "the future of global politics will be determined by interactions not between powers but blocs", and the "order within orders" paradigm can be regarded as a "reframing of the Greater Eurasian partnership designed to maximize the number of partners with which Russia can develop constructive relations."

Bearing this in mind, the many works by Lissovolik on the topic of Russia's trans-regional integration can become more easily understandable for the reader. it is not within the scope of this dissertation to discuss each and every one of the roughly twenty pieces that will be cited in detail, but to simply summarize them in order to portray the bigger picture of Russia's 21st-century geostrategy that then allows one to better appreciate the pivotal place that Russian-Pakistani relations occupy within this framework. Chronologically speaking, the examined works cover the period 2017-2019 and will be touched upon in order of publication. That year is the cutoff point because mostly everything afterwards concerned the black swan event of COVID-19 in one way or another and the subsequent talk of a “Fourth Industrial Revolution” that emerged from this crisis, which understandably took precedence in analytical circles over further building upon Russia's trans-regional integration vision. The foundational piece that sets the stage for all others is his article about "Re-Thinking the BRICS: On the Concepts of BRICS+ and BRICS++"[193], which basically postulates that BRICS+ is comprised of the regional integration groups that each of its members lead -- "Russia in the Eurasian Economic Union, Brazil in MERCOSUR, South Africa in the South African Development Community (SADC), India in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and China in the Shanghai Organization for Cooperation (SOC) and the prospective Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)" -- and that BRICS++ is "these countries and/or regional

[193] Lissovolik Y. Re-Thinking the BRICS: On the Concepts of BRICS and BRICS [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2017. 7 February. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/re-thinking-the-brics/.

blocks that have concluded agreements with BRICS countries' regional blocks". Lissovolik then expanded upon this idea in "BRICS Plus: New Technology, New Vision for Economic Integration"[194] to state that its goal is "to create a network of alliances that would be comprehensive and representative of all of the major regions/continents across the developing world. In this respect, the BRICS+ paradigm is more about inclusiveness and diversity rather than about selecting the largest heavyweights. By its very nature of being present in all of the key regions and continents of the developing world the BRICS could perform the unique role of a comprehensive platform for economic cooperation across the globe. Accordingly, the BRICS+ concept is first and foremost about a different approach to economic integration and a different technology of how alliances are structured globally." He also added that "BRICS+ could perhaps be termed as semi-globalism" because it "would represent an intermediary layer of coordination and integration between the global level institutions (WTO) and the amalgam of countries and regional blocks."

"The Mechanics of BRICS+: A Tentative Blueprint"[195] goes on to talk about how BRICS+ can function as the much-needed "sufficiently strong starting engine" for global integration processes by "creating a new platform for forging regional and bilateral alliances across continents". The envisaged modalities between the countries involve being a "platform for trade and investment integration", "cooperation in international organizations", "cooperation between the respective development banks and other development institutions formed by BRICS+ economies", "use of national currencies/payment systems", and "cooperation in establishing own reserve currencies/regional and global financial centers". Lissovolik then put all of the previously examined pieces together to write a report about "BRICS-Plus: Alternative Globalization in the Making?"[196], which concludes that "the new

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[194] Lissovolik Y. BRICS Plus: New Technology, New Vision for Economic Integration [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2017. 23 March. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/brics-plus-new-technology-new-vision/.

[195] Lissovolik Y. The Mechanics of BRICS: A Tentative Blueprint [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2017. 15 June. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-mechanics-of-brics-a-tentative-blueprint/.

[196] Lissovolik Y. №69 BRICS-Plus: Alternative Globalization in the Making? [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2017. 12 July. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/valdai-papers/valdai-paper-

vision of integration in the form of BRICS+ could drag the world economy out of its misery of persistently low growth rates. It appears that new principles and new approaches in advancing openness and integration are required. We need to think about integration, growth and globalization in new and in hitherto abnormal ways to surmount the ‘new normal’. We need to shift gears from the old ‘core-periphery’ paradigm to veritable sustainable development, which in the integration sphere is to be based on greater diversity, equality of opportunity and due care with regard to spillover and trade diversion effects."

Adding credence to his argument about the importance of BRICS+, Lissovolik wrote a piece "On the Paradox of Global Economic Integration"[197] that drew attention to the hitherto unidentified problem that "the economies most in need of economic integration are the ones that are the most left out from regional and global economic alliances and 'clubs'", which he believes necessitates the solution of a "new paradigm (that) needs to be based on new types of integration arrangements that focus more on issues of connectivity that in turn are paramount for landlocked developing countries." BRI and BRICS+, in his view, satisfy that criteria because they serve as platforms for regional integration, pan-continental arrangements, and trans-continental coordination[198]. Halfway between BRICS+ and BRICS++ are what Lissovolik calls InPEAKS/PEAKS in his article that takes "A Look at BRICS Derivatives and Alter Egos"[199], which are the BRICS' countries' "partners in key regional blocks or continental alliances with a substantial size of the financial market/economy and scope for playing catch-up to the BRICS core: Argentina in South America, Kazakhstan in the CIS, Pakistan in South Asia, Egypt in Africa, Indonesia in East Asia. The unifying acronym for this group of countries is InPEAKs - the countries in this

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[197] Lissovolik Y. On the Paradox of Global Economic Integration [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2017. 30 October. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/on-the-paradox-of-global-economic-integration/.

[198] Lissovolik Y. The Integration Platforms of the Global South [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2018. 29 March. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-integration-platforms-of-the-global-south/.

[199] Lissovolik Y. A Look at BRICS Derivatives and Alter Egos [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2018. 27 April. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/a-look-at-brics-derivatives-and-alter-egos/.

group may be viewed as the 'second generation' of BRICS countries coming from the same regions as the BRICS themselves. A moderate variation of the composition of this group would involve the selection of the largest economies by GDP in the respective regions: Egypt in Africa, South Korea in East Asia, as well as Pakistan in South Asia, Argentina in South America, and Kazakhstan in the Eurasian Economic Union. The resulting acronym – PEAKS – is suggestive of a strategy of portfolio allocation in EM and frontier markets that targets an optimal derivative set of countries from the main regions/continents of the developing world. The value of deriving a grouping such as PEAKS/InPEAKs lies in the expansion of the BRICS investment domain to include more markets, resulting in superior optionality, longer investment horizons and risk diversification."

This is the first time that Lissovolik, or any Russian expert to the best of the author's knowledge, identified Pakistan as an active player in trans-regional integration processes rather than the passive member of BRI, SAARC, and the SCO that it is oftentimes portrayed as. His subsequent research that will soon be talked about does not build upon the country's promising role, though Chapter 4 of the dissertation does, albeit in a different way than he had in mind since it does not deal with the BRICS+ framework -- and Pakistan's economic relationship to India through SAARC -- like he conceptualizes it. Instead, Chapter 4 concerns the Chinese-backed potential that Pakistan has to become its own center of trans-regional integration gravity through the CPEC+ corridors, especially N-CPEC+ through post-war Afghanistan and Central Asia en route to Russia. After all, Chinese-Pakistani trade is much higher than its Indian-Pakistani counterpart, and New Delhi has been taking steps to isolate Islamabad from SAARC[200] over the past few years and replace it with the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) as its preferred regional integration platform since that group includes the ASEAN gateway states of Myanmar and Thailand but excludes the Maldives, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

[200] Rehman H. Saarc Summit Cancelled, Not Adjourned [Electronic resource] // The News International. 2016. 30 September. Mode of access: https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/153802-Saarc-summit-cancelled-not-adjourned.

Moving along, "The Rising Role of South-South Integration"[201] makes it possible for Lissovolik to speak about "BEAMS of the Sunrise: A Look at BRICS 5-Year Cycles"[202]. The second-mentioned article's title refers to the BRICS' members' regional partners that were invited to attend the summits that they hosted from 2013-2018, namely BIMSTEC, EAU, AU, MERCOSUR, and SCO, and "the resulting acronym – BEAMS – among its several meanings is suggestive of the role of the aggregating platform of regional integration blocks as supporting structures to the edifice built on BRICS. In terms of terminology, the BEAMS platform is to denote the aggregation of regional integration groups, with BRICS+ being a broader concept that incorporates other forms of BRICS' interaction with developing economies such as platforms of regional developing institutions or regional financing arrangements (RFAs)." Lissovolik then predicts that the next (third) 5-year cycle will concern "the BRICS+ period and the crystallization of the 'integration of integrations' BEAMS platform" while the subsequent (fourth) one will involve "the BRICS++ period and the extension of the integration impulses from the regional BRICS+ platform to other parts of the developing world via a combination of regional and bilateral economic alliances." The reader should remember that Lavrov spoke about the "integration of integrations" concept in his September 2019 article commemorating the upcoming 70th anniversary of the People's Republic of China, showing that Lissovolik's ideas might have had a positive influence on Russia's top diplomat.

Thinking big, Lissovolik had the idea of including regional integration blocs into the G20 format in order to solve the dual problems of these structures' "low degree of vertical connectivity with global institutions" and "the lack of horizontal coordination among the regional economic blocks" themselves, which he expressed in his proposal titled "Towards

[201] Lissovolik Y. The Rising Role of South-South Integration [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2018. 23 May. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-rising-role-of-south-south-integration/.
[202] Lissovolik Y. BEAMS of the Sunrise: A Look at BRICS 5-Year Cycles [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2018. 14 June. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/beams-of-the-sunrise-a-look-at-brics-5-year-cycles/.

a G20 Global Governance Framework for Regional Arrangements"[203]. He writes that, "as opposed to the BRICS+/BEAMS framework which is to serve as a platform for the so-called format of 'integration of integrations' the R20 could play more of a coordination role with the meetings of the representatives of the respective regional blocks taking place each year under the umbrella of the G-20 meetings and consultations." This new framework could also include a "connectivity track", "which would bring together such infrastructural connectivity initiatives as the BRI launched by China or the India-Japan connectivity initiatives such as the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC)." it is important to draw attention to Lissovolik's interest in the AAGC since this promising initiative is one of the driving motivations behind what the dissertation's author believes should be Russia's prioritization of a Neo-NAM that a different Valdai Club expert proposed should be jointly led by that country and its Indian strategic partner, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

The next piece of relevance that Lissovolik published was the one that celebrated 2018 as "A Breakthrough Year for the Global South"[204] because he believes that "the progress achieved thus far confounds the notion of a highly divided and fragmented Global South – the possibility of the formation of pan-continental integration platforms no longer appears unreachable, while the forging of cross-continental alliances already appears to have been set in motion." He also writes that "the sequencing and the algorithm of how the formation of an extended South-South integration platform proceeds can follow multiple trajectories, including via the aggregation of the largest existing regional integration groupings led by the BRICS economies within the framework of BRICS+. But a short-cut of sorts in pursuing such integration could be achieved via linking together the pan-continental integration platforms in South America, Africa and Eurasia (represented by SCO+, CELAC and the African Union - referred to as the TRIA platform." This realization might have

[203] Lissovolik Y. Towards a G20 Global Governance Framework for Regional Arrangements [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2018. 13 November. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/towards-a-g20-global-governance-framework/.

[204] Lissovolik Y. A Breakthrough Year for the Global South [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2018. 28 November. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/a-breakthrough-year-for-the-global-south/.

inspired him to publish his report at the end of that year about "Building with BRICS and BEAMS: A Constructivist Approach to Global Economic Architecture" [205], which ambitiously predicts that "a potential megablock that brings together these regional integration arrangements denoted as BEAMS (BIMSTEC1, EAEU2, AU3, MERCOSUR4, and SCO5 – all on the basis of previous outreach undertakings by BRICS countries) could form the basis for the first megablock of the developing world that would have enough weight to provide a counterweight to other competing megaprojects such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) or the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)." With this vision in mind, Lissovolik began 2019 by writing about "The Global Integration Algorithm: Directing the Forces of Gravity"[206]. He writes that "the current system of a well-integrated developed world and a largely fragmented Global South may persist for quite some time lest the developing economies step up their efforts to bring together their existing integration blocks within unified integration platforms", which could be achieved through "building a global framework of South-South cooperation that becomes significant enough to engender full-scale cooperation with the developed world". Step by step, the corresponding sequencing would be "the Russia-India-China triangle" (RIC), "the Grand Eurasia" through "SCO+", "the integration of the Global South" through "BRICS+/BEAMS and/or TRIA", and then the creation of "North-South global platform". The most important aspect of his global integration algorithm is the crucial role played by the RIC core, upon which everything else in his sequencing is dependent and which is why the dissertation will talk about the need for Russia to balance between its two Asian counterparts while simultaneously managing the balance between both of them in Chapter 3 in order to keep this triangle as stable as possible. Chapter 4 will then explain why the intensification of Russian-Pakistani relations provides the perfect solution for sustainably

[205] Lissovolik Y. Building with BRICS and BEAMS: A Constructivist Approach to Global Economic Architecture [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2018. 20 December. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/reports/building-with-brics-and-beams-a-constructivist-app/.

[206] Lissovolik Y. The Global Integration Algorithm: Directing the Forces of Gravity [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 11 January. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-global-integration-algorithm/.

maintaining this complex balancing act and thus further entrenching Russia's status as the lynchpin of Global South integration processes.

Considering the rapid successes and promising potential of Global South integration processes relative to the existing Western-led ones, Lissovolik felt it timely to talk about "The Clash of Globalizations: The Next Frontier in International Competition"[207], which he believes will be characterized by the dichotomy between these two dynamics. He describes their primary differences as being "divergence vs convergence", "technology/mechanics of globalization", "algorithm and sequencing of globalization", "inclusive versus exclusive globalization", and "sustainable/more equitable globalization". According to him, "a 'Eurasian model of globalization' is likely to prioritize regional economic integration and greater transportation infrastructure connectivity, with continental connectivity taking precedence and being followed by cross-continental alliances through free trade and investment cooperation." Naturally, "the use of the 'integration of integrations' may prove to be the competitive edge of the Global South, given the lower scope for such integration on the part of the well-structured and conditionality-ridden integration groupings formed by advanced economies." Lissovolik concludes by remarking that "given the current state of affairs in the global economy rather than ideology or inter-civilizational strife, the emerging paradigm of global competition may be at least in part about the most appealing and competitive vision of the economic mechanics of globalization", and that "the delineation (of) the exact contours of the alternative globalization vision may be one of the more important developments in the intellectual debates of the next several years." it is precisely that last-mentioned task that the dissertation fulfills in Chapter 4 by "delineating a completely new contour of the alternative globalization vision" through Pakistan's CPEC+ corridors, especially the N-CPEC+ one that can eventually pioneer a new axis of Eurasian integration by connecting the South Asian state with Russia via post-war Afghanistan and Central Asia.

[207] Lissovolik Y. The Clash of Globalizations: The Next Frontier in International Competition [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 28 February. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-clash-of-globalizations-the-next-frontier/.

Building upon his last-cited piece, Lissovolik then published a follow-up one about "The Geotectonics of Global Alliances: On the Way to Pangaea Ultima?"[208] where he postulates that the continents are geologically diverging in parallel with geo-economically converging through the trend of "trans-continental mega-alliances". As he sees it, "the competing EAEU-China partnership is developing against the backdrop of the first trans-continental blocs" while "the world economy is transitioning from economic confrontation and competition between individual countries to competition between major integration groups", namely those between the developed economies and the Global South. Accordingly, he then co-authored a report with fellow Valdai Club expert and professor at Shanghai University Zhang Henglong about "Globalization: New Pathways Along the South-South Axis"[209], which is the need of the moment given the grand geo-economic context that was just touched upon in the last two mentioned pieces. That document reviewed a lot of what was earlier discussed above, celebrating 2018 as a breakthrough year for South-South integration and also emphasizing the urgent need for a "comprehensive platform of regional governance that brings together all of the main regional integration arrangements". Lissovolik's previous R20 proposal could possibly meet this need, though it would also require reinforcement from the World Trade Organization (WTO) and an accompanying global integration algorithm to continue the sequencing process.

Lissovolik continues that novel thought in his subsequent report about "Regionalism in Global Governance: Exploring New Pathways"[210], which fleshes out his previous R20 proposal more than the intervening piece about "Regionalism in Global Governance:

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[208] Lissovolik Y. The Geotectonics of Global Alliances: On the Way to Pangaea Ultima? [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 3 March. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-geotectonics-of-global-alliances/?sphrase_id=1034017.

[209] Lissovolik Y. №102 Globalization: New Pathways Along the South–South Axis [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 3 May. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/valdai-papers/globalization-new-pathways-along-the-south-south/.

[210] Lissovolik Y. Regionalism in Global Governance: Exploring New Pathways [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 6 June 2019. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/reports/regionalism-in-global-governance/.

Revisiting the R20 Paradigm"[211] did. His report "expands the 'possibility set'" by discussing the other regional integration platforms that could complement it, such as the "Trans-Pacific Partnership", "BRICS+", "RCEP", "the Indo-Pacific platform", "Grand Eurasia", and "APEC". it is the author of this dissertation's view that the CPEC+ networks should also be included in this list for the reasons that will be explained in Chapter 4. The rest of Lissovolik's research reminds readers about the fault lines present in the "Clash of Globalizations" and the need to "tame the excesses of realpolitik" in order to turn the aforementioned integration initiatives into win-win platforms for all. Finally, in connecting everything together, he released an analysis "Exploring the Prevalence of the 'Integration of Integrations' Phenomenon"[212], which he defines as the "accords between regional trade blocks" and was earlier discussed in this dissertation (especially in reference to Lavrov citing this concept in his September 2019 article). Lissovolik predicts that "there may be a greater role in the coming years for connectivity agreements among regional integration blocks – one example of such an agreement is the accord between the Eurasian Economic Union and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) spearheaded by China." Although he recognizes that "the 'integration of integrations' is still a rare phenomenon and its implementation has been hampered by the coordination difficulties of conducting talks and ratifying agreements across a large number of participants", he also believes that its increasing use "may serve to bring greater coherence and structure to the set of trade alliances in the global economy" given "the race to build ever greater mega-regional platforms".

It is on this note that the analysis of Russia's trans-regional integration strategy ends, but before proceeding, it is imperative to review the main takeaways of pertinence to this dissertation. Although it won't be discussed until Chapter 4, Pakistan's CPEC+ networks --

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[211] Lissovolik Y. Regionalism in Global Governance: Revisiting the R20 Paradigm [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 17 May. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/regionalism-in-global-governance-revisiting/.

[212] Lissovolik Y. Exploring the Prevalence of the ‘Integration of Integrations’ Phenomenon [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 20 June. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/exploring-the-prevalence-of-the-integration/.

and especially its N-CPEC+ branch -- perfectly complement the vision meticulously laid out in detail by Lissovolik in his many works, and can position the South Asian state as an important actor in emerging global governance processes. In fact, it'll later be argued that N-CPEC+ represents the most efficient manifestation of the EAU's integration with BRI because of its transit through the Central Asian space that both projects place an important focus on. The successful completion of this regional corridor after the end of the Afghan War would greatly improve the synergy between these two mega-structures and their core leaders of Russia and China, with Pakistan playing a pivotal role as the third relevant player in this arrangement by virtue of its access to the Afro-Asian ("Indian") Ocean through CPEC's terminal port of Gwadar and its enormous market potential. Russia's Greater Eurasian Partnership and its more ambitious plans for trans-continental integration will always remain incomplete without Pakistan since it is impossible to avoid the game-changing geostrategic significance of CPEC and its CPEC+ branches, which is why it is so urgent of a task to comprehensively intensify Russian-Pakistani relations as soon as possible in order to get a head start on spearheading this new axis of Eurasian (and possibly also Afro-Eurasian) integration. Not only that, but the rapid development of Russian-Pakistani relations to the point of a strategic partnership would afford Russia enormous geopolitical balancing potential when it comes to managing its bilateral relations with China and India as well as managing their multilateral ties through the crucial RIC framework that forms the core of Lissovolik's global vision.

For as promising as Russia's EAEU regional integration efforts are, as well as the much grander integration proposals that Lissovolik bases upon the successful completion of the aforesaid, all of this can be offset by the many systemic challenges emerging from the ongoing global transition to multipolarity. Lavrov was cited earlier in this chapter talking about how the transition to a multipolar world order does not necessarily have to entail more chaos and conflict, an optimistic stance which Andrey Sushentsov, programme director at the Valdai Club and Director of the Institute of International Studies at MGIMO University, also shares. His June 2019 article titled "Global Peace: Why a Major War Is

Impossible in Modern International Relations"[213] provocatively asserted that "the three key processes leading to the strengthening of the fabric of international relations are the Russia-West rivalry, the Russia-China entente, and a strategic autonomy of an increasing number of great powers." That's undoubtedly a unique perspective since many experts believe that the Russia-West rivalry is a destabilizing factor in International Relations that might worryingly lead to war, especially given the security dilemma in place between the West on one side and what he described as the Russia-China entente on the other. Instead, Sushentsov thinks that this almost counter-intuitively has a stabilizing effect on the world order, as does the strategic autonomy of an increasing number of great powers. About the latter, he referenced the 2015 Russian-Turkish tensions after the Turks downed a Russian aircraft and the Indian-Pakistani standoff earlier in 2019 to show that even close calls do not result in large-scale war anymore because the "countries involved in each of these episodes display commonsense and do not see war as a method to settle their differences. The multiplying military crises allow their participants to understand that global peace is a common value and there is no political goal, for which it could be sacrificed." The author personally regards Sushentsov's assessment as a bit too optimistic, but it is nevertheless a unique angle through which to analyze the ongoing global systemic transition and the forthcoming crises that may emerge from it.

There are plenty of arguments supporting the theory that a major war is still possible in modern International Relations, or at the very least pose systemic challenges that should be taken seriously. Showing his balanced outlook on global affairs, Sushentsov co-authored an annual report alongside five of his other Valdai Club colleagues the year before in October 2018 titled "Living in a Crumbling World"[214] and timed to coincide with the centennial anniversary commemorating the end of World War I. The Valdai Club authors drew

[213] Sushentsov A. Global Peace: Why a Major War Is Impossible in Modern International Relations [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 6 June. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/global-peace-major-war/.

[214] Barabanov O., et al. Living in a Crumbling World. Valdai Club Annual Report [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2018. 15 October. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/reports/living-in-a-crumbling-world/.

attention to the competition between nationalism and globalism, as well as the renewed use of aggressive economic means by leading sates. They concluded that the lack of a common ideological and political paradigm after the Old Cold War led to the failure of the unipolar moment. China did not "transform itself in the image of Western society and governance" and Russia renewed its historic pro-sovereign policies after some time. Although the world was still becoming more "flat", it was paradoxically the US itself which pushed back against this trend after its citizens "had become increasingly unhappy with the uneven distribution in society of the benefits of globalization and demanded protection from its consequences." Past approaches to solving current challenges are outdated and therefore irrelevant. "States are becoming increasingly egoistic and focused on solving their own problems – problems that stem from the challenges of an increasingly complex world...And, the greater the number of interests and conflicts in play, the more difficult it is to achieve some sort of equilibrium between them." As the Valdai Club experts observed, "the global paradigm is now marked by mutability, fluidity, and situation-based considerations. And often, those who can react most rapidly or adeptly stand to benefit most from such a state of affairs. However, any advantage they gain is short-lived."

The resultant uncertainty serves as a major impediment to long-term planning by states, and the sources of this unclear future are the "balance of power in the world", "the questionable state of international security", and "the durability of international structures". The outcome is that "conflict, including armed conflict, remains a means for managing international relations. But this conflict is convoluted in nature – asymmetrical, non-linear, and reflects a huge imbalance in the forces that the various states wield. And this uncertainty evens the odds." Correspondingly, "a major war has become, if not impossible, at least potentially less disastrous than the wars of the 20th century were", though this and the growing interdependence between states has had the downside of "prompting leaders to take peace for granted and to engage in frivolous and risk-laden behaviours." All of this is why the Valdai Club experts believe that the present world "will slowly but surely crumble and deform as peoples and states push and pull it to satisfy their own interests", even

leading to the destabilization of the global commons that used to be looked at as a means of uniting the world. Instead, they'll only become scenes of "further fragmentation and division", the likes of which not even the UN might be able to manage. The dissertation's author is of the view that this creates space for the Neo-NAM to emerge, which will be discussed in Chapter 3 but is relevant to mention at this point in order to enlighten the reader about the pressing problems that this informal network could resolve.

The cited report spoke about how the world was on the path to becoming "flat" before that trajectory was eventually offset by none other than the US itself, the country that did more than any other to take it to that point. Valdai Club Board Chairman Andrey Bystritskiy wrote more about this in his June 2019 article titled "Blurred Poles and Hazy Horizons: From a Flat to a Round World"[215], where he commented that the world is not moving towards multipolarity, but rather, a world with no poles whatsoever. Although each conflict involves polarization, he writes, it is difficult to make sense of everything when there are so many competing pairs involved in them. The resultant chaos and confusion raises the horrifying prospect of what he described as a "global civil war", or what is more commonly described in the Hobbesian manner as a "war of all against all" (which is also a refutation of Sushentsov's thesis made around the same time). In trying to make sense out of everything, he writes that "one of the assumptions is that this is primarily a clash between some kind of barbarism and enlightenment, humanism and cruelty, or between the desire for freedom and the emancipation of mankind on one hand and the desire to preserve the old social hierarchies and the privileges of elites on the other. But maybe this approach is a simplification." What can be learned from Bystritskiy's article is that there's a prevailing uncertainty among the Russian expert community about the future international order and serious worries that it'll inevitably lead to a global disaster.

Sri Lankan Ambassador to Russia Dayan Jayatilleka is one of those experts who fears for the future. He wrote an article for RIAC in September 2019 about "Protracted Asymmetric

[215] Bystritskiy A. Blurred Poles and Hazy Horizons: From a Flat to a Round World [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 5 June. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/chairman-speech/blurred-poles-and-hazy-horizons/?sphrase_id=1034017.

Geopolitical Conflict"[216] where he provocatively compares the World War II-era Axis' strategic goal of global domination to the US' pursuit of a unipolar world order, to which end he concludes that the US' "Indo-Pacific" strategy is a "maritime Lebensraum". The US must be counterbalanced and constrained, he writes, because it poses an existential threat to Iran, Russia, and even China. These countries and others should fuse their state-national interests with the spirit of internationalism through the pursuit of collective interests in order to confront this threat, but first there's a need for new institutions that will shape their intellectuals, who Jayatilleka considers to be too influenced by Western thought. He proposes that these structures could be associated with the SCO and BRICS. No matter what, he warns, detente shouldn't be considered because it is inherently dangerous, a position that the author personally disagrees with because he thinks that it is a pragmatic necessity so that Russia can then focus more on balancing its relations with China and India like will be explained in Chapter 3.

Moving on, the Ambassador intriguingly shared his views that China is caught in a contradiction of its own making by ending up vulnerable to both economic and military threats because its economic planning failed to manifest itself in the military sphere where it still remains comparatively weak. He also talked about two ironies, the first being that China considered its competition with the US to be strictly economic while its rival saw an inherent military component to it and thus prepared accordingly, and the second is that it was China itself during Mao's leadership that cautioned the USSR against viewing its competition with the US through a strictly economic lense, something that China itself ultimately ended up doing too. Jayatilleka's suggestion is that "basic survival instinct should dictate that the states designated and treated as adversaries should seek to combine their military and non-military strengths to countervail and deter such a power which regards them with hostility and as threats." He powerfully writes that "the bottom line is that in any objective, dialectical and historical Realist analysis of Russia’s core interests,

[216] Jayatilleka D. Protracted Asymmetric Geopolitical Conflict [Electronic resource] // Russian International Affairs Council. 2019. 24 September. Mode of access: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/protracted-asymmetric-geopolitical-conflict/.

no relationship with Europe can be a substitute or even on par with a partnership with China", and that "a Concert of Big Powers cannot be a substitute for a defensive United Front or coalition of states, of which the Russia-China relationship will be the main alliance, consisting of those sovereign states actively threatened in a military-economic sense by the West."

Jayatilleka insight is extremely relevant to the dissertation for several reasons. Firstly, he identifies the US' "Indo-Pacific" strategy as a serious threat to Russia, China, and Iran, and forecasts that this trans-regional space will become just as important in the New Cold War as Hitler's "Lebansraum" in Central and Eastern Europe was in World War II. Secondly, he insists that the intellectuals of those three targeted countries are under the influence of Western ideas that have resulted in their countries letting down their strategic guard. As a corollary to that, he points out how ironic it is that China ultimately ended up doing the same thing by partnering with the West for some time and only viewing its competition with it as purely economic just like the Soviet Union ended up doing during the Old Cold War. The last point of pertinence is his passionate call to arms in the conclusion where he implores Russia and China to strengthen their relations into a defensive alliance, something that goes far and beyond the intentions of either state's leadership but nevertheless speaks to how important their comprehensive strategic partnership is. Not only that, but his proposal that other targeted states could join this emerging network as well provides an argument for what the author will later describe as the Golden Ring in Chapter 4, the strengthened multilateral partnership between those two countries, Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey in order to turn the Central Asian space (including Afghanistan in this designation) into a zone of peace and mutual prosperity impervious to America's divide-and-rule Hybrid War plots.

Andrey Kortunov, the Director General of RIAC, takes an altogether different approach by iconoclastically challenging the taken-for-granted premise that the world is currently multipolar in his extremely detailed, heavily thought-provoking, and strongly worded

article in September 2019 titled "Between Polycentrism and Bipolarity"[217]. He posits that the notion that bipolarity will lead to multipolarity via a moment of unipolarity might be fundamentally flawed for many reasons. For example, the argument can be made that multipolarity was already emerging in the 1970s through the Trilateral Commission between the US, Western Europe, and Japan in the Western bloc and the divergence between the USSR and China in the Eastern one. Multipolarity is not inevitable in today's world and might even be indefinitely put on hold, especially since Kortunov identified a trend of bipolarity within the ongoing global systemic transition, both in structure but also in terms of outlook relative to the position of Russian intellectuals, decision makers, and their media. A strong argument in favor of this position is that global systemic change historically did not occur gradually and through an evolutionary process, but via revolutionary and forceful means, which haven't happened yet. Moreover, he even cites Primakov, the godfather of multipolarity, as saying in his last works that it'll take until the end of the second decade and the beginning of the third of the 21st century for multipolarity to be established, which is why Kortunov concludes that the world is presently in a "gray zone".

The multipolar outlook is difficult to quantify, and empirical evidence confirming it is questionable since it cannot be confidently asserted whether the EU, the Mideast, Africa, and the SCO are more "multipolar" now than they used to be. Even India, he says, which is regarded as a promising pole in a multipolar world order, is engaging in much closer cooperation with the US nowadays, leading him to remark that the removal of the Sino-American competition would probably leave little left of the multipolar drift of recent years. The dissertation's author, it should be said, personally shares Kortunov's assessment, specifically in respect to India not really being that "multipolar" (or viewed through through the "hybrid" multipolar-bipolar blend popular with Russian experts nowadays, "not on the same general side" as Russia and especially China). Kortunov wisely warns against

[217] Kortunov A. Between Polycentrism and Bipolarity [Electronic resource] // Russian International Affairs Council. 2019. 4 September. Mode of access: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/between-polycentrism-and-bipolarity/.

using historical parallels to forecast the future world order, convincingly arguing why the Concert of Europe model is not relevant to the 21st century's complexities that make its stakeholders much more heterogeneous than in the 19th century. Speaking of which, there's no universally accepted definition of what exactly constitutes a "pole" in the multipolar world order, nor how they're formed. In Kortunov's understanding of the views put forth by multipolarity's proponents, "it is assumed a priori that in most cases the 'core' of a standard civilizational pole is a great power (the U.S., Russia, China, India, Brazil), around which small and medium-sized countries group in some form."

What's more relevant, he believes, is to channel the Soviet-era tradition of identifying the "epoch's main contradictions", which he considers to be "order and chaos", "conservativsm and liberalism", "nationalism and globalization", "North and South", "the United States and the rest of the world", and "capitalism and socialism", though he also warns that "it should be noted that none of the above-mentioned 'main contradictions' can be placed anywhere near the Soviet original from the standpoint of consistency, logical cohesiveness and comprehensiveness—they are eclectic, superficial and half-baked. But in historical terms the period of time that has elapsed since the Soviet Union’s breakup is relatively short for new ideologies to ripen. The current landscape of emerging bipolar narratives looks like a vast and chaotic construction site, crammed with numerous semi-finished structures of different architectural styles and made of materials of different quality and having different life cycles." Nevertheless, he adds that "The world’s return to the bipolarity of the second half of the 20th century should not be ruled out. In any case, in the context of the forthcoming U.S.-Chinese standoff such an option looks more real than the comeback of the 'classical' 19th century multipolarity (one of the likely scenarios for the development of the current U.S.-Chinese standoff into a global bipolar system is described in: Mosyakov, 2018)", which is also a view that the author of this dissertation personally shares.

Kortunov's piece is not just critical, but it is also constructive in that it proposes the new paradigm of multilateralism for explaining modern-day International Relations and explaining the irreconcilable contradictions between multipolarity and bipolarity in today's

age. In his words, "while multipolarity singles out different categories of power as the basis for building a new world order, multilateralism relies on different categories of national and group interests. While multipolarity absolutizes the term ‘sovereignty’ of different centers of power, [multilateralism] envisages mutual restriction of the sovereign rights of states for the sake of preserving the stability of the entire system. While a multipolar world is built of blocs counterbalancing each other, a multilateral world is built on the basis of international regimes that complement each other. While multipolarity is in search of ways to assert the systemic privileges of frontrunners, multilaterality is focused on identifying new opportunities for those lagging behind. While a multipolar world’s development stages entail periodic adjustments of the balance of power that materialize as international crises or wars, the emergence of a multilateral world proceeds as a multistage process of accumulating elements of interdependence and of propelling the world system to new levels of integration." The author of this dissertation is of the personal view that multilaterality can be embodied through the establishment of the Neo-NAM that will be described in the next chapter since it could form the structural bridge between bipolarity and multipolarity that's most capable of reliably stabilizing the ongoing global systemic transition.

Before getting to that part of the dissertation, it is worthwhile to summarize the insight that was shared in the present chapter. Russia foreign policy endeavors to position the country as a stabilizing counterbalance to the destabilizing activities of other states such as the US, whose actions are causing chaos in the international system and are responsible for its ongoing transition to an uncertain end, which Moscow officially believes will be multipolar but which some of its experts consider to be bipolar. Regional integration through the EAEU is considered to provide Russia with the necessary platform for expanding its influence throughout Eurasia via the ultimate goal of a Greater Eurasian Partnership, the core of which will be the EAU's integration with BRI that would then enable the potential for broader trans-regional integration initiatives. Although there are many systemic challenges to this ambitious vision, it is more or less moving forward, but

would be greatly catalyzed through Russia's leading involvement in the N-CPEC+ connectivity proposal with Pakistan (which Lissovolik recognized as an important BRICS+ partner through the InPEAKS/PEAKS framework) that was hinted at in this chapter but won't be explored at length until Chapter 4. In order to fully appreciate the significance that this move would have for Russia's grand strategy, it is important to more closely study the nature of the country's relations with China and India, as well as the paradigm-changing impact that the Neo-NAM proposal would have in transforming the increasingly bipolar system into a tripolar one as part of the phased transition to the multipolar world order, which could be stably upheld by the new Russia-Pakistan N-CPEC+ integration axis in Eurasia for balancing both Asian Great Powers.

2.3 Relevance of Russia’s official and expert assessments to Russian-Pakistani Relations

Analyzing the relevance of Russia’s official and expert assessments of the modern international politics systemic transition to the subject of bilateral relations with Pakistan, it’s plain to see that Moscow’s multipolar worldview frames its entire foreign policy, which in turn shapes ties with that country and all others. The 2016 Foreign Policy Concept affirms Russia’s status as a distinct civilization that aspires to cooperate with its peers on an equal basis, thus lending a civilizational dimension to relations with Muslim-majority Pakistan, whose civilizational history is much different than Russia’s[218]. The expansion of bilateral relations therefore carries with it the positive optics of inter-civilizational cooperation between Russia’s historically Christian-majority one and Pakistan’s Muslim-majority civilization. This contributes to counteracting Huntington’s divisive “Clash of Civilizations” prediction, which has arguably been weaponized by some Western forces for divide-and-rule purposes across the Eastern Hemisphere since the start of this century.

[218] Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (Approved by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on November 30, 2016) [Electronic resource]. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Mode of access: http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/2542248

The concept mentioned above also discusses cooperation on countering cross-border threats, which is another basis of commonality between Russia and Pakistan nowadays considering their shared interest in containing Afghan-emanating terrorist threats like ISIS. In fact, it was that infamous group's emergence in the region in the middle of the last decade that spurred Russia and Pakistan to initiate their fast-moving rapprochement with one another, which in hindsight was in accordance with the first's 2016 Foreign Policy Concept. The comprehensive expansion of relations with Pakistan also advances the document's goal of rebalancing Russia's relations between the Atlantic (US-EU) and the Asia-Pacific. Moreover, it's a nuclear-armed state too, which thus makes good on Russia's goal of cooperating more closely with this exclusive club of countries.

The pursuit of mutually beneficial economic relations can eventually be achieved by pioneering a trans-Afghan connectivity corridor, though that's of course a long-term goal since the present security situation there and tense Pakistani-Taliban ties temporarily impede progress on this. Nevertheless, this isn't being abandoned by either party, especially when it comes to other dimensions of trade and investment such as the energy sphere. Russia can play a pivotal role in this respect by helping energy-starved Pakistan meet rising demand and therefore reduce the frequency of power outages that make its economic rise much more difficult. Additionally, the 2016 Foreign Policy Concept's goal of strengthening Russia's relations with the EAEU, CIS, and CSTO is relevant to Pakistan too since the previously proposed trans-Afghan connectivity corridor would pass through such states en route to Russia, thus meaning that this should be coordinated with Moscow's Central Asian organizational partners, especially Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, with whom Islamabad has independently been expanding bilateral ties too.

Moving along to President Putin's keynote address at the Valdai Club's 2019 annual summit, the part about him suggesting an Arctic-Siberia-Asia corridor aligns with the abovementioned trans-Afghan one since this could complement the North-South Transport Corridor between Russia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and India in a way that brings together Russia, Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. His remark about "a global 'concert' of

development models, interests, cultures and traditions" is pertinent here too for the reasons that were already explained earlier in this subchapter regarding the optics of inter-civilizational cooperation between Russia's majority-Christian one and Pakistan's majority-Muslim civilization. They each also share an interest in China's BRI-driven model of development and support its worldview of strengthening adherence to the principles enshrined in the UN Charter.

As for the cited insight shared by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in his articles and speeches, these can be interpreted in the context of this dissertation as representing the multipolar worldview that's served to bring Russia and Pakistan a lot closer together during the examined time period. Both support practical efforts to harmonize integration projects, principally within BRI but also potentially with respect to one another and the countries between them in Afghanistan and Central Asia when it comes to the possibility of a connectivity corridor tying them together one day like was proposed. Neither ascribes to the West's so-called "end of history" thesis, nor do they embrace its radical liberal policies, be it those that they impose domestically or those that they aggressively seek to push onto others internationally.

It's precisely because their leaderships concluded that unipolarity failed exactly as Lavrov declared that they're prioritizing the comprehensive expansion of ties with China, especially via BRI. They believe that China's rise stabilizes International Relations by restoring a semblance of balance to the world system that the US destabilized since the end of the Old Cold War. It therefore goes without saying that Russia and Pakistan are also convinced that the global systemic transition to multipolarity is irreversible, or as Lavrov phrased it in his piece for Russia In Global Affairs, the polycentric world architecture[219].

This dissertation earlier shared the observation that Russia and Pakistan are no longer

[219] 'World at a Crossroads and a System of International Relations for the Future' by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov for 'Russia in Global Affairs' Magazine, September 20, 2019 [Electronic resource] // The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 2019. 20 September. Mode of access: http://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/3792556?fbclid=IwAR2A8L5wUhPhqOEsLGz6RSkMIR1yq9PX14KJV2qB02t7ancInmbzi7MDjYs&p_p_id=101_INSTANCE_cKNonkJE02Bw&_101_INSTANCE_cKNonkJE02Bw_languageId=en_GB.

guided by the ideologies that disproportionately influenced their foreign policies during the Old Cold War, which is something that Lavrov also reminded everyone of when it comes to his country in the article that he wrote to celebrate the 70th anniversary of bilateral relations with China. It should be clarified though that while Pakistan was driven by a combination of Neo-Realist security dilemma-related motivations and Islamist ideological ones to lead the West's proxy war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, the second-mentioned driver impressively never impeded its cooperation with atheist China. This suggests two things: first, shared Neo-Realist interests vis-à-vis India override Neo-Liberal ideological differences; and second, Pakistan's previous Neo-Liberal ideological drivers were selectively prioritized to justify certain foreign policy moves for the domestic and international audience, thus meaning that they were never perfectly adhered to by those preaching them like General Zia and his representatives during the 1980s.

In the present, Pakistan no longer pushes any ideology like before, which means that there isn't any potential awkwardness to the expansion of its relations with Russia. Just like its new non-traditional partner's Foreign Minister said during his 2019 speech at the UNGA, Pakistan also doesn't believe in dividing the Asia-Pacific into blocs, particularly because that could force it into a zero-sum choice between China and the US. Ideally, this country will continue balancing between its top two partners just like it did during the Old Cold War, but it's nevertheless concerned by India's growing institutional cooperation with the US via the Quad and other related regional frameworks. Russia shares these concerns too, albeit expressed much more diplomatically and discretely owing to the sensitivity of ties with its decades-long strategic partner in India. These overlapping regional perceptions contributed to further eroding their erstwhile security dilemma and convincing policymakers from both countries to turn the page on their former rivalry and open a new chapter in their ties.

On the structural level that this dissertation's second chapter devoted a lot of time to analyzing, Russia and Pakistan also have plenty in common as well. The acknowledgement of political multipolarity but economic unipolarity is espoused by each when it comes to

their respective remarks about the former and Islamabad's reluctance to violate American sanctions when it comes to the latter. Precisely because of those same sanctions, Russia has sought to pioneer creative workarounds in order for its partners not to come under pressure from Washington as a result of their cooperation in restricted spheres. Each, however, supports the efforts that China is making to bring about economic multipolarity, though this is of course a work in progress that'll still take a lot of time to develop. Nevertheless, Russia and Pakistan can play important roles in this regard through the BRI's Eurasian Land Bridge, CPEC, and whatever trans-Afghan connectivity corridor they might eventually develop between themselves and Central Asia one day. Whether it's Russia's National Development Projects, Pakistan's CPEC-related ones, or whatever those two and others might jointly participate in for connecting one another, they also seem to share the belief in the "big push" theory of economic modernization through large-scale public investments. That said, they're also facing their own struggles in this regard and can't rely on China to fully finance their efforts, this represents an impediment to their modernization and connectivity goals.

Be that as it may, such obstacles shouldn't prevent them from brainstorming creative means through which to further cooperate with one another and others. Lissovolik has taken the lead when it comes to this exciting research after unveiling proposals like BRICS+, BRICS++, InPEAKS/PEAKS, and BEAMS, each of which is relevant for adding yet another dimension to Russian-Pakistani cooperation, albeit in a larger multilateral context. While some might scoff that these expanded frameworks could complicate the expansion of bilateral relations, the counterargument can be put forth that each can play important roles in advance their shared goal of accelerating the global systemic transition to multipolarity through their participation in these proposed platforms. It should always be remembered that while Russian-Pakistani relations are important in and of themselves, they're also significant for multipolarity and all those other countries that have a stake in this future world order.

RIAC chief (2011-2023) Kortunov's cited research about polycentism and bipolarity is

relevant at this juncture since neither Russia nor Pakistan wants a bipolar world order that's disproportionately charactered by China, the US, and their interplay with one another and third countries. That's not to say that China wants this either, but just that the momentum of its astronomical rise over the past three decades might push it into this position despite its multipolar will, unless of course other countries seize the initiative to ensure that bipolarity doesn't ever return. To that end and in the context of this dissertation, the comprehensive expansion of Russian-Pakistani relations can complement each party's respective balancing acts while simultaneously unleashing multipolar processes in the region between them upon the completion of the proposed trans-Afghan connectivity corridor. The success of the last-mentioned can preemptively avert the emergence of bipolarity in this part of Eurasia by empowering those two and their partners to independently chart their own multipolar future that's comparatively less influenced by Sino-US competition in this geostrategic space.

That Russian expert's other observations about the contradictions of the contemporary world, which he clarified aren't anywhere near as acute as those that defined the Old Cold War, are also relevant when it comes to Russian-Pakistani relations. They both support order over chaos, conservatism over liberalism, the Global South over the Global North, the non-West's yearnings for multipolarity compared to the US' desire to restore unipolarity, and have each been fleeced by the US' capitalistic model of globalization that contrasts with China's comparatively (key qualifier) somewhat more socialist one that it envisages. That's not to imply that they're "allies" in the New Cold War, but just that supporting the same sides in these aforementioned contradictions helps solidify their rapidly developing partnership instead of being on opposite ones and thus having to avoid whatever differences it might be slowing down the expansion of their ties.

The takeaway from this chapter is that Russia and Pakistan have closely related assessments of the global systemic transition, which thus function as the ideational and structural basis upon which their contemporary partnership is being built. They each support a multipolar future, are against the US' divide-and-rule plots in Eurasia, have

strategic ties with China, and want to expand connectivity with one another and others. The stage is therefore solidly set for them to continue taking their relations to the next level, though financial and geographic factors might slow down the pace of their plans, especially considering that each has their own financial struggles right now and that Afghanistan regrettably remains unstable. Even so, there's nothing stopping them from doing as much as is realistically possible in brainstorming, holding negotiations, and working together with their partners in larger integration frameworks like Lissovolik's proposed ones to continue making progress despite those two obstacles that were just described.

CHAPTER 3: The Role Of Russia’s Sino-Indo Balancing Act In Shaping Relations With Pakistan

The ongoing global systemic transition has resulted in Russia prioritizing its "Turn to Asia", particularly with China and India, both of whom are its fellow BRICS and SCO partners but which also have their own bilateral problems that have resulted in a security dilemma of sorts that the US is attempting to exploit in a Kissingerian fashion for divide-and-rule purposes. By virtue of their immense sizes alone, it is important for Russia to pay attention to both of these Asian Great Powers, but its ties with them are qualitatively different. China is unquestionably Russia's primary partner in Asia, though India is close behind and might actually become more significant if tangible progress is made on jointly leading a new Non-Aligned Movement (Neo-NAM) with it like will be officially proposed by a Valdai Club expert at the end of this chapter but has been hinted throughout the previous one and will be reminded about in the current one up until that point.

Because of the complex dynamics inherent to Russia's Asian balancing act between China and India, as well as the sensitivities associated with it being perceived (key word) as being closer to one at the perceived expense of the other, Moscow must find a creative way to better manage this policy so as to avoid any inadvertently negative consequences. Therein lays the significance of intensifying Russian-Pakistani relations to the point of a strategic partnership, which will be touched upon from time to time within this chapter such as when talking about what the dissertation's author describes as the "Fifth Player Theory" but won't be elaborated on at length until the next one. Chapter 3 therefore fulfills the irreplaceable function of putting Russia's relations with China and India into their current and future contexts, which enables the reader to better appreciate the pivotal role that the improvement of Russian-Pakistani relations can play in balancing between both of them per the proposals that will be discussed in Chapter 4.

3.1 Russian-Chinese Relations in the Context of Russian-Pakistani Relations

The establishment of the Neo-NAM that was briefly touched upon in the last chapter but will be explained more later on in this one presupposes Russia's interest in balancing between the most important forces relevant in influencing its foreign policy, which includes the Sino-centric pairs of the West and China and India and China (superficially summarized as balancing between the West and East, and also between its two main Eastern partners). Seeing as how China is the common denominator in both of the author's proposed balancing acts, it is necessary to take a closer look at the true nature of Russian-Chinese relations that inspires this policy. There's no denying that Russian-Chinese relations are excellent and historically unparalleled, especially after the unprecedented progress that was made in the 1990s through the peaceful demarcation of their borders and the subsequent establishment of the SCO. It was also during this time that both countries agreed to enter into a "partnership of strategic coordination based on equality and benefit and oriented towards the 21st century"[220] in 1996 that was followed up by the "Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation Between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation"[221] in 2001. Director of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute for Far Eastern Studies Sergey Luzyanin and director of Fudan University's Center for Russia and Central Asian studies Zhao Huasheng painstakingly elaborated on the finest details of cooperation between their two countries, especially in the scientific and technical fields, in their October 2019 joint report published by RIAC titled "Russian-Chinese Dialogue: The 2019 Model"[222].

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[220] China and Russia: Partnership of Strategic Coordination [Electronic resource] // Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. Mode of access: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/t18028.shtml.

[221] Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation Between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation [Electronic resource] // Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. 2001. 24 July. Mode of access: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t15771.shtml.

[222] Luzyanin S., Huasheng Z. Russian–Chinese Dialogue: The 2019 Model [Electronic resource] // Russian International Affairs Council. 2019. 10 October. Mode of access: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/activity/publications/russian-chinese-dialogue-the-2019-model/.

The assessment of the data demonstrates an impressive level of interaction: the trade turnover between China and Russia in 2022 increased by 29.3% in comparison to the previous year and reached a record of $190.3 billion. Chinese exports of goods to Russia increased by 12.8%, to $76.1 billion, and imports from Russia — by 43.4%, to $114.1 billion. and both countries committed “to significantly increase bilateral trade volume by 2030”[223].

Professor at the Russian Academy of Sciences Yana Leksyutina wrote an article for the Valdai Club in September 2019 titled "Russia-China: Economic Ties Progress from Cold to Warm"[224], in which she shared her assessment that the era of "hot politics, cold economics" was finally changing after her country began to look more seriously at China as an economic partner following the West's rebuff after Crimea's reunification and the gradual erosion of the security dilemma that earlier influenced some decision makers to slow the pace of cooperation with the People's Republic out of fear of becoming its "raw materials appendage". Fan Weiguo, chief of the Eurasian Bureau of Xinhua News Agency, wrote a brief piece for the Valdai Club in the same month as Leksyutina about "Trade and Economic Cooperation Between Russia and China: Beyond Ice Cream and Soybeans"[225]. He highlighted how trade and investment opportunities are flourishing in the Russian Far East, especially because of the US' trade war with China, and cited statistics proving their positive trajectory, but he also pointed out "the still-poorly-utilised potential of bilateral cooperation". Taken together, these experts' pieces are but two of many celebrating the strategic nature of Russian-Chinese ties but lamenting their underwhelming economic dimension in non-energy-related trade. Nevertheless, Putin's commitment to integrating the

[223] President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin Sign Joint Statement of the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation on Deepening the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Coordination for the New Era and Stress Settling the Ukraine Crisis Through Dialogue. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. 22.03.2023.

[224] Leksyutina Y. Russia-China: Economic Ties Progress from Cold to Warm [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 27 September. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-china-economic-ties-progress/.

[225] Weiguo F. Trade and Economic Cooperation Between Russia and China: Beyond Ice Cream and Soybeans [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 4 September. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/cooperation-between-russia-and-china/.

EAEU with BRI could provide a fresh impetus for improving upon this issue.

President of RIAC and former Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov published a piece at his think tank in July 2019 about "The Belt and Road Initiative: Towards a New World Order"[226], where he wrote that the "gradual disintegration of the existing world order" gave rise to "the ever-increasing efforts of leading states, either by themselves or with other countries, to promote various integration mechanisms that would satisfy their immediate interests and at the same time create a platform for their participation in shaping the future world order. The biggest and most ambitious of these projects is, of course, the Belt and Road Initiative". In his view, "the Belt and Road Initiative should not be viewed as an exclusively economic project (or perhaps not even as an economic project at all), but rather as an attempt to find an alternative approach to reformatting the world order. Not 'from above,' that is, through the radical transformation of the old and the creation of new global governance institutions, but rather 'from below,' through the consistent implementation of specific regional and continental projects envisaging the most diverse and flexible formats for getting potential participants involved." This strategy enables China to advance one of the core principles of Xi Jinping Thought, "creating a community of common destiny for humankind". Nevertheless, this well-intended effort led to suspicion in the US, EU, India, "and partly in Russia", he wrote, yet no significant alternative project has been put forward thus far. With an eye on the comprehensive strategic partnership between his country and China, Ivanov suggests that Moscow "needs to clearly define its long-term priorities and interests within the project, taking its real possibilities and limitations into account, and then implement it together with China and the other participants in a coordinated manner."

The author of this dissertation agrees with Ivanov's assessment, which not only correlates with his own opinion of BRI as China's engine for shaping the emerging world order, but also with the innuendo that Russia is still somewhat suspicious of the project owing to the lingering security dilemma hinted at by Leksyutina. This interpretation is shared by Anton

[226] Ivanov I. The Belt and Road Initiative: Towards a New World Order [Electronic resource] // Russian International Affairs Council. 2019. 10 July. Mode of access: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/the-belt-and-road-initiative-towards-a-new-world-order/.

Bespalov, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of valdaiclub.com, who shared his thoughts on this topic in October 2018 during a conference in Poland titled "Beyond Europe: Reconnecting Eurasia" and which was reported on by the Valdai Club in an article titled "Belt and Road Initiative: While the East is Upbeat, the West Seems to be Wary"[227]. At the event, Bespalov shared his insight that "Moscow realizes the risks related to the Chinese investments, but positively assesses Beijing's infrastructural projects as contributing to stability and security in Eurasia. He said that the Russian-Chinese ties are at an unprecedentedly high level, but also stressed that China, important as it is, is not the only partner for Russia, which develops relations with all Asian countries." The Pakistani Ambassador to Poland, Shafqat Ali Khan, also participated in the event and shared Bespalov's view, stating that "it is only because of the turnaround in the Russia-China relations that we can talk about reconnecting Eurasia." The diplomat expressed his excitement about what the BRI-driven future holds for his country when said that "today, economic considerations are coming to the fore and Pakistan has great expectations from inclusion of the region in the system of Eurasian transport and logistics corridors as a factor contributing to development", which the author of this dissertation will elaborate upon in Chapter 4 while also talking about the several points of geostrategic convergences that this can create between Pakistan and Russia.

The theme that pervades through each of the cited works is that Russia acknowledges the multilaterally constructive efforts of its comprehensive Chinese strategic partner to reshape the world order, but that it nevertheless still has some wariness about getting so closely involved with it, possibly due to long-standing concerns about potentially losing some of its sovereignty if it becomes Beijing's "junior partner", even if only in the economic dimension[228]. Trade between the two is currently dominated by energy, arms, and a little bit of agriculture, all but lacking in any real-sector commercial sense, which speaks to a

[227] Belt and Road Initiative: While the East Is Upbeat, the West Seems to Be Wary [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2018. 28 October. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/events/posts/articles/while-the-east-is-upbeat-the-west-seems-to-be-wary/?sphrase_id=1034017.

[228] Desai R. International Economic Governance in a Multipolar World. Taylor & Francis. 2022. P. 54-56.

conscious decision made by the Russian leadership to keep Chinese enterprises as arm's length in order to protect domestic industries. This proactively defensive approach, which might gradually change if the EAU's ongoing integration efforts with BRI result in the promulgation of some kind of free trade agreement (however doubtful it may be at this point in time), has led Russia to seek other partners for developing its strategically positioned Far Eastern region in order to balance out Chinese influence in a "friendly" economic manner that wouldn't risk inadvertently triggering a mutually detrimental security dilemma between the two. It is not just the author's own view that Russian-Chinese trading relations in the Far East are underwhelming and that Moscow is encouraging other non-Chinese partners to get involved there, but is a position that's also shared by several Valdai Club experts who published reports about this during the 2019 Eastern Economic Forum in September of that year.

Artyom Lukin, Associate Professor and Deputy Director for Research at the Far Eastern Federal University's School of Regional and International Studies, wrote about this in his piece titled "Russia's 'Turn to Asia' Has Yet to Bring Prosperity to the Far East"[229]. He described the region's socio-economic problems in detail to prove that nothing of tangible significance has happened to improve living standards there since the government began prioritizing its development over a decade ago. Although the Far East needs Asian investment, "there is only something like four large projects with Chinese participation...in part because Chinese companies would like to mine natural resources there on similarly liberal terms as in Third World countries, such as Angola or Laos where they bring their own workforce and do not overly concern themselves with environmental regulations." Moreover, Russian authorities are reluctant to let the Chinese and other investors take control of "so-called strategic facilities" like ports, so "Russia holds onto its sovereignty and China its money." The US sanctions, underdeveloped infrastructure, and the risks not justifying the costs of potential investments are also pertinent factors at play, but Lukin

[229] Lukin A. Russia's 'Turn to Asia' Has Yet to Bring Prosperity to the Far East [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 4 September. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-s-turn-to-asia-has-yet-to-bring-prosperity/.

suggests that it is this unspoken suspicion of Chinese intentions that's most responsible for why Russia's "Turn to the East" has yet to take off.

Bespalov assembled a report of various experts' views on the topic of "Russia's Turn to the East: Expectations and the Reality"[230] which paints a very sobering assessment of the current state of affairs. He opens by talking about the revived popularity of the Eurasianist stream of thought, citing the earlier discussed 2012 Valdai Club report titled "Towards the Great Ocean, or the New Globalisation of Russia"[231] to make the case that "Russia needs to align its national development strategy more closely to the macro trends of global development than anytime before" in order "to become a strong and modern state", which means towards "East and Southeast Asia and India". The strategic imperative to focus more on South Asia (identified solely as Russia's BRICS partner India in the 2012 context) is more important than ever following the announcement BRI a year later and the 2015 decision to launch that initiative's flagship project of CPEC in Pakistan (just months before it and India were formally invited to join the SCO). Bespalov also cites Putin's 2012 election article about "Russia and the Changing World"[232] to remind readers that the country's vision is to "catch the 'Chinese wind' in the 'sails' of the Russian economy". Nevertheless, "there is an inevitable fear of unequal relations" and "it would be wrong to dismiss this fear as illegitimate, especially if we compare the demographic and economic potential of the two countries." Still, Bespalov quotes fellow Valdai Club expert Bordachev as reassuring everyone that "there is nothing bad in this as long as Russia does not fall into debt dependency", and "energy exports to China will not make Russia the junior partner in the relationship."

Hans-Joachim Spanger, Valdai Club's expert from Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, is quoted as commending the Russian-Chinese strategic partnership for accomplishing so

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[230] Bespalov A. Russia's Turn to the East: Expectations and the Reality [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 1 July. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-s-turn-to-the-east-expectations-and-the-rea/?.

[231] Karaganov S., Barabanov O., Bordachev T. Report: Toward the Great Ocean, or the New Globalization of Russia // Valdai International Discussion Club. Op. cit.

[232] Putin V. Vladimir Putin: Russia and the Changing World [Electronic resource] // Russkiy Mir Foundation. 2012. 27 February. Mode of access: https://www.russkiymir.ru/en/publications/139698/.

much in such a short time, especially relative to the Russian-EU one that stalled for years, yet he points out that "seeking refuge in Asia and notably in China is clearly defensive, meant to counter Western efforts at isolating Russia internationally and to mitigate the adverse economic impact of Western sanctions." This reactionary reorientation towards the East explains why Russia was so unprepared for maximizing the opportunity after having neglected its regional gateway of the Far East for decades, which is why "Russia today lacks the political clout, economic tools, cultural platform, historical foundation, or deep and genuine interest in regional affairs to make this diversification real." The diversification that he's speaking of is expanding Russia's Asian partners beyond China and finding ways to reduce its reliance on natural resource exports for generating regional interest in that part of the country. Furthermore, Spanger says that "Russia has been forced to operate in a true minefield of competing territorial claims and historical animosities" because "too-close ties between Moscow and Beijing (might) hinder the development of Russia's relations with other regional actors...if Russia were forced to take sides." This tricky state of affairs is why Viktor Larin, professor at the Far Eastern Federal University's Asia-Pacific Department, is quoted by Bespalov as saying that "the task of turning Russia's Far East into an 'integration platform' has been addressed from several angles and with varying degree of success. Ideologically, it was achieved in full. Politically – through developing relations with China – it was achieved in part. Financially, economically and technologically, it failed."

Spanger believes that these reasons plus cultural-historical ones are why "Russia's neighbours in the Asia-Pacific region will not accept it as an Asian power. 'Russia has invariably been perceived as a purely European power in Asia. Bearing in mind the notoriously long memories in Asia and the suffering of Asians at the hands of Europeans, Russia does not make any difference. In terms of balancing politics, however, it is much welcomed – at least as long as counterweights against the US are considered expedient'". Considering all of this, Bespalov concluded his report by writing that "Russia simply has no choice but to realise itself as an integral part of Greater Eurasia, to be open to both East

and West, and to make use of the innumerable opportunities that this belonging to two continents and the two centres of attraction affords." The author of the dissertation is of the personal view that the examined article justifies Russia's efforts to reach a "New Detente" with the US through pragmatic deal-making in Ukraine, Syria, and elsewhere, as well as the need to reduce its strategic dependence on China by creating the Neo-NAM for balancing between it and the West, which will now be conceptually introduced before proceeding to an analysis of Russian experts' views on their country's relations with India.

Oleg Barabanov, Programme Director at the Valdai Club and professor at both MGIMO University and the Russian Academy of Sciences, published his article about "China’s Road to Global Leadership: Prospects and Challenges for Russia"[233] in May 2019, after which he became the first Russian expert to the best knowledge of the dissertation's author to seriously discuss the creation of a new Non-Aligned Movement. He began his piece by praising Putin's intent to integrate the EAEUwith BRI in order to advance the Greater Eurasian Partnership, but instead of channeling the increasingly popular narrative that Russia is China's "junior partner", he interestingly reverses the relationship by asserting "the extremely important premise that China needs Russia on its path to global leadership." This perspective frames the rest of what he explores in his article. As it stands, Barabanov believes, "the challenges posed by Chinese leadership in Eurasia and the world in general...do not represent challenges for Russia per se, but in the context of Russia's relations with other major power centers both on the continent and beyond. Occasionally, the expert communities of a number of countries already exhibit a kind of jealousy over Russia and China getting 'too close.' This has led to the conclusion that since Russia is allegedly too deep in China’s orbit, it may lose its geopolitical independence in its relations with other actors. In fact, what we are witnessing here is an echo of the old zero-sum game, 'either you’re with us or you’re with them.'"

He's also of the view that some in the US think that "the Americans need to restore at least

[233] Barabanov O. China’s Road to Global Leadership: Prospects and Challenges for Russia [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 14 May. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/china-s-road-to-global-leadership/.

some dialogue with Russia solely in order to create space between Russia and China", but these pragmatic outreaches that the dissertation's author describes as being in pursuit of a "New Detente" have led to "a number of Chinese experts [starting to have] doubts about Russia's reliability as a true and sincere long-term partner of China" because they "may suspect that Russia will 'betray' China at the first convenient opportunity." According to Barabanov, "the fact that a new bipolar world will crystallize in the medium term with the United States and China in opposition to one another" shouldn't lead to a zero-sum outcome because "partnering with one country does not necessarily mean the automatic end to partnership with another (or even enmity)", but the balance that countries like Russia can strike between both of them and others would be greatly aided by the creation of a "new Non-Aligned Movement" (referred to by the dissertation's author as the Neo-NAM). Should it be established, then "other large countries do not necessarily have to take one side of the barricade, but, on the contrary, would be better off if they maintain some kind of neutrality and coordinate their efforts" through this network. That said, he also warns that "if pursued in a too radical and uncompromising way, the logic of the 'new non-aligned movement' can become a challenge to the consolidation and unity of Eurasia, which is the top priority for the SCO and other projects", so that's why Russia's diplomats must be extremely careful while practicing this delicate balancing act in order to offset the possible scenario of a security dilemma inadvertently forming between their country and China a a result.

From everything that's been discussed thus far in the dissertation pertaining to the many complex challenges inherent to the ongoing global systemic transition and the New Cold War between the US and China that emerged as a result, it is clear that the creation of a Russian-led Neo-NAM (even if jointly led by India per the policy proposal that will be analyzed later on in this chapter) presents the most pragmatic solution for managing Moscow's interests in this rapidly changing and ever-unpredictable context as well as stabilizing International Relations as much as it feasibly can under the circumstances. The Neo-NAM, like its Old Cold War-era predecessor, wouldn't be aimed against any particular

country or "side", but would function as a much-needed platform for balancing between everyone else, both within this structure and outside of it. Furthermore, it could also play the role of its own "concert of powers" (again, both within this network's informal membership and as part of a larger one that includes the US, China, and other informal non-members) and become a testing ground for Kortunov's theory about multilaterality that was talked about in Chapter 2. In addition, the tripolarity that it could trigger in International Relations as a result of its founding could end up representing a transitional phase between the bipolarity and polycentrism that he wrote about in his previously cited article. it is therefore extremely important for Russian decision makers to consider how they could turn this academic proposal into a tangible reality, and the greatest chance for doing so lies with carefully leveraging the Russian-Indian Strategic Partnership in this direction.

3.2 Russian-Indian Relations in the Context of Russian-Pakistani Relations

Russian experts have a lot of worthwhile insight to share about their country's strategic partnership with India, but before diving into the details of they've said over the years, it is important to frame the relationship so that the reader can better understand the policy progression since the onset of the New Cold War in 2014 as they continue through this text. The grand strategic relevance of the Russian-Indian partnership in contemporary geopolitics is to reduce Russia's over-reliance on China following Moscow's "Turn to the East" after the imposition of the West's anti-Russian sanctions in 2014. India's Russian-invited involvement in the Arctic and the Russian Far East, both in the economic sense and potentially soon even the military one too as manifested by regular joint military exercises there, is symbolic in that it shows China that Russia has other privileged Asian partners so it therefore is not desperate to agree to any deal that Beijing might offer. This development is also substantial in its own way as well because Moscow is functioning as the gateway for expanding New Delhi's influence into new geographic domains with the hope that its

partner will reciprocate in other regions like ASEAN, South Asia, and Africa through the creation of trilateral partnerships with third-party states.

In 2014, the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Russian Federation announced plans to increase trade and economic turnover between Russia and India to $30 billion by 2025. By the end of 2021, it amounted to $13.5 billion, an increase of almost 50% compared to the pandemic year 2020. This is a lot, but the pace is hardly sufficient to achieve this goal in the remaining 2.5 years. At the same time, India has not yet entered the top ten key foreign trade partners in Russia. With a share of 1.7% at the end of last year, this country ranks 14th in the overall ranking.

In total, Russia exported $9.13 billion worth of goods to India in 2021. Almost a third of this volume accounted for mineral products (including ore and fuel), 19.88% — machinery, equipment and vehicles, 18.44% — precious metals and stones, 16.08% — chemical industry products, 5.5% — metals and products made from them, 4.27% — food products and agricultural raw materials. In turn, India exported $4.43 billion worth of goods to Russia in 2021. These are mainly chemical industry products (31.7%), machinery, equipment and vehicles (29.9%), foodstuffs and agricultural raw materials (16.34%), metals and products made from them (7.69%), textiles and footwear (7.31%)[234].

The most geostrategically significant outcome of Prime Minister Modi's participation in 2019 Eastern Economic Forum was that he and President Putin agreed to create the Vladivostok-Chennai Maritime Corridor (VCMC)[235], which will function as the first direct connectivity route between the two nations and potentially lay the basis for Russia's future involvement in the Indo-Japanese "Asia-Africa Growth Corridor"[236] (AAGC), which can understandably result in the clinching of multilateral economic partnerships elsewhere like is one of the goals of Moscow's foreign policy in this respect. Building upon that, it'll be

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[234] Kulik L., Kalinin A. Developing Russia-India Economic Ties Under New Circumstances. Russian International Affairs Council. 2022. P. 4.

[235] India, Russia Sign Pact to Open Maritime Route Between Chennai and Vladivostok // *News18*. Op. cit.

[236] Prakash A. The Asia–Africa Growth Corridor: Bringing Together Old Partnerships and New Initiatives [Electronic resource] // Observer Research Foundation. 2018. 25 April. Mode of access: https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-asia-africa-growth-corridor-bringing-together-old-partnerships-and-new-initiatives/.

argued in this chapter that Russia wants to take its strategic partnership with India even further through the joint creation of the Neo-NAM in order to revolutionize International Relations by transitioning the increasingly bipolar world into a tripolar one, which would give both Russia and India much greater sway in determining the ultimate outcome of the ongoing global systemic transition through the power-broking positions that they'd obtain through their semi-coordinated "balancing" acts via this informal network. In order to preemptively offset any security dilemma suspicions arising from the Chinese side, as well as to maintain the intra-organizational balance between itself and India given its partner's recent pro-American drift, Russia should prioritize the improvement of relations with Pakistan as a paradigm changer for expanding the Russia-India-China-US quartet into a quintet through what the dissertation's author describes as the "Fifth Player Theory". All of this will now be explained in the subsequent paragraphs, with regular reminders about the bigger picture periodically inserted in the text.

Starting off, the basis for the Russian-Indian Strategic Partnership is the document that both sides signed to this effect in 2000[237], which states in its opening clauses that it is founded upon the 1971 Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation[238] that in turn led to the 1993 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and the 1994 Declaration on the Further Development and Intensification of Cooperation after the USSR dissolved in 1991. President Putin then broadly outlined the parameters of their prospective relations in his article "India and Russia: new prospects for strategic partnership in the 21st century"[239], which was published by The Hindu ahead of his visit to the South Asian state in December 2012. His main emphases were on closer cooperation through multilateral institutions like BRICS, nuclear energy, military-technical ties, and people-to-people relations, all of which

[237] Declaration on Strategic Partnership Between the Republic of India and the Russian Federation [Electronic resource] // Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. 2000. 3 October. Mode of access: https://mea.gov.in/Images/pdf/DeclerationStrategicPartnership.pdf.

[238] Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation between the Government of India and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics [Electronic resource] // Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. 1971. 9 August. Mode of access: https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/5139/Treaty+of+.

[239] Putin V. India and Russia: New Prospects for Strategic Partnership in the 21st Century [Electronic resource] // Official Internet Resources of the President of Russia. 2012. 23 December. Mode of access: http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17180.

would later be expanded upon through the RIAC report about "100 Postulates on Russia-India Relations"[240] jointly published by Oleg Popadyuk and Igor Denisov in September 2016. The experts reviewed the full gamut of relations, and some of their main points deserve to be highlighted in order to place their ties in the proper international context.

According to them, both sides support the polycentric world order, but their bilateral relations do not exist in a vacuum since "the prospects of their development depend on the nature of Russia and India's interactions with other global players, in particular, with the United States and China." The prioritization of the RIC triangle is important, but it should be remembered that their relations -- both in the bilateral and multilateral framework -- aren't aimed against any third-party like the US. it is important for Russia to get involved in India's "Make in India" industrial development program, and pioneering the North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC) could greatly improve commercial and agricultural trade between the two, as could the clinching of a free trade agreement between India and the Russian-led EAU. Some of the experts' recommendations most relevant to this dissertation are the creation of the aforesaid free trade zone, enhanced military-technical cooperation and economic diversification, and Russia "involving India in settling violent conflicts around the world, solving pressing political issues, and reforming the international financial and economic architecture", which the author of this thesis interprets through the "gateway" perspective mentioned at the beginning of this subsection about facilitating the expansion of India's influence into new domains such as Northeast, Southeast, and Central Asia in order for it to serve as a "friendly" counterbalance to China's there. Popadyuk and Denisov strongly hint at this when writing that "many Asian countries listen to New Delhi, particularly those that are wary of China's strengthening positions on the global stage", which is one of the implied conceptual bases upon which the proposed Neo-NAM could be founded.

Lissovlik wrote his own analysis in the same month as Popadyuk and Denisov's about "The

[240] Popadyuk O., Denisov I. 100 Postulates on Russia–India Relations [Electronic resource] // Russian International Affairs Council. 2016. 5 September. Mode of access: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/activity/workingpapers/100-tezisov-o-rossiysko-indiyskikh-otnosheniyakh/.

Crossroads of Eurasia and Asia Pacific"[241] where he identified the "three key trajectories" of Eurasian-Pacific integration as being Northeast Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia via the Russian Far East, Japan and South Korea, and ASEAN, respectively. In his view, "the advancement towards establishing and reinforcing the above three links between Greater Eurasia and the Asia Pacific could render the mega-projects in the region more stable and complete", with visionary outlook presciently predicting the VCMC (Northeast Asia to South Asia through East and Southeast Asia) and the economic ties that Russia could develop with India's Japanese AAGC partner as a result if this initiative is taken to its logical integrative conclusion with time. Russian-Indian relations therefore showed immense grand strategic promise by the end of 2016, so it is little wonder then that RIAC teamed up with its partners at the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF) to publish a much more comprehensive report about how to actualize these opportunities and more on the 70th anniversary of bilateral relations a year later in October 2017. "70th Anniversary of Russia-India Relations: New Horizons of Privileged Partnership"[242] is co-authored by many prestigious experts, and the foreward was written by Vyacheslav Trubnikov -- the former Director of the Foreign Intelligence Service and Ambassador to India -- and Kanwal Sibal -- former Foreign Secretary and Ambassador to Russia.

The first-mentioned foresaw that "it is possible that a new bipolarity could emerge – the United States against China, with Russia and India being the new 'non-aligned' powers relying on regional systems of international security such as BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO)." Trubnikov also declared that "the time to think in large and specific categories is fast approaching", which will lead to a "new paradigm of strategic partner relations

[241] Lissovolik Y. The Cross-Roads of Eurasia and Asia Pacific [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2016. 14 September. 2016. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-ross-roads-of-eurasia-and-asia-pacific/.

[242] Popadyuk O., et al. 70th Anniversary of Russia-India Relations: New Horizons of Privileged Partnership [Electronic resource] // Russian International Affairs Council. 2017. 11 October. Mode of access: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/activity/publications/70th-anniversary-of-russia-india-relations-new-horizons-of-privileged-partnership/.

between Russia and India", though the author of the dissertation believes that he was being unrealistically optimistic when he wrote that "the SCO and BRICS frameworks are large enough to attract China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and other countries in the Indo-Pacific region to Russia–India bilateral relations in these large-scale projects" since India won't join BRI because of CPEC, thus limiting Chinese-Pakistani ties with that country. In any case, Trubnikov's overall insight as shared in the foreward makes the case for what will later become the Neo-NAM proposal between Russia and India suggested by two Valdai Club experts three years later and which will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

As for Sibal, he seems to hint at this future possibility when writing that "close ties with Russia are a balancing factor in our foreign policy and give us the strategic autonomy that we feel we must have", while assuring his counterparts that Indian-American ties aren't being expanded at Russia's expense. He does, however, express concern at the improvement of Russian-Pakistani relations, remarking how uncomfortable it is for India that its rival "has begun to tout a Pakistan–China–Russia axis against an India–US axis in the region". This hints at the nightmare scenario that India is most worried about, namely that its comprehensive expansion of relations with the US will engender the counter-reaction of closer Russian-Chinese-Pakistani relations, though the dissertation's author believes that the Damocles' sword of this response could actually serve to put the brakes on Indian-American ties in order to ensure that they do not take on a threatening anti-Chinese form, thus maintaining balance within the Neo-NAM and therefore retaining as much structural stability in Eurasia as possible. it is ironic that India does not take Russia and China's concerns into consideration when strengthening ties (especially those of a military nature) with the US, yet is seemingly upset about much lower-level Russian-Pakistani ones, making one wonder whether a double standard is at play and if Indian influencers are trying to hoodwink their Russian counterparts about their country's true long-term strategic intentions in parallel with guilting them about their own ties with Pakistan in order to curtail their growth as the most likely counterbalance to the former.

That's probably why he sternly says that "the belief in some Russian quarters that Pakistan

can be a participant in major SCO or BRICS infrastructure and other projects within the framework of the India–Russia strategic relationship is unlikely to find a positive echo in Indian thinking, given India’s seven decades of experience with Pakistan’s endemic hostility. Russia’s evolving optic on Pakistan is creating a gap in the hitherto strong geopolitical understandings between India and Russia in our region." it is extremely hypocritical, to say the least, that India's ties with the US are above scrutiny by any Russian experts while Russia's ties with Pakistan are the subject of criticism by Indian ones. This further reinforces the fear that Sibal and those like him aren't being sincere in their interactions with their Russian counterparts, but are using those opportunities to manipulate their interlocutors' perceptions for grand strategic ends despite talking about "friendship", "trust", and using other "disarming" language the entire time. it is important to keep this in mind going forward, not just for the rest of this dissertation but even in general when talking about Russian-Indian relations as whole, because there's a worry that India is trying to manipulate Russia in order to serve its own interests, which is natural in a Neo-Realist world but should nevertheless be a scenario that Russians do not forget so that they do not lose important opportunities for keeping Indian-US relations in check through their prospective Russian-Pakistani counterbalance.

Continuing along, Sibal expresses his opinion that China has an "upper hand" in its relations with Russia, and that it is exploiting the BRICS+ idea "for expanding its geopolitical and geoeconomic goals, and, in the process, diminish the relative role of Russia and India in the forum." This zero-sum thinking contrasts with the win-win outlook officially associated with India's policy of "multi-alignment" and puts it at odds with Russia while placing it on the same side as the US in this respect. Sibal does not stop there, however, since he goes on to explain the security dilemma between his country and China, especially concerning BRI and CPEC. His conclusion at that point is that "China is in a better position to challenge the US and establish a G2 of sorts, an outcome that would be reached at the cost of both India and Russia. The question therefore is whether India and Russia should become partners in this process or refine their strategy in ways that they do

not accelerate the realisation of China’s geopolitical and maritime ambitions that are now quite evident." This strongly suggests that Russia and India should team up to balance China, a thought that's recently gained currency in Russian strategic circles through Barabanov's Neo-NAM proposal and the more detailed one made by two Valdai Club experts that will be talked about at the end of this chapter.

To simplify the main positions put forth by the prestigious Russian and Indian authors of the report's foreward, Trubnikov basically believes that India can help Russia balance out the increasingly bipolar state of International Relations, a goal that Sibal also shares but he goes even further by trying to offset the positive trajectory of Russian-Pakistani relations in order to preempt the creation of any Damocles' sword scenario that could put a check on his country's rapidly expanding strategic partnership with the US. India does not want Pakistan becoming the fourth player in RIC or the fifth one in the US-Russia-China-India quadrangle, but it is precisely this possible development that could serve as the ultimate paradigm changer for facilitating Russia's "balancing" act between each of them through the inclusion of another actor into these complicated relationships. After all, Pakistan is objectively involved in these processes, whether it is officially recognized as being so or not, so it only makes sense for Russia to advance the "Fifth Player Theory" of accepting this dynamic and making up for the many opportunities that were lost over the years to enhance bilateral relations and create a new axis within the resultant quintet for better balancing the entire framework. This idea will be talked about more in Chapter 4 but is being introduced at this point because of its relevance against the backdrop of Sibal's statements.

Returning back to the report, it mostly reviews a lot of the postulates touched upon in the previously cited RIAC analysis from a year prior, thus functioning as a spiritual successor of sorts that succeeded in popularizing many of these ideas through the involvement of so many influential experts who are more than capable of transforming these ideas into action. Some pertinent points that were made or reminded of are that bilateral ties between Russia and India aren't occurring in a vacuum, and that China is moving closer to Eurasia as a

reaction to the US' "Pivot to Asia", the latter of which is objectively true considering what was written in Chapter 1 about how CPEC was probably pioneered in response to the containment that China felt in the South China Sea as a result of that policy. The authors are also very frank in talking about the contrast of improving Indian-American relations in parallel with the deterioration of Russian-American ones, but once again caution Russia not to read too deeply into this or see it through a cause-and-effect perspective that could lead to creeping distrust between the two. The NSTC and a EAU-Indian FTA are once again touched upon, too.

The conclusions and recommendations are predictable enough, and they're to actualize those two aforementioned initiatives as well as for Russia to support India's increasing role in International Relations and especially the UNSC. A cleverly written one, however, is that "historically, Russia and India have not pursued policies in the neighbourhood of either country that are geopolitically against their respective interests. This compatibility of geopolitical interests should be maintained. Inter alia, this requires additional consultations between Moscow and New Delhi on current dynamics in South Asia, Central Asia, Middle East, Eastern Europe and East Asia." It kills several birds with one stone because it implies the future curtailment of Russian-Pakistani relations (which actually did not end up happening since ties only strengthened in the subsequent years) while deflecting from US-Indian ones because they're do not directly concern Russia's "neighbourhood" even though they risk destabilizing China and thus causing indirect consequences for Moscow. In addition, the phrase, "that are geopolitically against their respective interests" is extremely vague and subject to one-sided subjective interpretations such as the manner through which the dissertation's author just described the Indian position vis-a-vis Russian-Pakistani relations. Nevertheless, one extremely visionary proposal made in the conclusion is that "India and Russia can profitably cooperate with each other in economic projects in third countries, primarily in Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, as well as in Central Asia", which implies Russia's closer cooperation with the AAGC to that effect and is also relevant to the guiding goals of the Neo-NAM.

Overall, the report represents an academic and policy-making milestone in spite of the clear agenda being pursued by the Indian side within it to downplay their relations with the US while pressuring Russia because of its newly improved ties with Pakistan at the time. India hides behind the "multi-alignment"/"strategic autonomy" rhetoric to obviously impose double standards on Russia when it comes to Pakistan while pretending that Moscow shouldn't be concerned about the direct and indirect implications of closer US-Indian strategic ties. In light of this, the recommendation that "it is necessary for India and Russia to prevent third countries from exerting significant influence on their bilateral ties" seems like wishful thinking on the Russian side given the increasing sway that the US holds over Indian strategic thought at this time (especially when it comes to India's relations with China) while coming off as sincere from the Indian side considering that they're deflecting all criticism of their aforesaid strategic ties with the US while disproportionately focusing on the incomparably lesser ones between Russia and Pakistan. These legitimate issues aside, the report itself is extremely thorough and does indeed present a very practical blueprint for the Russian-Indian Strategic Partnership, particularly because of the emphasis that it places on bilaterally cooperating all throughout Eurasia and possibly even expanding this framework into various trilaterals that include China, the US, Iran, Israel, and Afghanistan, some of which could form axes within the Neo-NAM.

Having finished analyzing the extensive report published during the 70th anniversary year of bilateral relations, the next expert commentary on Russian-Indian relations to be reviewed in this dissertation is the piece released by Bordachev a few months later in February 2018 titled "Greater Eurasia in 'the Indian Century'"[243]. In it, he assesses that the US' failed unipolarity is giving way to chaos instead of bipolarity or multipolarity, and that the US is weaponizing this process to sow discord in the Chinese-Indian relationship. Therefore, "it is particularly important for Russia, China and other Eurasian states not to allow this chaos to spread to their macroregion", which tangibly entails "preventing the

[243] Bordachev T. Greater Eurasia in ‘the Indian Century [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2018. 22 February. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/greater-eurasia-in-the-indian-century/.

formation of a new multipolarity in Greater Eurasia with rival, or simply competing centers of power". The author of the dissertation believes that this is already a fait accompli, however, and that Russia must make the best of it through the Neo-NAM with India, albeit maintaining a balance with its co-founder within this network through the intensification of ties with Pakistan. Although Bordachev hints at how the smaller- and medium-sized countries of ASEAN are trying to play various powers off against one another to their self-interested benefit, this warning is not that applicable for Pakistan since it is a relevant power in this quintet by its own right per the "Fifth Player Theory" of expanding the poles of pertinence in this framework and not just an object of competition for larger powers. If anything, and using the RIAC-VIF report as but one example, it is India that's applying this divide-and-rule policy on a much grander level but is disguising it with the rhetoric of "multi-alignment"/"strategic autonomy", though that does not mean that Russia cannot take advantage of it for its own ends when it comes to "managing" what Barabanov earlier described as the "challenge" of China's rise.

Kortunov proves that he understands both the naturally occurring and externally encouraged divergences between China and India very well in his extensive analysis about the "Indo-Pacific or Community of Common Destiny?"[244] published in May 2018 at his think tank. He opened his piece by talking about how the next 15-20 years will largely determine the essence of the emerging world order, believing that "it is clear that the epicentre of the struggle is — and will continue to be — the Eurasian continent." The fact that he accepts that the ongoing global systemic transition is still in its initial stages is important because one can then apply the primary precept of Steven R. Mann's 1992 work about "Chaos Theory and Strategic Thought"[245] to postulate that any changes at the onset of complex processes such as this one will disproportionately affect the ultimate outcome, meaning that the proposal put forth by the author of this dissertation that Russia should go

[244] Kortunov A. Indo-Pacific or Community of Common Destiny? [Electronic resource] // Russian International Affairs Council. 2018. 28 May. Mode of access: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/indo-pacific-or-community-of-common-destiny/.

[245] Mann S. Chaos Theory and Strategic Thought [Electronic resource] // Parameters. 1992. Mode of access: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2d4c/edff480f9962dedd7bd4997f4b7a29e25276.pdf.

forward with the dual gambits of the Neo-NAM and prioritizing bilateral relations with Pakistan could conceivably amount to a paradigm change that results in Moscow becoming the kingmaker of the eventual world order. That will be talked about a bit more later in the thesis, but the reader is being reminded of it at this time because it is extremely relevant to keep in mind when analyzing Kortunov's article.

RIAC's Director General is of the belief that "two competing long-term visions of Eurasia are coming into focus. Each represents the national interests of key players, a combination of regional military, political, and economic strategies, bilateral and multilateral international mechanisms, and corresponding ideological and conceptual designs. Each vision is collecting its coalition, mobilizing its allies, and accumulating its resources. The main battles are yet to come, but the scent of gunpowder is already in the air. Everything points to a protracted and demanding confrontation. Tactical compromises between the two visions are possible and likely even inevitable, though in the long term, the two projects are in no way fully compatible. In the end, there can be only one winner, and the loser shall be relegated to the fate of being a redundant historical player in the evolution of the Eurasian continent." These two competing long-term visions are, as the title of his article states, the US-backed Indo-Pacific and the Chinese-backed Community of Common Destiny. The former is envisaged to manifest its core as the Quad of "maritime democracies" comprised of the US, India, Japan, and Australia, all of whom would then pool their resources towards collectively containing China, while the latter is driven by a combination of BRI and the US' containment pressure while having no such implied containment objectives of its own because it seeks to consolidate Eurasia instead of divide it.

The Indo-Pacific and Community of Common Destiny have yet to fully crystallize though, and each has their respective advantages and disadvantages that could determine their success or lack thereof in the future. Kortunov thinks that the US' advantage is its military while its disadvantage is its "precarious economic foundation", especially given the absence of any multilateral trade projects like the former TPP. Unlike during the Old Cold

War (the term used by the dissertation's author and not Kortunov) when the US paired the Truman Doctrine with the Marshal Plan, the Indo-Pacific does not have a complementary economic counterpart, though the dissertation's author disagrees in a sense because Trump's plan is to replace multilateral trade pacts with bilateral ones that still involve the most significant countries of this space such as India. As for China's Community of Common Destiny, Kortunov praises the long-term strategic (economic) planning of the People's Republic but also points out how its unique disadvantage "lies in the fears of neighbouring states regarding Chinese economic, political, and military hegemony in Eurasia" since "the current American hegemony along the periphery of the Eurasian continent strikes many as less burdensome and more bearable than the potential dominance of Beijing." Theoretically speaking, it can be said that China's true disadvantage lies in its inability to creatively wield Constructivism and positively shape the perceptions of its many partners, who are coming under the influence of US and Indian information warfare campaigns that fearmonger about the grand strategic consequences of any country's long-term commitments to BRI.

India is characterized as a "decisive swing state" by Kortunov, which is true to a large extent since it has yet to fully commit itself to either the Indo-Pacific or Community of Common Destiny visions despite visibly leaning towards the former while eschewing the latter because it believes that its flagship project of CPEC violates its "sovereignty" by traversing through the Pakistani region of Gilgit-Baltistan that New Delhi claims as its own per its maximalist approach to the Kashmir Conflict. Kortunov is right, however, in writing that both the US and China need India on their side, even going as far as to state that "it would not be an exaggeration to say that for the present, and moreover for the future, a partnership with India is no less important to the US than their Cold War alliance with Japan was." He also has a valid point in implying that China's so-called "string of pearls" -- the neologism popular in India for referring to China's investments (specifically port-related ones) in the Afro-Asian ("Indian") Ocean -- contributed to Indian strategists falling under the sway of seeing their relations with that state through the prism of a security

dilemma. As a result, he's right in saying that "it is unlikely that India will be able to avoid junior partner status in the USA’s Indo-Pacific with all the accompanying costs" if it decides to double down on this partnership in order to contain China.

As for Russia's interests, Kortunov correctly notes how the Indo-Pacific concept completely excludes his country, but then provocatively states that "a standoff between the maritime and continental parts of Eurasia would clearly be preferable to Russia than the hypothetical version of close American-Chinese cooperation as the G2, which would certainly reduce the value of Moscow as a partner not only in Washington's eyes, but in Beijing's as well. But the costs of a new Eurasian bipolarity for Moscow would in any case outweigh possible benefits: Russian policy in Eurasia would lose its flexibility, and many traditional partnerships, such as with Vietnam and India, would be jeopardized." While the Community of Common Destiny would serve Russia's interests more than the Indo-Pacific or the G2 scenario, "Russia must not behave like a spoke attached to the central Chinese Eurasian axis, but as a parallel axis, albeit one smaller in diameter", hence why it "must enter the Community of Common Destiny with its own Eurasian integration project (EAEC) and not empty-handed." Without realizing it, Kortunov just made a brilliant case for why Russia needs to lead (whether on its own or jointly with India) the Neo-NAM in order to balance the asymmetries of its bilateral relationship with China, adding also that "India will face the same challenge if it should decide in favour of the Community of Common Destiny" so "it would be logical for Delhi to perform a system-forming function for South Asia, similar to the one that Russia must implement in Central Eurasia". "At the same time", however, "the Indian leadership must understand that the time of exclusive Spheres of Influence enjoyed by the great powers are a thing of the past, that it is no longer possible to count on the unconditional loyalty of even the closest neighbours and partners, like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal, and that it will be necessary to fight hard for their attention and benevolence."

Kortunov is correct with what he said because India's regional policy has recently been characterized by coercing the comparatively smaller states in its neighborhood to

"bandwagon" with it instead of "balancing" with China. This was seen through the failed informal blockade that was imposed against Nepal in 2015[246] following controversy over its then-newly promulgated constitution that was considered by New Delhi to be disadvantageous to the southern plains-dwelling Madhesi people with whom it shares very close historical, demographic, and economic links. More successful, however, were the Indian-backed democratic regime changes that took place in Sri Lanka [247] and the Maldives[248], as well as its co-opting of the ruling Awami League party in Bangladesh in order to turn the former East Pakistan into New Delhi's junior partner, much to the rising consternation of some of its populace[249]. Russia, meanwhile, hasn't resorted to such tactics in its "Near Abroad", which is why it enjoys much better goodwill and trust with the countries included in its informal "sphere of influence" unlike India, whose hold on its regional partners is tentative and always at risk of being lost because of the coercive nature with which it expanded its influence over them. From a theoretical standpoint, one can say that those countries naturally balanced with China out of fear of India as the regional rising hegemon, but that India undertook what are described as "active measures" in the intelligence community to compel them to "bandwagon" with it instead. This might be successful for the short-term, but it cannot guarantee medium- or long-term results, and could create even more strategic opportunities for China than ever before if Beijing creatively leverages its BRI outreach efforts to lure them back under its sway, which would inadvertently exacerbate the existing Chinese-Indian security dilemma unless Russia intervened to "balance" affairs there.

Kortunov channels Kissinger by referencing the latter's strategic precept that "in any

[246] Nepal Blockade: Six Ways It Affects the Country [Electronic resource] // BBC. 2015. 12 December. Mode of access: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35041366.

[247] Chalmers J., Miglani S. Indian Spy's Role Alleged in Sri Lankan President's Election Defeat [Electronic resource] // Reuters. 2015. 18 January. Mode of access: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sri-lanka-election-india-insight/indian-spys-role-alleged-in-sri-lankan-presidents-election-defeat-idUSKBN0KR03020150118.

[248] Mitra D. India’s Strategy on Maldives Delivered Results, Says Ex President Nasheed [Electronic resource] // The Wire. 2019. 20 February. Mode of access: https://thewire.in/south-asia/indias-strategy-on-maldives-delivered-results-says-ex-president-nasheed.

[249] Ahmed I. In Bangladesh, a Student’s Murder Opens a Window on Rising Anti-India Sentiment across the Border [Electronic resource] // Scroll.in. 2019. 10 October. Mode of access: https://scroll.in/article/939979/in-bangladesh-a-students-murder-opens-a-window-on-rising-anti-india-sentiment-across-the-border.

geopolitical triangle, the corner whose relationship with each of the other two angles is better than their relationship with each other is in the most favourable position", so "in keeping with this classic of geopolitics, Russia should theoretically be interested in maintaining a certain level of tension in Sino-Indian relations in order to occupy the most favourable position in the Russia–China–India triangle." Theoretical is the key qualifer because he then states that "Russia does not stand to benefit from an exacerbation of Sino-Indian conflicts" in practice, so "it should be a priority for Russian foreign policy (of no less importance than restoring relations with the West! [which the dissertation's author describes as the "New Detente"]) to seek ways to overcome disagreements between India and China and to strengthen cooperation between the two" through revitalizing the RIC framework "which was to some extent swallowed up within the BRICS structure." The dissertation's author somewhat disagrees with this because the replacement of the "Chimerica" G2 with the A2 of "Chindia" could make Russia just as irrelevant in that triangle as the former scenario. This does not at all mean that Russia should recklessly throw away its hard-earned goodwill with both of them by trying to drive further wedges between them together with the US, but just that it should accept the objective existence of the security dilemma between them and thereafter devise the best way to leverage this dynamic in pursuit of its own grand strategic interests, ideally through the Neo-NAM (which would be internally balanced through the intensification of Russian-Pakistani relations that would also reduce any rising threat perception that China might have of that informal network).

Kortunov's closing thoughts are that the Community of Common Destiny is the best of the two approaches for Russia to pursue, but that it "does not in any way signify a return to the old idea of Yevgeny Primakov, expressed during his visit to Delhi in late 1998, about the trilateral cooperation of Russia, China, and India existing to counter the monopolar American world." He then proceeds to explain that "the monopolar American world has not come to pass nor will it. The balance of power in the world has changed alongside the rules of the game of world politics. Moscow’s biggest mistake would be to try to fill the

new Eurasian project with old geopolitical content. Equally erroneous would be any attempt to present the Eurasian project and the development of relations between individual participants and external players as a type of Zero-sum game." If successful, then "the implementation of the Common Destiny would see the United States gradually lose its imperial status and turn into primus inter pares – the most powerful of several great powers paving the way into the 22nd century." The author of this dissertation believes that all of this could be facilitated through the paradigm change that would occur if Russia jointly formed a Neo-NAM with India in parallel with implementing the "Fifth Player Theory" of elevating China's ally Pakistan, on whose BRI flagship project of CPEC Beijing's grand strategic game-changer of obtaining unrestricted access to the Afro-Asian ("Indian" Ocean) is dependent, to the level of an equal player in what would then be the geopolitical quintet between them. This would replicate on a much larger and more globally significant scale what the US and Russia's outreaches to the Kurds (primarily in Iraq and Syria) are doing in the Mideast by completely revolutionizing regional geopolitics between the four concerned states through the elevation of a new "fifth player" in that framework too.

As it stands, Kortunov believes that there are four scenarios that future developments could broadly take, which he wrote about in his follow-up pieces just a week later in June 2018 titled "China and the US in Asia: Four Scenarios for the Future"[250]. His prognosis is that the coming years will result in either a "Washington consensus 2.0" of restored American influence, a "China-India Axis", a "multipolar balance of power", or a "new bipolarity" of "maritime democracies" and "continental autocracies". He thinks that the first scenario would actually be good for Russia because it would increase its strategic significance to China, which is a clever prediction that would also hold true for Pakistan by virtue of CPEC according to the dissertation's author. Kortunov also sees clear advantages in the second scenario too because of the potential that Russia's cooperation with both pillars

[250] Kortunov A. China and the US in Asia: Four Scenarios for the Future [Electronic resource] // Russian International Affairs Council. 2018. 8 June. Mode of access: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/china-and-the-us-in-asia-four-scenarios-for-the-future/.

could lead to the strengthening of RIC. it is here where the dissertation's author once again disagrees with him, however. The first scenario is theoretically sound as a possible opportunity for Russian foreign policy, but it also overlooks the fact that Russia could once again be relegated to the margins, just like it could be in the second one, too. Instead, it is the third and fourth scenarios that provide the greatest opportunities because Russia could jointly lead the Neo-NAM with India within them in parallel with intensifying Russian-Pakistani relations in pursuit of an eventual strategic partnership for the reasons that have already been explained. This outcome, which is applicable in half of the scenarios that Kortunov forecast, would enable Moscow to be the kingmaker of Eurasian affairs and thus bestow more influence upon it than it could ever hope to achieve if it hadn't undertaken these dual courses of action. Again, the specifics of how and why the Russian-Pakistani partnership is so pivotal to all of this will be explained in Chapter 4, but it is worthwhile to keep in mind that it is the lynchpin for all of this, especially in the more tangible trans-regional integrational sense.

Kortunov has clearly invested a lot of his intellectual talents in thinking about the Eurasian-wide interplay between China and India, which is such an important topic to him that he further elaborated upon it in February 2019 in his analytical piece titled "Heartland Reunion: Geopolitical Chimera or Historical Chance?"[251] He starts off by referencing MacKinder's Heartland theory, but reconceptualizing it to postulate that what the godfather of geopolitics considered to be the "inner crescent" of China and India is actually the new 21st-century Heartland of the Eastern Hemisphere. This creative twist means that the future of Chinese-Indian relations will determine the future of Eurasia, which in turn will shape the outcome of the ongoing global systemic transition. On the surface, then, there shouldn't be any reason to worry about the future since "it would seem that there are no fundamental obstacles to the consolidation of the Heartland". Both Asian Great Powers share the same stance towards many international issues and are "'revisionist' players on the global stage in

[251] Kortunov A. Heartland Reunion: Geopolitical Chimera or Historical Chance? [Electronic resource] // Russian International Affairs Council. 2019. 8 February. Mode of access: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/heartland-reunion-geopolitical-chimera-or-historical-chance/.

the sense that both China and India are interested in revising the old rules of the game that serve the interests of the 'collective West.'" Nevertheless, their relations have been characterized by rivalry, which leads one to ask why this state of affairs is the way that it is. Upon further examination, there are profound differences between the two, namely their forms of government, demographic ratios (China is much more homogenous while India is very heterogeneous), the fact that China is more like an EU state whereas India is more like the EU as a whole because of the aforesaid demographic ratios, their different histories, the regional competition for markets and resources between them, the lingering memory of their brief 1962 border conflict, and the power asymmetries between them which undoubtedly prove that China is much more economically and militarily stronger than India at this point and will probably remain so for the foreseeable future.

About the last-mentioned of Kortunov's observations, the dissertation's author believes that it provides yet another argument in favor of the Neo-NAM and the intensification of Russian-Pakistani relations since external balancers always side with the weaker of the two in any pair, which is India vis-a-vis China and Pakistan vis-a-vis India (at least according to statistical data about the size of their economy and the number of their military forces, not the quality of the latter as was seen on full display during their February 2019 incident when Pakistan shot down at least one Indian jet that illegally entered its territory).

Continuing with the content of his article, Kortunov correctly pointed out that "today we are witnessing an attempt by the United States to replicate the successful approaches of Henry Kissinger taken in the 1970s and to build a Eurasian geopolitical triangle. The difference is that the USSR is replaced by China, and China is replaced by India. This explains the increased attention of the United States to New Delhi and the persistent attempts to involve India in multilateral groupings that include allies of the United States that are located on the island periphery of the Eurasian continent, namely Japan and Australia (the concept of a 'democratic Indo-Pacific'). If Washington had succeeded in achieving the sustainable institutionalization of these groupings in the form of a military-technical alliance similar to NATO, this would have created long-term guaranteed

preventing the consolidation of the Heartland." He's not too concerned, however, because in his estimation, "any format of allied relations with Washington is politically unacceptable for the Indian elite, which is pushing for the preservation of the country's strategic independence. What is more, India cannot sacrifice its continental Eurasian partners (primarily Moscow and Tehran) – not even for the sake of friendship with Washington."

The author of the dissertation disagrees with this interpretation because it was proven three months after Kortunov's article was published that India decided to abide by the US' unilateral anti-Iranian sanctions and therefore discontinued purchasing oil from its traditional partner[252], instead replacing its imports with US, Saudi, Emirati, and even Russian resources. As for India not being able to sacrifice its relationship with Russia, that's true, since it conversely strengthened it during the Eastern Economic Forum later that year through the creation of the VCMC. Even so, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute proved in its "Trends In International Arms Transfers, 2018"[253] report released in early 2019 that "Russia accounted for 58 per cent of Indian arms imports in 2014–18, compared with 76 per cent in 2009–13", which Indian media alarmingly reported is a 42% drop[254] caused by their country progressively replacing Russian imports with American, Israeli, and French ones instead. The point is that India is indeed sacrificing some of its interests with Russia under the cover of "multi-alignment"/"strategic autonomy" precisely "for the sake of friendship with Washington", though not as openly as it is when it comes to Iran.

Channeling Kissingerian thought, Kortunov writes that "the consolidation of the Eurasian Heartland around the China–India axis would entail a further shift in the Eurasian center of gravity towards the south of Russia's borders. This would marginalize Russia even further

[252] India Has Ended Iranian Oil Imports: Envoy [Electronic resource] // France 24. 2019. 23 May. Mode of access: https://www.france24.com/en/20190523-india-has-ended-iranian-oil-imports-envoy.

[253] Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2018 [Electronic resource]. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2019. Mode of access: https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/fs_1903_at_2018_0.pdf.

[254] Russian Arms Exports to India Fell by 42% between 2014-18 and 2009-13: Report [Electronic resource] // Livemint. 2019. 12 March. Mode of access: https://www.livemint.com/news/india/russian-arms-exports-to-india-fell-by-42-between-2014-18-and-2009-13-report-1552330101285.html.

as a participant in the Eurasian community." Be that as it may, he cautions, "it is safe to predict that attempts to capitalize on the contradictions between China and India will inevitably raise suspicions both in Beijing and in New Delhi, cause them to doubt the sincerity of Russia’s actions", which is certainly true, so the best prospect is to prioritize RIC and get it more involved in specific issues like Syria and Afghanistan but also different geographic domains like the Arctic. Nevertheless, according to Kortunov, "whatever Russia’s role in the consolidation of the Eurasian Heartland, it will by no means be decisive. China–India relations have their own internal logic and their own dynamics that no external player (be it the United States, the European Union or Russia) can change." The dissertation's author once again disagrees with Kortunov because the Neo-NAM and the intensification of Russian-Pakistani relations to the point of a strategic partnership would be a paradigm changer.

India would approve of the Neo-NAM while China would probably view it with suspicion, just like India would probably view stronger Russian-Pakistani relations with suspicion while China would approve of them, thus balancing out both of their concerns by giving each of them something to support in these dual policies to counteract the parts that they'll most likely be opposed to. Should Russia undertaken these courses of action, then it would no longer have to accept Kortunov's prediction that its role in the consolidation of the Eurasian Heartland "will by no means be decisive" since it'll immediately become one of the most decisive power brokers in the world precisely at the initial stages of the ongoing global system transition which could then enable it to disproportionately influence the ultimate outcome in the next 15-20 years that Kortunov previously predicted it should be settled by. Only through these means can Russia keep one foot in the Indo-Pacific with India through the Neo-NAM (as well as the AAGC that could be paired with it) and the other in the Community of Common Destiny through intensifying relations with the host state of BRI's flagship project, Pakistan, in such a way as to avoid becoming too over-reliant on either of these visions' American or Chinese progenitors, respectively. Russia must find a middle, third way to navigate between the emerging bipolarity in International

Relations, and it can do so by taking the initiative to revolutionize the strategic situation through the Neo-NAM (by moving the global system towards "tripolarity") and the "Fifth Player Theory" of elevating Pakistan to the point point of becoming the newest balancing player in what would by then be the geopolitical quintet between itself, Russia, China, the US, and India.

As the chapter nears its end, it is time to introduce Valdai Club expert and Researcher of the Sector of International Organizations and Global Political Regulation of the Department of International Political Problems at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) in Moscow Alexey Kupriyanov. He's written extensively on Russian-Indian relations and is regularly quoted by his country's media on this important topic, and it is he who put forth the idea of Russia and India jointly leading the Neo-NAM, which he calls the "Peaceful Development Movement". Before analyzing the very important piece that he co-authored in which he officially put this proposal forth, his interview with Bespalov should be talked about just a bit in order to frame the context in which he came up with his groundbreaking idea. Bespalov interviewed Kupriyanov and several other experts in his July 2019 article "Goodbye Pacific Rim, Hello Indo-Pacific?"[255], where the South Asia expert insisted that the Indo-Pacific concept is only anti-Chinese and zero-sum in the American variant, but is not conceptualized as such by India or the other involved countries. He also said that "India is trying to maintain a balance between the US and China", so it and others could use both the Indo-Pacific and BRI for their needs instead of one or the other exclusively. In his view, "the Indo-Japanese-Indonesian version of the Indo-Pacific and the Belt and Road project could be integrated if both sides are interested and have the political will: both initiatives increase Eurasia’s transport potential", which hints at a hybrid fusion between the two that could possibly create a new precedent for finding a middle/third way in an increasingly bipolar world. In order to take maximum advantage of this, Kupriyanov urged his countrymen to realize that

[255] Bespalov A. Goodbye Pacific Rim, Hello Indo-Pacific? [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 1 July. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/goodbye-pacific-rim-hello-indo-pacific/?.

"it is time for Russia to form its own vision of Indo-Pacific and, importantly, bring it to the countries of the region", something that he then proceeded to do himself a little more than two months later.

3.3 The Role of “New Non-Aligned Movement” for Russian-Pakistani Relations

Timed to coincide with immediately after Prime Minister Modi's participation in the Eastern Economic Forum in September 2019 as President Putin's guest of honor, during which time the VCMC was launched, Kupriyanov co-authored a Valdai Club report with Alexander Korolev, junior research fellow at the Centre for Comprehensive European and International Studies at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, titled "The Eurasian Chord and the Oceanic Ring: Russia and India as the Third Force in a New World Order"[256]. They began their work by talking about how the world is in the midst of a New Cold War, which they call the "Second Cold War", between the US and China. They're of the opinion that this competition "is a strictly imperialistic affair, for there is no particular difference between the US and China", whereby "both countries are concerned with expanding their influence, gaining access to resources, promoting their goods on the markets of dependent countries, and claiming the mantle of the global hegemon within the global market system." Against this increasingly bipolar backdrop, the experts believe that "Moscow and New Delhi may respond by forming an unofficial, non-military alliance, which could be termed the Peaceful Development Movement", and that "the aim of forging such a space of co-development would be to continue positive globalization while also searching for fairer alternatives to the existing world order." This would ensure that neither of them have to take a side in the New Cold War, thus allowing them to "profit from maintaining strategic autonomy for as long as possible in order to benefit from trade with both parties while avoiding commitments."

Neither China's Community of Common Destiny nor the US' Western democratic model

[256] Kupriyanov, Alexey, and Alexander Korolev. “The Eurasian Chord and the Oceanic Ring: Russia and India as the Third Force in a New World Order.”, op. cit.

can replace the role that ideology used to play in the Old Cold War, which is why "what we are witnessing today is more reminiscent of the period before World War I, an imperialist war, with powers' purely economic rivalry over colonies, resources, and markets." Wanting to "avoid backing the wrong horse", it makes sense for the "key/swing states" of Russia and India to work more closely together pioneering a middle/third way between the US and China by "creating issues-based coalitions that prevent unipolar or bipolar arrangements" instead of just simply balancing between those two aforementioned superpowers. In pursuit of this, it would certainly be helpful to rely on the previously cited articles about the "100 Postulates on Russia–India Relations" and its spiritual successor report about the "70th Anniversary of Russia-India Relations: New Horizons of Privileged Partnership". The experts believe that there's already a naturally existing geopolitical complementarity to their bilateral relationship that could be jointly leveraged to their collective advantage because "without Russia's participation, no one can access the Arctic shelf's resources", while "without India, there are no approaches to the resources of East Africa."

The author of the dissertation believes that the second statement is an exaggeration, though, because the Indian Navy is not anywhere near as strong as it would have to be to exercise any real control over the Sea Lines Of Communication (SLOC) across the Afro-Asian ("Indian") Ocean except perhaps its southern tip and the Maldives, but in general it is incapable of controlling this enormous body of water because there aren't any chokepoints within it either (though it is bookended by the Bab al-Mandab and Strait of Malacca that are under the control of other powers). Even if it one day had the capability to do so a few decades into the future, it would be hypocritical for India to actually do what it and its new American strategic partner accuse China of intending (key word) to do in the South China Sea, as this could also trigger a more pronounced security dilemma between it and Beijing too since the People's Republic will grow ever more reliant on these waters as the years progress seeing as how Africa is poised to become one of its largest trading partners. CPEC already provides it with a "shortcut" to the Afro-Asian ("Indian") Ocean for facilitating trade with that continent, the Mideast, and Europe further afar, but this trend

will only become more pronounced in the future, especially once all the CPEC phases are complete and the project truly enters into operation on the scale that its Chinese investors are planning in the coming decades. Predictably, China might preemptively take action to bolster the Pakistani Navy and acquire more logistics facilities for itself in the Afro-Asian ("Indian") Ocean in order to thwart any moves by India to threateningly exercise control over this vast maritime space, further exacerbating their ongoing security dilemma.

Having explained why the dissertation's author personally believes that the implied point in the report about India being in control of the "approaches to the resources of East Africa" is exaggerated, it should be said that Kupriyanov and Korolev's assessment about the interplay between the US, China, Russia, and India is absolutely accurate. They write that "a change in the status of either [Russia or India] would entail a simultaneous shift for the other. For example, if Russia enters into an alliance with China, the latter will become vastly more powerful. If the United States enters into an alliance with India, China will be significantly weakened. If Russia or India suddenly joins the US, this will spell defeat for China, which will have to forget about its maritime ambitions and start fortifying its borders instead. If Russia and India decide to take China’s side, this will spell defeat for the United States, because China will enjoy an inexhaustible supply of resources." As "for India, a formal military and political alliance with either of the two great powers will mean a dramatic worsening of relations with the other. As it grows closer to the United States, relations with China will deteriorate, resulting in, first and foremost, escalation of border conflicts. This scenario is such a remote possibility because it is totally incompatible with India’s development goals. Significant closeness between New Delhi and Beijing is also unlikely in the foreseeable future. There is no advantage for India to enter the orbit of its main rival in the race for regional leadership, which would work against India’s bid to become a great power in its own right. In this context, China’s negative reaction to the Indo-Pacific concept is unsurprising. The Chinese establishment sees it as a means of containing Beijing. Besides, closer ties with China would have a negative effect on India’s relations with the United States, one of its most important trade partners and a supplier of

defence technology. Constructive relations with the US are also a key factor in India joining the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)." As a result, "developments are prodding Russia and India into forming an informal alliance, a Non-Aligned Movement 2.0, which could be more aptly termed the Peaceful Development Movement (PDM)."

Before talking about their vision for the Neo-NAM (PDM), a few words should be said about their absolutely accurate assessment of the interplay between the US, China, Russia, and India. There's no arguing with what they wrote, except that the model they analyzed could become outdated through Russia's possible implementation of the "Fifth Player Theory" to elevate Pakistan to the level of becoming the fifth relevant player in what would by then be the geopolitical quintet between all of them. Taking that step without making parallel progress with the Neo-NAM could undermine India's trust and work out to China's decisive advantage, though the opposite is also true, in that working on the Neo-NAM without making parallel progress on the intensification of relations with Pakistan to the point of a strategic partnership and the eventual realization of the "Fifth Player Theory" could undermine China's trust and work out to India's decisive benefit by default (as well as that of its new American strategic partner too, it should be added).

it is therefore of the utmost importance to pair the Neo-NAM with the earlier proposed policy of "Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar" that will be elaborated on in the next chapter otherwise the delicate balance act that Russia is engaged in between China and India will fail and ultimately reverse many of the hard-earned gains that it made with one or the other, all to the US' Kissingerian divide-and-rule benefit. It is only through the combination of the Neo-NAM and its "insurance policy" of "Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar" that this balancing act can succeed since advancing one without the other could ruin Russia's balancing act. That's not to say that Russian-Pakistani relations do not have a significant importance on their own bilateral basis or through the author's visionary one of N-CPEC+ that will be explained in the next chapter, but just that taking them to the point of a strategic partnership without also making progress with the Neo-NAM could undermine the trust with India that's needed to "balance" China through the Neo-NAM. Having said

that, "Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar" can (and in the author's view, should) be immediately prioritized if India pivots towards the US and ends up disrupting the balance between itself and China more broadly, and itself and Russia in the context of the Neo-NAM, as a result. This is the only realistic back-up option available to restore as much of a semblance of balance as possible in that scenario, especially if put to use to promote the Golden Ring vision that will be described in Chapter 4.

In any case, to round out the rest of Kupriyanov and Korolev's Neo-NAM (or "Peaceful Development Movement") proposal, they draw attention to how "the very principles that underpin formation of international alliances have changed" since the first NAM's founding, which is why "under these circumstances, it makes no sense to revive NAM or create NAM 2.0". The author of the dissertation accepts the validity of that argument, but seeing as how the proposed network will first and foremost serve the purpose of helping its members balance between the two contemporary superpowers of the US and China, he believes that it is more convenient for simplicity's sake to refer to it as the Neo-NAM instead of the PDM because it does indeed channel the spirit of its Old Cold War predecessor in the context of the New Cold War. Whatever the reader personally chooses to call it, the two Valdai Club experts believe that "the new movement should be based on new standards and new rules of the game, specifically what President Trump calls ‘principled realism’, under which states are guided primarily by their own interests while putting forward a set of principles they agree not to breach", which is a very pragmatic suggestion. More tangibly, they propose that the following seven principles form the basis of this jointly led Russo-Indian global network:

"1. Support for democracy with national features, rejection of coups as a means of gaining power;

2. Non-interference in the internal affairs of other states with the exception of cases where the authorities commit mass crimes and only after such cases are investigated;

3. Keeping to the positive globalization course while searching for fairer alternatives to the

existing world order, including reforms of the UN in the interests of developing nations;

4. Seeking to avoid military conflicts through peacekeeping and stable development, which does not mean a commitment to unbounded pacifism – each state reserves the right to self-defence;

5. Aversion to unilateral sanctions, trade wars, or any other types of protectionism used as a means of foreign policy;

6. Non-participation in exclusive global or regional military political blocs involved in the Second Cold War;

7. Promoting trade and economic liberalization by signing free trade agreements with foreign partners and supporting multilateral institutions and integration unions."

They also emphasized that "the important thing in this context is to understand that PDM is precisely a movement, an informal alliance held together by common goals rather than a rigid framework", before asserting that "naturally, no one has the right to prohibit India from solidifying relations with the US, nor Russia from doing the same with China. But these relations should not be reduced to vassalage, something that would automatically make the PDM redundant. On the contrary, member-states must see to it that their PDM partners improve relations with partners outside the Movement. In effect, this is an extension of the ‘multi-alignment’ concept characteristic of Indian foreign policy." These points are sound in principle but neglect to mention the double standards related to the Indian position of tacitly trying to pressure Russia to curtail its relations with Pakistan, which New Delhi views purely through a zero-sum perspective contrary to the spirit of "multil-alignment"/"strategic autonomy" that it says that it supports for all of its partners including Russia. Taking the experts' suggestions at face value, however, there shouldn't be anything slowing down the intensification of Russian-Pakistani relations because it is unrealistic to predict that either of the two nuclear-armed countries would become "vassals" of the other. Pakistan might also remain outside of the Neo-NAM framework so as not to raise any unnecessary concerns with China about its intentions, as well as to prevent India from claiming a soft power victory by portraying its rival as voluntarily

joining an organization that India jointly leads. Since "member-states must see to it that their PDM partners improve relations with partners outside of the Movement", Pakistan would then fit the criteria of being a Russian partner whose relationship with Moscow should be spared the public criticism of New Delhi and its representatives if they were truly sincere, which is of course questionable.

In justifying their proposed Russo-Indian joint leadership of the Neo-NAM, the Valdai Club experts note how both Great Powers are increasing their foreign influence across the world and that "no other pair of countries of comparable weight can boast such strong historical and political ties and a total lack of conflicts in the past and foreseeable future." They also predict that "middle-sized countries would play an important role in the future PDM, as they are essential to the stability and systemic nature of the Movement", and that blocs of states such as "the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) but also any other organizations (MERCOSUR, the Southern African Development Community – SADC, the Economic Community of West African States – ECOWAS, etc.)" could join as well because they all share the network's "neutral stance". This interesting suggestion meshes well with Lissovolik's extensive work about Russia's trans-regional integration strategy and definitely deserves some further thought since it could serve as an additional catalyst to Moscow's 21st-century geostrategic mission. Since the Neo-NAM will be an "informal alliance", it is actually possible for Pakistan to "informally" participate in some of its Russian-led functions in Central Asia through N-CPEC+, not necessarily under the banner of this structure in order to assuage any speculative Chinese concerns but nevertheless still doing so in practice, just like Russia could "informally" participate in N-CPEC+ without doing so under that banner in order to assuage any guaranteed Indian concerns if it made its CPEC-related investments official. The point about informal trans-regional networking on the state-to-state and bloc-to-bloc level is an important point that will developed further in the next chapter when talking about the future of Russian-Pakistani relations in the context of N-CPEC+.

Wrapping up the end of this chapter, the key takeaway is that Russian strategists want to

avoid any future dependence on China, to which end they're reinvigorating their country's ties with India as a "friendly" counterbalance, which could even go as far as spearheading the joint Russo-Indian Neo-NAM informal network of neutral cooperation across Eurasia in order to transition the increasingly bipolar international system into a tripolar one. That development would indeed be a paradigm changer and could also provide the opportunity to experiment with Kortunov's ideas about multilaterality as a middle ground between bipolarity and polycentrism, but any move in the Neo-NAM direction would need to be accompanied with parallel safeguard measures in order to avoid inadvertently triggering a security dilemma with China and to maintain the intra-organizational balance with US-leaning India. The solution to both of these prospective problems is the intensification of Russian-Pakistani relations to the point of a strategic partnership via the roadmap of "Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar", which would satisfy Moscow's balancing needs vis-a-vis China and India in parallel with advancing Lissovolik's ambitious trans-regional integration vision. In fact, the next chapter will argue that Russian-Pakistani ties can actually be described as pivotal and paradigm-changing for these very reasons and others, especially in the event that Russia implements the "Fifth Player Theory" by elevating Pakistan to the point of being an equal pole in what would by then be the geopolitical quintet between those two, China, the US, and India in order to "shake up the system" and create unparalleled balancing opportunities for both of them to shape the outcome of the ongoing global systemic transition. it is therefore of the utmost importance that influencers, strategists, and decision makers in both countries realize the wide range of mutual benefits associated with improving ties between both of them, as only then might these ideas come to fruition and effect tangible change that could greatly improve each of their positions in the emerging world order.

3.4 Impact of Russia’s Sino-Indo Balancing Act on Russian-Pakistani Relations

The analysis demonstrates that Russia and Pakistan are practicing their own balancing acts

vis-à-vis their top two partners, which are China-India and China-US respectively. Regarding Moscow, it seems that the state should preemptively avert the scenario of becoming disproportionately dependent on Beijing simultaneously with decelerating the pace with which Delhi is strengthening its strategic ties with Washington, all without inadvertently provoking a security dilemma by signaling (whether rightly or wrongly) that it's leaning closer to one at the perceived expense of the other. Likewise, Islamabad understanding Russia's position on Russian-Indian and Russian-Chinese must continue carving out a role for itself in the emerging world order whereby it becomes a subject of International Relations instead of an object of Sino-US competition, all while being careful not to inadvertently provoke a similar such security dilemma through the impression that it's leaning closer to one at the perceived expense of the other.

Russia has sought to resolve this dilemma by synchronizing the EAEU with BRI via the SCO in order to appeal to China while informally exploring pathways through which it and India can enhance one another's balancing acts (Delhi's being between Moscow and Washington with a view towards deterring what it regards as Beijing's territorial transgressions stemming from their unresolved border conflict) as well as third parties' via what can be described as the Neo-NAM. Nevertheless, this balancing act remains very difficult to maintain, hence the importance of including another player into the mix through the comprehensive expansion of ties with Pakistan that forms the basis of this dissertation.

Pakistan has meanwhile sought to resolve this dilemma by playing a pivotal role in BRI while simultaneously retaining very close military-security ties with the US, though just like Russia, this balancing act is difficult maintain and would thus be vastly improved through the inclusion of another player like Russia into the mix. These complementary strategic calculations unofficially drive the improvement of Russian-Pakistani relations since their policymakers have come to realize the wisdom of strengthening ties with the intent of maximizing their strategic autonomy in the emerging world order, which is being done to improve the viability of their balancing acts while also counteracting bipolar trends of the sort that RIAC chief Kortunov earlier warned about in his previously cited analysis.

Without Russia and Pakistan relying on one another to this end as explained above, the failure of one of their balancing acts could set into motion a sequence of events that leads to them and India having to choose sides in the larger New Cold War between China and the US, which would risk turning all three of them into objects of those two's competition and therefore neutralizing their hard-earned strategic autonomy. The author assumes that Asia would then be divided into Chinese - and US-led blocs that would in turn indefinitely delay the emergence of true multipolarity. This scenario could be preemptively averted, however, through clever and complex balancing acts between all parties, in particular the Russian-Pakistani one that forms the basis of this dissertation but also the proposed Neo-NAM between Russia and India.

In accordance with its Foreign Policy Concept, Russia believes that it's destined to play an indispensable role in balancing the supercontinent's affairs by virtue of its geography and diplomacy, which is intended to stabilize interstate competition and therefore create more opportunities for mutually beneficial economic cooperation that further accelerates multipolar processes. Pakistan shares this vision since it would stand to tremendously lose if it became an object of fierce Sino-US competition, especially since the US could exploit domestic fault lines such as ethno-regional and religious ones through Hybrid War means to plunge that country into turmoil as part of a larger proxy war against China aimed at rendering CPEC unviable. It's therefore of the highest priority that Pakistan retains and expands its hard-earned strategic autonomy, which can most realistically be done by prioritizing the northern vector of its larger connectivity strategy via the pioneering of a trans-Afghan corridor through Central Asia to Russia.

Doing so could allay any Chinese concerns about Pakistan's close military-security ties with the US since Russia is one of Beijing's closest partners. Likewise, Pakistan's regional diversification from CPEC could signal to the US that it aims to preemptively avert any potentially disproportionate dependence on the People's Republic. As for India, the economically driven expansion of Russian-Pakistani relations (which could also include large-scale energy cooperation) might make it think twice about the wisdom of pivoting

towards the US out of fear that the resultant reshaping of the regional geostrategic chessboard could compel a closer alignment between Russia and Pakistan in response as bloc politics come to characterize the supercontinent in that scenario. From another perspective, however, India might positively assess Russia and Pakistan's proactive diversification of ties from China and the resultant strengthening of their respective strategic autonomy to conclude that these economically driven moves reduce the chances of its northern neighbor ever dominating Asia like its policymakers fear. That could also influence them to slow the pace of their pivot towards the US during the dissertation's analyzed time period if they come to think that such drastic geostrategic moves aren't required to counterbalance China's rise.

The insight shared in this chapter is sensitive so it's obviously unlikely to be reflected in official statements from any partner, but the reader should appreciate the candidness with which these complex and interconnected balancing acts are described, especially since they're all being proposed with a view towards stabilizing the global systemic transition in order to avoid conflict and counteract potential bipolar trends that could impede multipolarity. International Relations are becoming much more chaotic and unpredictable, hence the importance of proposing mutually beneficial and pragmatic vectors of cooperation, both bilateral and multilateral, each of which are relevant when it comes to Russian-Pakistani relations. Their ties are significant in and of themselves but become incomparably more so when viewed from the grand strategic perspective of the emerging world order and associated risks that were described thus far in this dissertation, particularly relating to the inadvertent sparking of security dilemmas that could lead to fast-moving sequences of events that result in the onset of bloc-based policies for dividing-and-ruling Asia between China and the US (even though this isn't what Beijing would prefer).

CHAPTER 4: The Path To "Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar"

The dissertation has finally reached the fourth chapter, the first part of which will review the contemporary context in which Russian-Pakistani relations are unfolding, drawing upon everything that was shared in the previous three chapters so as to remind the reader of the most relevant developments that are presently influencing ties between these two

states. The second part will then talk about their history of relations over the past seven decades, during which time the most important moments will be analyzed in order to place them in their proper perspective. Following that, the third part of the chapter will be devoted to the author's unique insight on Pakistan's future geostrategic potential and its pertinence to Russia's previously discussed foreign policy goals, which lays the path to "Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar", the author's neologism for the proposed strategic partnership between Russia and Pakistan that translates to "Russians and Pakistanis are buddies" and will be discussed in the dissertation's conclusion as the research's most tangible outcome.

4.1 Contextual Review

"Today’s international scene is dominated by Realpolitik – national interest reigns supreme not just at the country level, but is also strongly felt at the level of regional and global institutions", according to Lissovolik in his March 2019 piece about "A Different Global Governance: Taming the Excesses of Realpolitik"[257]. He believes that "individualism that is venerated at the key societal value breeds an individualistic/Realpolitik type of foreign policy. This in turn may present obstacles to building equitable and stable regional alliances, with the same holding true for global institutions in which countries strive to gain a larger share of the vote at each others’ expense. The result as game-theory would suggest is a 'prisoner’s dilemma' pyramid that is built from the foundations of individual values to the level of international institutions." The problem is systemic in his assessment because "the blueprint of the construction of global governance has never been predicated on considerations of economic efficiency, inclusivity or equitable globalism, but was at the outset based on Realpolitik considerations and was performed in a largely unilateral (i.e. Western-led) setting", which is why he thinks that "a new global governance construct

[257] Lissovolik Y. A Different Global Governance: Taming the Excesses of Realpolitik [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 12 March. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/a-different-global-governance-taming-the-excesses/.

needs to change the balance between national self-interest and international cooperation in the world economy." When Lissovolik writes that "overall, a rebalancing of the national self-interest with incentives for international cooperation could in part be attained through building a regional layer of global governance and a greater integration of regional arrangements with global institutions", what he's proposing is that his visionary trans-regional integration plans of BRICS+, InPEAKS, BEAMS, BRICS++, and TRIA be advanced as soon as possible, all of which -- and explicitly InPEAKS -- imply the need to intensify Russian-Pakistani relations in order to "tame the excesses of realpolitik" that characterize the ongoing global systemic transition so as to facilitate more multilaterally beneficial outcomes for all.

Timoveev's article from a year prior in March 2018 supports Lissovolik's later assertion that Realpolitik predominates in contemporary International Relations. In "Russia: A New Political Cycle and the Contours of a New World Order"[258]. He writes that "Russia views the world order as a balance of forces of individual countries and alliances and connects its transformation with the potential demise of the US might and the rise of other centers of power such as China. This realism of Russian diplomacy looked old-fashioned in a globalizing world. Indeed, the liberal world order allowed the coexistence of various poles of power, preventing anarchy and creating the impression of stable unipolarity. However, the world has long ceased to be unipolar in terms of the balance of forces, and political differences are breaking the shell of the liberal world order like an emerging chick that is breaking free of its shell." As such, he advises that Russia "should prepare for any turn of events" since while "the destruction of the world where Russia is assigned the role of a raw materials appendage and is considered an outcast despite its military might could give Russia an opportunity to become a co-creator of a new world order with a larger role", he's unsure whether Russia will "feel more successful and better protected in a more chaotic world, especially compared to aggressive and more powerful counteragents", seeing as

[258] Timofeev I. Russia: A New Political Cycle and the Contours of a New World Order [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2018. 2 March. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-a-new-political-cycle-and-the-contours/.

how it "will hardly be the only or decisive force in the future transformation of the world." Therefore, instead of passively standing by and letting others take the initiative to shape the future international system, Russia should proactively leverage its geostrategic position to become the supreme balancing force upholding stability across Eurasia during these uncertain times.

The key to doing so is to follow the lead of former Kazakhstani President Nursultan Nazarbayev, "the first supporter of Eurasian integration" and the visionary who devised the modalities of this contemporary process. Sushentsov celebrated this legendary figure's balancing act in his July 2019 analysis about "The Policy of the Golden Mean: Kazakhstan's Experience for Greater Eurasia"[259], stating that "the golden mean involves balance...Naturally, Kazakhstan maintains friendly relations with key Western countries. Russia is not even jealous of that. Kazakhstan has always conducted an open foreign policy, involving an honest and direct defense of its national interests and has never attempted to play on the controversy between major centers of power." This is precisely the path that Russia should follow as it seeks to balance between friends (China & India) and rivals (the West) alike through the Neo-NAM that was discussed in the preceding chapter. The piece written by Maria Khodynskaya-Golenischeva, Senior Advisor of the Foreign Policy Planning Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, that same month about "How Bloc-Free Mentality Helps Russia Be a Welcome Foreign Actor in the Middle East"[260] proves that it is already doing so in that pivotal tri-continental region and could therefore eventually export this model throughout the entirety of Eurasia -- especially when it comes to managing the growing competition between its Chinese and Indian institutional partners -- if it has the political will to do so.

There's no reason to doubt that it does, however, considering that Lavrov affirmed in

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[259] Sushentsov A. The Policy of the Golden Mean: Kazakhstan's Experience for Greater Eurasia [Electronic resource]// Valdai Internatioanl Discussion Club. 2019. 4 July. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/the-policy-of-the-golden-mean-kazakhstan/.

[260] Khodynskaya-Golenischeva M. How Bloc-Free Mentality Helps Russia Be a Welcome Foreign Actor in the Middle East [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 25 July. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/how-bloc-free-mentality-helps-russia/.

September 2019 that he expects Russian diplomacy to remain "dynamic, thoroughly professional, (and) ready to respond in kind to challenges" across the next 20-30 years[261], having said so just a day after it was reported that Russian experts shared their thoughts about a so-called "multilateral strategic stability" concept with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. TASS reported that Kommersant received a document pertaining to these unnamed individuals' ideas on "Russia's relations with the United States and strategic stability", which "run counter to Moscow's current foreign policy"[262]. The outlet quoted the text as saying that "today the nature of strategic stability is multilateral - involving China and other nuclear states, while a non-nuclear conflict and its consequences can be compared with a nuclear one and there are higher chances than before that it may trigger the use of nuclear weapons", which inspired them to devise the concept of "multilateral strategic stability" that TASS reported "implies that nuclear powers must prevent any military confrontation between each other - both deliberate and unintended - since any standoff could spark 'a global nuclear war.'" Should the "multilateral strategic stability" concept gain currency among Russian diplomats, and it appears likely that it will due to its pure pragmatism, then it could serve as yet another precept of foreign policy justifying Russia's balancing act between nuclear-armed China and India (as well as between India and Pakistan, too), which in the view of the dissertation's author would be perfected through the intensification of relations with Pakistan to the point of a strategic partnership that would in turn enable Moscow to retain inter-organizational balance with New Delhi in the Neo-NAM while assuaging Beijing's threat perception thereof.

The interlinked concepts of the Neo-NAM and "Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar" must become the dual pillars of Russia's balancing act between China and India because they complement one another and thus collectively place Moscow in the most advantageous position to manage these important sets of relations (both bilateral along their various axes

[261] Lavrov Expects Russian Diplomacy to Be Dynamic, Ready to Tackle Challenges [Electronic resource] // TASS. 2019. 13 September. Mode of access: https://tass.com/politics/1077995.

[262] Press Review: Trump’s ‘Bolton-Free’ Policy Plans and Moscow’s Multilateral Strategic Model [Electronic resource] // TASS. 2019. 12 September. Mode of access: https://tass.com/pressreview/1077783.

and also their multilateral whole). Academic progress is being made to promote the creation of the Neo-NAM as one of the future goals of Russian foreign policy precisely because the country's comprehensive strategic partnership with China has several shortcomings that have resulted in it failing to succeed to the maximum extent that it is regularly portrayed as having already reached. Kortunov candidly spoke about this at the 5th International Conference "Russia and China: Cooperation in a New Era", and his remarks were published at his think tank shortly thereafter in early June 2019 under the title "Who Will Build the New World Order?"[263] "While not at all belittling the significance of the work done to date and the results achieved", he "proposes a somewhat controversial thought: cooperation between Russia and China still lacks a strategic perspective." Kortunov bases his provocative claim on the fact that most of their international cooperation is ad hoc and reactionary with the exception of "coordinated voting in the UN Security Council and even the joint efforts to combine the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative and the Russian plans for the development of the Eurasian Economic Union", which he nevertheless feels is not enough.

After all, "Russia and China have always had, and will always continue to have, diverging and even conflicting interests", and "it is possible that competition between the two countries will even intensify in the future", so they should prioritize "arriving at a common understanding of the fundamental rules of the game in the new system of international relations" as soon as possible. He insists that "strategically, the two countries should match their views of the desired future world order and coordinate efforts to create it" other than just "using the same terms to describe the future they desire: multipolarity, a post-Western world, the indispensability of the rule of law, the indivisibility of security, and so on", which he "sadly" believes "remain predominantly proclamatory." He's therefore "not entirely sure that Moscow and Beijing have arrived at this common understanding yet", which is extremely worrying because it means that they "have not fully accomplished the

[263] Kortunov A. Who Will Build the New World Order? [Electronic resource] // Russian International Affairs Council. 2019. 6 June. Mode of access: https://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/who-will-build-the-new-world-order/.

first objective: the contradictions, disagreements, and conflicts accumulated through the centuries of these countries' joint past have not all been ironed out yet." As such, "the second objective, that of opening a door to the future", which Kortunov considers to be "even more important", "has yet to be achieved" as well. The lack of tangible progress that's been made in the comprehensive strategic partnership between Russia and China naturally led decision makers in Moscow to consider the most realistic alternative available to them, namely reinvigorating their relations with India and then leveraging their shared Neo-Realist interests towards"gently" balancing China in as "friendly" of a manner as possible through the proposed Neo-NAM.

This hasn't been lost on Chinese observers, however, especially not after the 2019 Eastern Economic Forum where Prime Minister Modi was President Putin's guest of honor and the two agreed to establish the Vladivostok-Chennai Maritime Corridor (VCMC). Hu Zhiyong, research fellow at the Institute of International Relations at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, wrote an analysis at the time for China's Global Times (which is published under the People's Daily, the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party) about how "India-Russia ties rest on strategic calculations"[264]. He described the many agreements that the two sides signed during that time, but also interestingly noted how "Modi proposed trilateral cooperation among India, Russia and Japan in developing the Russian Far East on the eve of the EEF which was interpreted by observers as an attempt to challenge China's economic clout in the region." This contributed to his conclusion that "the advance of India-Russia ties will push the multi-polarization of international relations and reinforce India's role in Asia. It will also add the leverage of Russia to counter Western pressures on diplomacy and security, empower Russia to effectively resist Western countries' strategic blockade and defend its strategic and economic interests in South Asia. However, stronger Russia-India ties, especially their military-technical cooperation, would have a negative impact on China's national security. Consolidating and developing ties with Russia implies

[264] Zhiyong H. India-Russia Ties Rest on Strategic Calculations [Electronic resource] // Global Times. 2019. 16 September. Mode of access: http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1164611.shtml.

India's strategic intention to contain China's rise. It would pile more geopolitical pressure on China and increase the instability in China's periphery." Quite clearly, China is beginning to grow suspicious of this new era in Russian-Indian relations, the perception of which Moscow must do its utmost to responsibly manage in order to not inadvertently reverse the relative progress that was recently made in relations with Beijing over the past half-decade.

Yet another hint that China is beginning to grow wary of India's strategic intentions in general was shared in a different Global Times analysis published that same month by Ding Gang, senior editor with People's Daily and currently a senior fellow with the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China, in his piece titled "'Balance of power' a strategic trap for India"[265]. He quotes an article, "The India Dividend: New Delhi Remains Washington's Best Hope in Asia"[266], that was released at the time by the influential Foreign Affairs magazine and "noted that for the US-Indian partnership to bear fruit, both sides must recognize that their primary shared interest is to balance a rising China - and not expect a close alliance or alignment on all major policy issues." Ding adds that although "the Indian government hasn't explicitly announced it was adopting such a strategy to balance the rise of China, but there are indications that India and the US are moving forward on this path", which confirms Kortunov's earlier fears that were discussed in the last chapter. The Chinese expert states that it is "understandable" that "New Delhi wishes to safeguard its interests in a relatively balanced regional situation through a balance of power with Beijing", but points out that "the balance of power which India hopes for is different from that upheld by the US", which is instead pursing a "so-called balance of power (that) is aimed at keeping its dominance in the Asia-Pacific region and containing China." Therefore, "balancing China will jeopardize India's own interests", he believes, so "India should think this through" because "such a strategy might work at the

[265] Gang D. 'Balance of Power' a Strategic Trap for India [Electronic resource] // Global Times. 2019. 11 September. Mode of access: http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1164295.shtml.
[266] Blackwill R. D., Tellis A. J. The India Dividend: New Delhi Remains Washington's Best Hope in Asia // Foreign Affairs. 2019. September & October.

very beginning, but at critical moments, relevant parties will have to make a choice." Considering that China is already suspicious that Russia might also be working with India to balance Beijing as well, it is conceivable that a security dilemma might arise if the People's Republic begins to regard this as part of a global containment policy against it all along its immediate periphery, which is why the Neo-NAM must emphasize a balance of interests instead of a balance of power so as to avoid this possible scenario.

Russia shouldn't place all of its balancing eggs in India's basket, however, since Valdai Club expert and former Indian Ambassador M. K. Bhadrakumar warned in an analysis on his personal blog later that same month in September 2019 that "Russia is auxiliary to US-Indian partnership, not balancer"[267]. That piece was written in response to another Global Times article that was released as part of China's reaction to the outcome of the Eastern Economic Forum, "Modi does balancing act between US and Russia"[268]. Mao Keiji, associate researcher at the International Cooperation Center of the National Development and Reform Commission, argued that "New Delhi found that Russia is, more often than not, the only and the most reachable party India can resort to, especially when it comes to global geostrategic issues" in order to avoid "compromising its cherished strategic autonomy" as a result of moving ever closer to the US in recent years. He believes that "while Moscow understood the strategic dangers of New Delhi's pro-US pivot in recent years and the need to balance regional affairs by strengthening the Russia-Pakistan ties in response, it, at the end of the day, stood by India on the Kashmir issue", which led to it "surrendering its credibility as a neutral actor in the region (while) the US retained its strategic flexibility and replaced Russia's lost role." Mao thinks that "Moscow aimed not only to maintain its ultra-profitable weapons relationship with India, but also to harvest even more benefits, be it economic or strategic", which is why "Modi brought with him a large contingent of Indian entrepreneurs, and signed with Putin a number of high-profile

[267] Bhadrakumar M. K. Russia Is Auxiliary to US-India Partnership, Not Balancer [Electronic resource] // Indian Punchline. 2019. 20 September. Mode of access: https://indianpunchline.com/russia-is-auxiliary-to-us-india-partnership-not-balancer/.

[268] Keiji M. Modi Does Balancing Act between US and Russia [Electronic resource] // Global Times. 2019. 20 September. Mode of access: http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1165009.shtml.

memorandum of understandings, including developing a maritime corridor from Vladivostok to Chennai, a deal for India to manufacture spare parts for Russian military equipment, an agreement by Indian companies to purchase Russian LNG etc." The Chinese expert intriguingly concluded that by "exploiting Moscow's concern of overdependence on China, India also marketed its presence in Russia as a balancing factor. For example, India has been keen on selling the idea of 'Indo-Pacific' to Russia by encouraging Moscow to re-emerge as a Pacific power in its own right rather than as a junior partner of China. While New Delhi rejects the Western concept of 'containment' against China, it surely desires to take up the mantle of the Indo-Pacific agenda by making a Russian buy-in feasible."

Mao's interpretation of the "global and regional setting" surrounding Prime Minister Modi's trip to the Eastern Economic Forum as President Putin's guest of honor and the resultant outcomes that it led to proves that an incipient security dilemma is indeed forming between Russia and China regarding the former's newly reinvigorated relations with India, which could serve to be extremely problematic if Moscow makes progress on the Neo-NAM without simultaneously reassuring Beijing of its neutral intentions in a credible way such as through the prioritization of relations with the latter's "all-weather friend"[269] in Islamabad (which also hosts BRI's flagship project of CPEC) to the point of a strategic partnership. Bhadrakumar, however, strongly disagrees and writes that "the Chinese commentary misses a key point" because "the Modi government prioritises a defining partnership with the US where Russia is inconsequential." The former ambassador is of the opinion that "in the Indian elite's scheme of things...Russia is not a balancer, since it is a much weaker power than the US and will remain so for decades to come" because it "lacks innovation and Indian elites are sceptical whether Russia has anything to offer by way of high technology." Instead, it is regarded by them as a "stepney (reserve tyre)", so "when one of the four American tyres goes phut, India replaces it with the stepney so that the vehicle can keep running." In practice, this took the form at the time of Russia

[269] Pakistan Is Our All-Weather Friend: China [Electronic resource] // The Hindu. 2016. 2 April. Mode of access: https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/world/pakistan-is-our-irreplaceable-allweather-friend-china/article6824017.ece.

endorsing India's de-facto annexation of Kashmir[270] while the US took a much more purposely ambiguous approach, but Bharadkumar does not think that Russia is strategically useful to India for much of anything else other than international messaging during times like that and as "an adjunct to its defining partnership with the US". Although he thinks that "the India-Russia relationship is increasingly more important to Moscow" than the reverse, he insists that "despite all Chanakyan entreaties by the Indian elite, it never ever — not even remotely — crossed the Russian mind to roll back the country's entente with China for the sake of pleasing India."

These two experts' drastically different interpretations of the events leading up to the Eastern Economic Forum and its eventual outcome deserve to be commented upon. In the personal opinion of the dissertation's author, Mao's views are much more objectively realistic than Bhadrakumar's, the latter of whom seems to be influenced by the increasingly outdated pro-Russian sympathies associated with the Indian National Congress (INC) opposition party whose sway over the state's permanent bureaucracy ("deep state", particularly its military, intelligence, and diplomatic wings) is rapidly declining following the de-facto implementation of one-party rule by the much more pro-American BJP. Bhadrakumar thinks that the Russian-Chinese partnership is progressing much better than the Russian-Indian one (especially after what Mao described as "New Delhi's pro-US pivot"), but he clearly is not familiar with Kortunov's many writings on that topic which the dissertation's author analyzed in the last chapter and even earlier in the present one. The former ambassador's article might also be influenced by his own personal affinity for Russia after having previously worked there and regularly writing very supportive op-ed pieces about its foreign policy, whereas Mao is not under any such influences and therefore has a more accurate take on this complex situation. It should also be said that the Global Times, being under the People's Daily which is the Communist Party of China's official newspaper, probably wouldn't have approved the publication of Mao's piece if its editors considered it to be too "politically incorrect", which therefore leads to one deducing that

[270] Our Views Exactly the Same: Russia Backs India's Kashmir Stand // India Today. Op. cit.

his views are unofficially endorsed by his country's ruling party and were approved for release in order to send a message about its changing perceptions towards both countries in light of recent events at the time.

That said, Bhadrakumar is not entirely wrong either, since he has a point in talking about how India's present leadership regards its relations with Russia. Truth be told, the BJP has proven itself to be much closer to the US than Russia, adding credence to his theory that New Delhi sees Moscow simply as "stepney". That, however, does not preclude it from partnering with the Eurasian Great Power in pursuit of their joint unstated interests in balancing China through the Neo-NAM, but just further proves one of the main theses postulated by the dissertation's author that Russia must intensify its relations with Pakistan to the point of a strategic partnership in order to maintain balance within this informal network and obtain a Damocles' sword that it can rely on for keeping Indian-American relations in check. This strategic partnership could also function as the fulcrum of the Golden Ring trans-regional integration initiative that will be described later on in this chapter and which might be prioritized as the most reliable geopolitical back-up plan if "New Delhi's pro-US pivot" becomes irreversible and starts causing serious strategic security challenges for Beijing and the rest of Eurasia. Without the creation of a solid Russian-Pakistani strategic axis, Russia stands to lose China's trust if it makes too much progress on the Neo-NAM, could easily end up being taken advantage of by its US-pivoting Indian partner in this network, and would also be left without any credible way to actualize the Golden Ring back-up plan in the event that the second-mentioned scenario comes to pass.

A thought-provoking suggestion on how to take bilateral relations with Pakistan forward was put forth by Barabanov in March 2019 in his article about "Russia and the Search for Balance Between India and Pakistan"[271], which was released two months before he became the first Russian expert to the best knowledge of the dissertation's author to seriously

[271] Barabanov O. Russia and the Search for Balance Between India and Pakistan [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 4 March. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/russia-india-pakistan/.

propose the creation of a "new Non-Aligned Movement". He began by talking about how the February 2019 clashes between these two South Asian neighbors "essentially marked the first military conflict between SCO members" and were therefore "a test of the organization's solidity and efficacy." Not only that, but he also considers them to have "tested whether the accession of India and Pakistan was justified", which is why he realized that "ultimately, the SCO’s future stability and reliability greatly depend on its ability and the ability of its member states to act with energy to successfully settle the Indo-Pakistani conflict, achieve a ceasefire and restore trust." it is with this in mind that he then explained how "Russia’s position in relations between India and Pakistan underwent a marked evolution after their accession to the SCO." In his words, although Russians and Pakistanis generally have negative perceptions of one another owing to the lasting legacy of the 1980s Afghan War, the two states have nevertheless drawn closer as a result of their shared security interests in Afghanistan, which led to bilateral anti-terrorist drills and an improvement in their expert dialogue, all of which resulted in the overall "Russia-Pakistan dialogue beginning to acquire the features of a trust-based partnership."

BRI and CPEC offer new opportunities for intensifying bilateral economic cooperation, he says, and he notes how "experts in Pakistan are interested in uniting this southern route with the potential northern route that would stretch from the main line of the new Silk Road to the Arctic ports of Russia", which could even transit through China and "thereby form a sustainable Russia-China-Pakistan geo-economic line." He continues by writing that "external factors are also enhancing the mutual interest of Russia and Pakistan, such as the continued deterioration of ties between Pakistan and the US", as well as "the consolidation of geopolitical ties between India and the US" which "may lead to a major shift in the balance of power in the region, affecting the interests of both Russia and Pakistan." "Sometimes the Indian expert community expresses mistrust of Russia because of what they consider the excessively close Russia-China partnership, as a result of which Russia is losing its independent political image in India", Barabanov believes. "Obviously, viewing Russia exclusively through the prism of Indo-Chinese divergences does not

promote trust", and "thus, US policy in the region (and probably the potential Indo-US link) serves as an additional external impetus for Russia-Pakistan dialogue." In conclusion, he suggests that "Russian society should now adopt a balanced response to the new Indo-Pakistani conflict" which "is essential for the SCO's stability and Russia's national interests in the region" and could be pursued through replicating "its successful experience of striking a delicate balance and effectively moderating the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorny Karabakh" just like it is "constructing a similar balance in Syria in relation to the majority of external actors in this conflict." With this pragmatic vision in mind, it is now time to review the history of Russian-Pakistani relations in order to appreciate the importance of the present moment in this continuum, which will then enable the reader to better understand the interconnected geopolitical concepts that will then be put forth by the dissertation's author afterwards.

4.2 The History Of Russian-Pakistani Relations

Russian-Pakistani relations stretch over the span of more than seven decades, and there have been several high and low points throughout this time. it is not the intention of the dissertation's author to meticulously focus on each and every event during this extensive period, but to point out the most important ones and subsequently analyze them so that the reader have obtain a more solid grasp of how everything arrived at the present moment where an entire thesis is being written about the promising prospects that their proposed strategic partnership of "Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar" holds for both of them in the context of the ongoing global systemic transition. Instead of specifically citing various works in the text like has been the standard up until now, it is believed to be much more efficient to simply list the several materials that were relied upon in advance and then proceed with a much smoother historical review than if the existing style was applied in this subsection.

The five foundational works that were referenced for learning about the key events in

Russian-Pakistani relations are the books "Soviet-Pakistan Relations and Post-Soviet Dynamics, 1947-92"[272] by Hafeez Malik and "Pakistan: Beyond Stereotypes"[273] that was published by the Moscow-based Center for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies (CAST), as well as the detailed articles "An Overview of Pak-Soviet/Russia Relations"[274] by Sarfraz Khan & Noor Amin, "Pakistan-Russia Relations Redux: From Estrangement to Pragmatism" [275] by Muhammad Nawaz Khan, and "Russia-Pakistan: Perception Paradigm" [276] by Sarfraz Ahmed Rana. The insight shared within these five works is blended together in the present subsection in order to result in a brief review of the history of Russian-Pakistani relations without focusing too much on any given event or period during the past 70 years. Separate dissertations could be written about the history of their relations alone, never mind specific incidents, but the purpose of the present one is to analyze the future of these ties in the contemporary context of multipolar balancing. That's why this part of the dissertation won't go too in depth elaborating on the past when the future is much more important, though an educated understanding of some previous events and their significance immensely helps with making sense of how these two countries arrived at the present moment in their relations where such a promising future finally awaits them if they both have the political will to seize it.

Before beginning, it is appropriate to quote Nawaz Khan in order to properly frame events. The first sentence of his article profoundly stated that "Pakistan-Russia relations can be summarised as a narrative of mutual misunderstandings, miscalculations, and wasted opportunities due to the shifting policies of the two states under geopolitical realities of the Cold War period", which indirectly references the three schools of International Relations thought (Neo-Realism: geopolitics; Neo-Liberalism: communism vs. capitalism; Constructivism: perceptions). This perspective is the most accurate one through which

[272] Malik H. Soviet-Pakistan Relations and Post-Soviet Dynamics, 1947–92. Op. cit.
[273] Пакистан: за рамками стереотипов / под ред. Т.И. Борисова, К.В. Матвиенко. М.: Центр анализа стратегий и Технологий, 2019. 208 с.
[274] Khan S. Noor A. An Overview of Pak - Soviet/Russia Relations. Op cit.
[275] Khan M. N. Pakistan-Russia Relations Redux: From Estrangement to Pragmatism. Op cit.
[276] Rana S. A. Russia-Pakistan: Perception Paradig. Op cit.

Russian-Pakistani relations should be analyzed, as will be proven in this subsection.

To start off, scholars divide the Old Cold War-era history of relations into four distinct periods: 1947-1965; 1966-1971; 1972-1977; and 1978-1991. Prior to the subcontinent's partition, the Indian National Congress (INC) was always more socialist-inclined than the Muslim League, the latter of which was more closely associated with the landed elite and therefore did not have any ideological leanings towards the USSR unlike the INC. That makes it all the more interesting then that Pakistani Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan was invited to the Soviet Union in 1949, six years before his Indian counterpart Jawaharlal Nehru eventually was, though Ali Khan never ended up making the trip for reasons that still remain murky to this day. Mansoor Kundi and Manzoor Afridi investigated this in their joint article "Why Visit to Moscow not materialized: Myths and Realities"[277], concluding that it was probably due to domestic pressure from Islamist groups who were ideologically opposed to the USSR because of its anti-religious policies and internal pro-American lobbying by some elements of his administration such as Finance Minister Ghulam Mohammad that the visit never materialized. They also wonder whether Ali Khan leveraged the invitation in order to receive one from the US, which was identified as the superpower with which he wanted to partner more, possibly having felt snubbed by President Truman inviting Nehru at the time instead of him. Whatever the real reason(s) may be, the decision not to take Moscow up on its offer is seen in hindsight as a fateful event that placed Pakistan firmly in Washington's camp, and thus influenced the Soviet's perception of it as an American proxy instead of a friendly or even neutral state. These perceptions were confirmed as valid after Pakistan joined the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)[278] and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO)[279] in 1954 and

[277] Kundi M. A., Afridi M. K. Why Visit to Moscow Not Materialized: Myths and Realities [Electronic resource] // Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan. 2018. Vol. 55. No. 1. P. 131–141. Mode of access: http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/history/PDF-FILES/10_55_1_18.pdf.

[278] Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), 1954 [Electronic resource] // Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute, United States Department of State. Mode of access: https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/seato.

[279] The Baghdad Pact (1955) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) [Electronic resource] // The Office of Electronic Information, Bureau of Public Affairs, U.S. State Department. Mode of access: https://2001-

1955, respectively, and the country let the US use its territory for reconnaissance flights over the USSR such as the infamous U-2 incident that sparked an international scandal in 1960[280].

The two sides eventually came closer in the 1960s following President Ayub Khan's visit to the USSR in 1965[281], which was done as a purely pragmatic move meant to show that the South Asian state was now interested in balancing between competing powers such as the Soviets, the US, and China, the latter of which started to become one of Pakistan's main partners during this time as well. The trip was partially conducted to calm Soviet perceptions that the emerging Pakistani-Chinese axis was overtly aimed against India following the brief border conflict between that Soviet-leaning country and the People's Republic in 1962. In addition, the accelerated Pakistani-Chinese partnership -- which, it objectively seems, was indeed partially motivated by shared Neo-Realist concerns stemming from their mutual Indian neighbor -- showed that Islamabad was no longer as concerned about domestic Islamist opposition to its ties with communist countries like it was during the time of Ali Khan, so it made sense from a balancing perspective to probe the possibility for closer ties with the USSR as well. Although it did not reap anything too tangible at the time, it did create an improved sense of goodwill between the two that was later leveraged by Moscow to broker peace between Pakistan and India following their second war with one another later that same year[282]. The Tashkent Declaration of 1966[283] emerged from these efforts, and importantly, it also symbolized that Pakistan could not depend on its official Western military allies in SEATO, CENTO, or the US for military or

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2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/lw/98683.htm.

[280] U-2 Overflights and the Capture of Francis Gary Powers, 1960 [Electronic resource] // Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute, United States Department of State. Mode of access: https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/u2-incident.

[281] From the Past Pages of Dawn: 1965: Fifty Years Ago: Ayub’s Visit Momentous [Electronic resource] // Dawn. 2015. 5 April. Mode of access: https://www.dawn.com/news/1173970/from-the-past-pages-of-dawn-1965-fifty-years-ago-ayubs-visit-momentous.

[282] Timofeychev A. Kosygin: Soviet Premier, Peacemaker between India and Pakistan [Electronic resource] // Russia Beyond. 2016. 28 November. Mode of access: https://www.rbth.com/arts/people/2016/11/28/kosygin-soviet-premier-peacemaker-between-india-and-pakistan_651603.

[283] Tashkent Declaration [Electronic resource]. United Nations Peacemaker. Mode of access: https://peacemaker.un.org/india-pakistan-tashkent-declaration66.

diplomatic support when it needed it the most.

Aware of these changing perceptions which somewhat surprisingly contradicted Neo-Realist (geopolitical) and Neo-Liberal (communist vs. capitalist) International Relations expectations, Soviet Premier Kosygin traveled to Pakistan in 1968 in a bid to gradually supplant the US' supposedly declining influence there. It was around this time that the so-called "Kosygin Plan" was also unveiled[284], which proposed the creation of an economic corridor linking the USSR with India via Afghanistan and Pakistan. In addition, Soviet leader Brezhnev also put forth an "Asian Collective Security Concept"[285] that could have complemented this economic integration in a military way. Pakistan rejected both because it believed that they were aimed at driving a wedge between it and China, which could have prospectively made the state even more vulnerable had it lost both its only credible regional balancing partner of the People's Republic and its unreliable overseas one of the US in order to sandwich itself between rival India and its Soviet patron. Moscow probably did not realize that Islamabad would most likely interpret these proposals in such a way, but it should be said that Pakistan is extremely sensitive about its security and sovereignty because its decision makers regard their country as facing an existential threat from India, which never truly accepted its separation from the British Raj as an independent state. It was therefore impossible for Pakistan to agree to the "Kosygin Plan" and the "Asian Collective Security Concept" in that contemporaneous international context.

1971 was an important year for Russian-Pakistani relations, though not in a good way. Islamabad facilitated Kissinger's secret trip to Beijing[286], which was aimed at co-opting the People's Republic as an American partner in order to turn it against the USSR via a crafty policy of Neo-Realist "triangulation", while the USSR doubled down on its efforts to turn India into one of its most important global partners through the "Treaty of Peace,

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[284] Noorani A. G. The Kosygin Plan [Electronic resource] // Dawn. 2018. 22 December. Mode of access: https://www.dawn.com/news/1452942/the-kosygin-plan.

[285] Horelick A. L. The Soviet Union's Asian Collective Security Proposal: A Club in Search of Members [Electronic resource] // RAND Corporation. 1974. Mode of access: https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P5195.html.

[286] Getting To Beijing: Henry Kissinger's Secret 1971 Trip [Electronic resource] // USC US-China Institute. 2011. 21 July. Mode of access: https://china.usc.edu/getting-beijing-henry-kissingers-secret-1971-trip.

Friendship and Cooperation"[287]. South Asian tensions over the joint Indian- and Soviet-backed "Mukhti Bahini's" separatist insurgency in then-East Pakistan finally boiled over at the end of the year into all-out war between Islamabad and New Delhi which ultimately resulted in East Pakistan's independence as Bangladesh. Importantly, Pakistan's SEATO, CENTO, and American allies once again did not come to its defense, confirming to decision makers in that country that they were just being taken advantage of without receiving any benefits whatsoever for their institutional membership in these organizations. This increasing awareness of being abused by America contributed to President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's visit to the USSR the year afterwards in early 1972[288], after which he eventually announced Pakistan's withdrawal from SEATO later that same year and then traveled to the Soviet Union once more in 1974 to become the first-ever Pakistani Prime Minister to do so while he was serving in that capacity. Bhutto wasn't just reflecting the pragmatic strategic rethinking of the Pakistani establishment at the time, but was also sympathetic to socialism himself in a personal capacity, which contributed to the rapid thawing of ties that symbolically manifested themselves in the 1973 founding of the Pakistan Steel Mills with Soviet support[289].

The honeymoon was short-lived, however, because Bhutto was overthrown in a military coup by General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq in 1977, after which Pakistan found itself isolated from both the USSR (especially after executing Soviet-friendly Bhutto in 1978) and the US, with China remaining as its only reliable partner of contemporaneous geopolitical significance. Still, Islamabad at the time sought to be regionally pragmatic and that's why General Zia visited Afghanistan the year after despite it having experienced the pro-communist Saur Revolution earlier in 1978[290]. 1979, however, proved to be even worse for

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[287] Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation between the Government of India and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. Op. cit.

[288] Bhutto Z. A. Pakistan Builds Anew // Foreign Affairs. 1973. April.

[289] Hasnain S. The Demise of Pakistan Steel Mills [Electronic resource] // Herald. 2018. 10 December. Mode of access: https://herald.dawn.com/news/1153574.

[290] Ruttig T. An April Day That Changed Afghanistan 1: Four Decades after the Leftist Takeover [Electronic resource] // Afghanistan Analysts Network. 2018. 25 April. Mode of access: https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/an-april-day-that-changed-afghanistan-four-decades-after-the-leftist-takeover/.

Soviet-Pakistani relations than 1971 was. Then-US National Security Advisor Brzezinski later admitted to using Pakistani soil to destabilize Soviet-aligned Afghanistan as early as the summer of 1979 with the hope that it would provoke a military intervention that could then serve as Moscow's Vietnam[291], which ultimately ended up happening. Pakistan went along with this campaign for several reasons. Firstly, General Zia espoused an Islamist ideology that made him a natural opponent of communism, and his government might have feared the speculative security consequences of Soviet-aligned Afghanistan one day receiving Moscow's support to settle its dispute with Pakistan over the Durand Line, which Kabul does not recognize as legitimate despite it being regarded as the international border between the two by the rest of the world. In addition, Afghanistan's communist revolution put Pakistan in a tight spot of being between two Soviet partners if one also accounts for India, further exacerbating the security dilemma between Islamabad and Moscow. Lastly, the US' Symington Amendment was activated against Pakistan that year to punish it for the progress that it was making on its nuclear program by depriving it of much-needed military equipment and spare parts, which pressured it to go along with Washington's plans in order to receive sanctions relief, which was forthcoming in 1981 when a waiver was granted[292].

it is not within the scope of this dissertation to discuss the Afghan War too in depth, but just to point out that it obviously was the lowest point in Soviet-Pakistani relations. Pakistan had Neo-Realist, Neo-Liberal, and Constructivist reasons to side with the US over the USSR, respectively being: the fear of a Soviet-backed Afghan-Indian pincer attack to dismember the rest of Pakistan along the lines of the 1971 template; ideological commitment to the Western bloc despite having left both SEATO and CENTO by that time; and total distrust of the USSR and its regional Afghan & Indian partners. The USSR also had its own Neo-Realist, Neo-Liberal, and Constructivist reasons for militarily intervening

[291] St. Clair J., Cockburn A. How Jimmy Carter and I Started the Mujahideen [Electronic resource] // Counterpunch. 1998. 15 January. Mode of access: https://www.counterpunch.org/1998/01/15/how-jimmy-carter-and-i-started-the-mujahideen/.

[292] Pakistan's Sanction Waivers: A Summary [Electronic resource] // Carnegie Endowment For International Peace. 2001. 29 October. Mode of access: https://carnegieendowment.org/2001/10/29/pakistan-s-sanction-waivers-summary-pub-10778.

in Afghanistan and relevantly regarding Pakistan as the greatest threat to its forces there, respectively being: Pakistan's leading role in facilitating international support for the Afghan mujaheddin; the obvious East-West competition over Afghanistan's political future; and the fear that "losing" Afghanistan could lead to the spread of anti-communist Islamic militancy into the USSR's vulnerable Muslim-majority Central Asian Republics. Although General Zia traveled to Moscow in 1982 to attend Brezhnev's funeral, Pakistan and the USSR still remained at fierce loggerheads over the Soviet military operation in Afghanistan. That conflict has left a lasting legacy that continues to this day since decision makers and the general public in both countries have a generally negative view of the other because of it, though it is important for each side to realize that the Russia of today under President Putin is not the communist USSR of the past, the same as modern-day Pakistan under Prime Minister Imran Khan is not the Islamist military government of the 1980s. Both countries have drastically changed over the past 40 years, yet few on each side realized this about the other because of the relative disengagement between the two following the end of that proxy war, though that's gradually changing nowadays.

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 did not end the proxy war between the two because Moscow continued to support Kabul until the fall of the communist government there in 1992 and then thereafter threw its backing behind the Northern Alliance that was opposed to the Pakistani-backed Taliban. Nevertheless, the withdrawal and subsequent dissolution of the USSR is commonly regarded as ending their rivalry and therefore being a turning point whereby negative Neo-Realist considerations about one another no longer had the same influence on policymaking as before. The US also once again proved that it couldn't be trusted after failing to grant Pakistan a sanctions waiver for the Pressler Amendment in 1990[293], thus continuing the policy that was briefly enacted from 1979-1981 of using sanctions as an instrument of pressure against the country. Pakistan was reminded for the fourth time (the first being the 1965 war, the second being

[293] Akhtar R. The Correct Narrative on Pressler [Electronic resource] // Dawn. 2017. 29 May. Mode of access: https://www.dawn.com/news/1335979.

the 1971 war, and the third being the initial imposition of sanctions in 1979) that the US wasn't a sincere partner, which led to it unsuccessfully seeking Russian arms at this time in what some believed was partially intended to show the US that it had alternatives in case it did not promulgate another waiver. Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's 1999 visit to Moscow was regarded positively by both sides even though nothing much came out of it, just like General Pervez Musharraf's a couple years later in 2003.

2001 changed the geostrategic calculus for yet another time, however, and in the most dramatic way ever. Pakistan joined the US' "Global War On Terror" because its military government at the time felt like it had no realistic option given the ferocious bloodlust that was driving America's revenge campaign immediately after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This decision came back to haunt Pakistan, however, which Prime Minister Khan lamented in 2019 when he talked about how the blowback led to the deaths of 70,000 of his citizens and the loss of $150-200 billion to his country's economy after the war spilled over into Pakistani territory[294]. India also began to exploit the chaos to carry out hybrid warfare against Pakistan through its sponsorship of anti-Pakistani terrorist groups operating from across the border in Afghanistan. Pakistan's security situation therefore notably deteriorated and reached its nadir in 2011 after the US' unilateral raid against Osama Bin Laden in Abbottabad[295] and NATO's attack against the Pakistani border post in Salala[296], the latter of which resulted in Islamabad cutting off the alliance's transport routes to Afghanistan through its territory until Secretary of State Clinton apologized for the incident a year later[297]. Being backstabbed by the US once again, Pakistan turned to Russia

[294] A Conversation With Prime Minister Imran Khan of Pakistan [Electronic resource] // Council on Foreign Relations. 2019. 23 September. Mode of access: https://www.cfr.org/event/conversation-prime-minister-imran-khan-pakistan-0.

[295] Strange H. US Raid That Killed Bin Laden Was 'an Act of War', Says Pakistani Report [Electronic resource] // The Telegraph. 2013. 9 July. Mode of access: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/10169655/US-raid-that-killed-bin-Laden-was-an-act-of-war-says-Pakistani-report.html.

[296] 24 Soldiers Killed in NATO Attack on Pakistan Check Post [Electronic resource] // The Express Tribune. 2011. 26 November. Mode of access: https://tribune.com.pk/story/297979/nato-jets-attack-checkpost-on-pak-afghan-border/.

[297] Pakistan Allows Nato Convoys to Afghanistan to Resume [Electronic resource] // BBC. 2012. 4 July. Mode of access: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-18700496.

as a regional counterweight, but this led to a twist of historical irony whereby President Putin was invited to the country in 2012 but abruptly postponed his trip (indefinitely) just prior to the time when it was scheduled[298] in a modern-day reversal of Ali Khan's Old Cold War-era failure to visit the USSR upon being invited to do so. it is unclear to this day why that happened, but the general consensus is that Russia wanted the trip to achieve something of tangible significance more than just a photo-op, though it can also be said that Moscow wanted to avoid upsetting the sensitivities of its partners in New Delhi with whom it was closely cooperating with at the time through BRICS (and with more promising prospects than the present).

Whatever the reason may be, the subsequent several years from 2013-2016 re-energized their bilateral relations and placed them on a much more positive trajectory than ever before. China's BRI was announced in 2013, the year after which Russia lifted its arms embargo on Pakistan and signed a deal to sell it 4 Hind-35M helicopters for anti-terrorist and counter-narcotics purposes in 2015[299]. This was most likely due to the growing threat that ISIS/Daesh posed to the region upon its reported presence there in 2014[300]. The world's most notorious terrorist group is a direct threat to Pakistan for obvious reasons and an indirect one to Russia since it could destabilize the Central Asian Republics, some of which have visa-free travel agreements with with Moscow, and thus catalyze a large-scale refugee crisis that terrorists could also exploit to infiltrate into the Eurasian Great Power. China announced that Pakistan would host BRI's flagship project of CPEC in 2015, which was also the same year that the South Asian state and its Indian neighbor were invited to join the SCO and Prime Minister Sharif (serving this role for his second non-consecutive time) visited Moscow. 2016 saw the inauguration of the first-ever annual joint Russian-

[298] Putin Defers Pakistan Visit; Quadrilateral Summit Postponed [Electronic resource] // Dawn. 2012. 27 September. Mode of access: https://www.dawn.com/news/752408.

[299] Russia Ready to Sell Four Mi-35M Combat Helicopters to Pakistan — Source [Electronic resource] // TASS. 2015. 17 June. Mode of access: https://tass.com/russia/801226#betternews.

[300] Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) [Electronic resource] // Center For Strategic & International Studies. 2018. Mode of access: https://www.csis.org/programs/transnational-threats-project/terrorism-backgrounders/islamic-state-khorasan-k.

Pakistani anti-terrorist drills[301], which caused panic among Indian policymakers who feared that it and other subsequently positive developments in Russian-Pakistani relations were part of Moscow's asymmetrical response to their country's pro-American pivot in recent years towards the US' "Indo-Pacific" policy of containing Russia's Chinese strategic partner[302]. This perception was reinforced by Pakistan facilitating Russia's contacts with the Taliban from 2017-2019 that ultimately led to the mujaheddin's successors being hosted by Moscow several times that latter year for peace talks.

About that, the very fact that Russia would host a group whose members fought against its predecessor state and dealt it the worst-ever military defeat that Moscow experienced in decades speaks to the pragmatism that guides contemporary Russian foreign policy since the Eurasian Great Power realized that it must have contacts with this group in order to gain a say in the post-war government that the fighters will likely lead[303]. Not only that, but the Taliban have proven themselves to be the most effective on-the-ground fighting force against Daesh in Afghanistan, so it makes sense to politically support them in this respect despite their organization still officially being branded as a terrorist group by the Russian government. To be frank, it is only natural that Russia would begin talking to the Taliban since every other international actor of significance -- the US, China, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and even recently India too as of June 2021[304] -- was already doing so[305], therefore leaving Moscow at a strategic disadvantage for letting its Afghan War-era grudge influence its state-level decision making in the present. Only Pakistan could help bridge the trust deficit between the Taliban and Russia, which is why it facilitated these contacts over the

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[301] Russia Attaches Great Importance to Anti-Terror Cooperation with Pakistan [Electronic resource] // Dawn. 2016. 11 February. Mode of access: https://www.dawn.com/news/1238822.

[302] Kapoor N. Russia-Pakistan Relations and Its Impact on India // Observer Research Foundation. Op. cit.

[303] Barabanov O. Taliban in Russia and the Future of Afghanistan [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2019. 3 June. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/taliban-in-russia-and-future-of-afghanistan/?sphrase_id=1163484.

[304] Mohan G. Indian Officials Had a 'Quiet' Rendezvous with Taliban, Says Qatari Special Envoy [Electronic resource] // India Today. 2021. 22 June. Mode of access: www.indiatoday.in/world/story/indian-officials-meet-taliban-qatari-special-envoy-talks-1817915-2021-06-22.

[305] Burchill R. Bringing the Taliban to Moscow: Constructive Move or Waste of Time? [Electronic resource] // Valdai International Discussion Club. 2018. 16 November. Mode of access: http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/bringing-the-taliban-to-moscow-constructive-move/.

years, not only for pragmatism and security's sake, but also as a goodwill gesture showing Moscow that it truly intends to turn the page on their complicated history of relations and chart a new future of joint cooperation together after the war ends.

Therein lays the challenge, however, since neither side has offered any comprehensive vision for what this would look like, let alone for how to retain the positive momentum in their ties following the inevitable end of the current Afghan War that's brought them together so quickly. it is already a notable achievement as it is that yearly anti-terrorist exercises are being held and the two sides are so closely coordinating their diplomatic approaches to Afghanistan (especially as regards the leading involvement of the Taliban in the peace process), but there needs to be a vision for where to take their bilateral relations once the conflict ends and the Neo-Realist motivations that are responsible for their rapid rapprochement are no longer as strongly in effect. In addition, this couldn't be more urgent of a task either since India is doing its utmost to pressure Russia to curtail its newfound relations with Pakistan despite hypocritically defending its own much more strategic relations with the US as being above criticism from Moscow. Russia already proved that it is no longer a credible neutral actor in South Asia after reiterating its historic support for India following the latter's de-facto annexation of Kashmir in August 2019, so it is important to ensure that the progress made in bilateral relations over the past half-decade is not squandered in the coming future. After all, Russia also needs to avoid becoming too dependent on India in the prospective Neo-NAM framework while simultaneously preventing the emergence of a security dilemma with China because of it, and the intensification of relations with Pakistan to the point of a strategic partnership presents the best solution for accomplishing both of these objectives.

In fact, the timing actually couldn't be better since the country is now led by Prime Minister Khan, who's prioritized Pakistan's engagement with regional powers and has spoken out in favor of enhancing relations with Russia even further[306]. The 64-member

[306] 'Putin Is a Big Voice in the World': Khan Hopes Russia Will Get Closer to Pakistan [Electronic resource] // RT. 2019. 13 September. Mode of access: https://www.rt.com/news/468753-imran-khan-russia-kashmir/.

Russian delegation that visited Pakistan in December 2019 led by Minister of Industry and Trade Denis Manturov was also a welcome sign showing that Moscow is truly interested in improving economic relations with Islamabad after decades of neglect as evidenced by RT's report that they signed several deals worth billions of dollars[307]. According to the outlet, “this includes investments in energy, rail and steel industries”, particularly “$1 billion for the rehabilitation and upgrading of the Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) project” and agreements that would later lead to the Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline that will be described in the next section. Other details that were reported at the time are that “A Russian company has developed a project to convert the Muzaffargarh thermal power station to coal and establish a 600-megawatt coal-fired power plant at Jamshoro.” In addition, “Moscow will also help to construct a railway track from Quetta to Taftan.” All of this was made possible the week prior after “Pakistan and Russia signed an agreement on the settlement of mutual financial claims and commitments on operations of the former Soviet Union, whereby Pakistan repaid a $93.5 million debt to Russia”, which in turn removed prior bureaucratic-legal hurdles to Moscow's economic and financial cooperation with Islamabad.

The Neo-Realist problems that plagued their relationship during the entire Old Cold War era are no longer in effect following the Soviet dissolution and the retreat of Moscow's direct authority back to the borders of Russia proper instead of Afghanistan where it once reached, which has in turn made it possible for the two to cooperate because of their shared Neo-Realist security concerns stemming from Daesh's expansion to that landlocked state. The trust that's been built between the two during this short period of time could be used to pioneer joint connectivity initiatives that satisfy both country's Neo-Liberal objectives of improving their institutional cooperation and bringing real economic benefits to their populations, to say nothing of the benefits that this could also bring to Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics between them. For any real progress to be made on this front,

[307] Russia Looks to Invest in Pakistan in a Big Way [Electronic resource] // RT International. 2019. 9 December. Mode of access: www.rt.com/business/475368-russia-pakistan-investments-energy/.

however, there must first be a vision to apply that could then positively shape policymakers' perceptions on both sides to the point where they agree to pool their effects into jointly pursuing it, hence the need to elaborate on Pakistan's future geostrategic potential and its pertinence to Russia's foreign policy aims, which is the focus of this chapter's final subsection.

Statistics demonstrate Russia-Pakistan trade has a lot of opportunities. Russian exports to Pakistan in 2020 amounted to 496.9 million US dollars which is a 194.61% increase in comparison to 2019. The main share of exports fell on food and agricultural raw materials - 75.38% of total exports, mineral products - 10.94%, chemical industry products - 5.05%, wood and pulp and paper products - 3.28%. The largest increase in Russia's exports to Pakistan in 2020 was in the following commodity groups: cereals - an increase of $ 278.4 million, mineral fuel, oil and their distillation products; bituminous substances; mineral waxes - an increase of $ 48.3 million, vegetables and some edible root crops and tubers - an increase of $ 11.6 million, nuclear reactors, boilers, equipment and mechanical devices - an increase of $ 7.9 million.

Russian imports from Pakistan in 2020 amounted to US$ 292.9 million, a decrease of 20.90% compared to 2019. The main share of deliveries fell on textiles and footwear - 55.47% of the total volume of imports, foodstuffs and agricultural raw materials - 25.51%, chemical industry products - 4.64%, machinery, equipment and vehicles - 2.02%. The largest increase in Russia's imports from Pakistan in 2020 was recorded for the following commodity groups: cotton - an increase of $ 3.7 million, ores, slag and ash - an increase of $ 1.6 million, soap, surfactants, detergents, lubricants, artificial and finished waxes - an increase of 1.2 million USD[308].

4.3 Pakistan's Geostrategic Potential in Russian-Pakistani Relations

Russian strategists and decision makers have hitherto presumably perceived Pakistan to be

[308] ШОС и БРИКС: Россия-Пакистан: новый виток отношений. Центр международной торговли. 2021. URL: https://corp.wtcmoscow.ru/news/rossiya-pakistan-novyy-vitok-otnosheniy/ (accessed 10.04.2023).

a passive participant in the ongoing global systemic transition, exerting influence in its region like it is always historically done but never really taking the initiative to shape larger outcomes that affect more than those four countries in its immediate neighborhood. That perspective is outdated, however, since Pakistan is actually poised to become the central component of a larger Chinese-backed trans-regional integration network referred to by the author as CPEC+, with its northern component through post-war Afghanistan and Central Asia (N-CPEC+) having previously been touched upon a handful of times in the research thus far because of its prospective role in strengthening bilateral relations with Russia. It is now time to explain Pakistan's future geostrategic potential in order to complete the shift in perceptions that's presently taking place in Russian thinkers' minds and convince them that their country has every reason to intensify relations with the South Asian state to the point of a strategic partnership through the "Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar" vision that will then be proposed in the dissertation's conclusion.

This section of the research, just like the previous one, is written in the same narrative style because it largely represents the author's own unique insight into the topic. Chapter 4.2 was built upon five foundational works that were cited at the beginning of the subsection, whereas this one comprises over a dozen of the author's works that were published over the intervening five years and will be cited in the text when relevant, as will any other supplementary materials from other sources. The point to pay attention to is that the forthcoming trans-regional vision that will be elucidated perfectly pairs with the fundamental precepts of Russian foreign policy as extensively explained by Lissovolik in Chapter 2.4, which were in turn reflected in some of President Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov's policy pronouncements and are based upon the Russian foreign policy concept of 2016. Accepting that one of the contemporary priorities of Russian foreign policy is to promote the Eurasian Great Power's participation in supercontinental integration projects with a view towards building the Greater Eurasian Partnership, then it is only natural that Pakistan's CPEC+ vision should of the highest interest to Russia's strategists and decision makers alike.

CPEC

As the author's description of this vision makes obvious enough, CPEC+ is the expansion of CPEC, BRI's flagship project. To review what he wrote for Russia's publicly financed international media outlet Sputnik in his April 2017 piece titled "What's CPEC, and How Does the Future of the Multipolar World Depend on It?"[309], this economic corridor is of irreplaceable geostrategic significance for China because it represents its only reliable non-Malacca access route to the Afro-Asian ("Indian") Ocean through which its enormous trade with Europe, the Mideast, and increasingly Africa traverses, thus enabling it to avoid the US Navy's possible disruptions in the aforementioned chokepoint and the South China Sea in the event of a heightened tensions between these two superpowers in the future. Without the strategic liberty to continue trading with the rest of the Eastern Hemisphere beyond its immediate region in times of crisis, China would de-facto be contained and thus incapable of practicing its independent foreign policy of challenging America's dominance over global affairs, hence why it can be confidently asserted that the developing multipolar world does indeed depend on CPEC's success to an enormous degree, much more than has previously been recognized by Russian experts seeing as how they've largely overlooked the project's global strategic significance in the current International Relations context.

Before analyzing the geostrategic significance of CPEC for China and for the emerging Multipolar World, it is important to cover CPEC influence on the Pakistani economy and on the Sino-Pakistani relationships. According to various estimates, China's investments in the project amounted to about USD 62 billion[310]. With a certain degree of conditionality, this amount can be considered as an investment in the development of Pakistan's deteriorating infrastructure. The uniqueness of CPEC is that this corridor of the BRI is

[309] Korybko A. What's CPEC, and How Does the Future of the Multipolar World Depend on It? [Electronic resource] // Sputnik. 2017. 24 April. Mode of access: https://sputniknews.com/columnists/201704241052940823-cpec-multipolar-world-future/.

[310] Khetran, M. S. B., Saeed, M. A. The CPEC and China-Pakistan relations: A case study on balochistan. China Q. Int'. l. Strategic Stud. 2017. 3 (3). P. 447–461.

being developed in just one country which is Pakistan[311]. A lot of experts agree that the project can be a strong trigger for the Pakistani economy, as it will probably provide the country with business opportunities and regional growth, economic empowerment and alternative trade and energy channels[312].

Pakistan is an important partner in the context of the BRI project realization and the implementation of CPEC as a part of it will not only strengthen Pakistan-China economic cooperation, it will also powerfully demonstrate the Belt and Road Initiative could be executed for the welfare of countries involved.

In general the successful implementation of the project is likely to boost the Pakistani economy as it becomes the quickest developing economies in the local region. For Pakistan it will not only be the most convenient way to trade with China, it will open a wide range of trade opportunities with the whole region of South Asia. According to some assessments the combination of Pakistan's beneficial location and of the extension and the advancement of the Gwadar exceptional monetary zone under the CPEC apparently will make Pakistan "duty-free economic zone" for its neighbors[313].

Moreover, CPEC implies the creation of different projects to ensure economic development: economic zones (27 economic zones to be developed across both countries[314]) energy projects, building new hospitals, industrial parks, airports and roads. CPEC`s special role is that it will likely decrease poverty in Pakistan significantly. Poverty reduction is connected to the creation of millions of jobs in various sectors.

When it comes to the employment issues due to the CPEC development Pakistan can achieve 400,000 jobs creation, while by even more optimistic predictions this figure coud

[311]Menhas, R., Mahmood, S., Tanchangya, P., Safdar, M. N., and Hussain, S. Sustainable development under belt and road initiative: A case study of China–Pakistan economic corridor's socio-economic impact on Pakistan. Sustainability. 2019. 11 (21). P. 6143.

[312] Shaikh, F., Ji, Q., and Fan, Y. Prospects of Pakistan–China energy and economic corridor. Renew. Sustain. Energy Rev. 2016. No. 59. P. 253–263

[313] Hali S. M., Shukui, Dr. T., Iqbal, S. One belt and one road: Impact on China-Pakistan economic corridor. One Belt One Road. 2014. No. 34 (4). P. 147–164.

[314] Munir M., Khalid R.; Latif, M. Route optimization for the cement industry under the CPEC initiative. Business Rev. 2018. No. 12. P. 65–83.

reach 800,000 jobs by 2030.[315] In 2017, about 30,000 Pakistani professionals, including management, engineers, doctors, IT experts and policy experts were employed in various CPEC projects in Qasim port and Coal Power projects. Among the positive effects of the CPEC realization are sufficient expansion in both GNP and GDP. According to some research Pakistan could have 4 million new openings. If Pakistan completes the project and supports it with reforms, trade will grow by 9.8 percent[316].

At the same time around CPEC there are a lot of controversies and the wide range of socio-economic opportunities prognosed does not guarantee the rapid boost in the economy and quality of life. For example, the research based on the public polls demonstrates that at the very beginning of the project implementation people were full of high hopes and expectations which were changed with strong skepticism in recent years. Pakistanis think that they will feel any good from CPEC because of enormously high levels of corruption, discrimination in the distribution of resources and non-transparent procedures which have led to a growth of political trust deficit in Pakistan[317].

While the economic benefits for the population of Pakistan are not yet obvious, the ecological detrimental effects of its realization are already tangible. The massive harm to the ecosystem and other repercussions of cutting trees like the melting of glaciers in northern Pakistan can lead to a wide range of problems as Pakistan is still an agro-based economy. Moreover, most problems come from the energy projects of CPEC. The generation of energy from coal-fired plants leads to huge carbon dioxide emissions which can lead to a number of respiratory problems, acid rains, global warming and other hazards[318].

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[315] Zia M., Waqar S. Employment Outlook of China Pakistan Economic Corridor A Meta-Analysis. Centre Of Exellence. CPEC. 2018. P. 4-6.

[316] Masood M. T., Farooq M., and Hussain, S. B. Pakistan's potential as a transit trade corridor. Trans. 2016. No. 18 (1). P. 267–289.

[317] Malik A. Banking on the Belt and Road: Insights from a new global dataset of 13,427 Chinese development projects. 2021. Williamsburg, VA: AidData at William & Mary.

[318] Kouser S. Uncovering Pakistan's Environmental Risks and Remedies under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Environmental Science and Pollution Research. 2019. No. 27. P. 4661–4663.

N-CPEC+

The previously mentioned piece talks about a few other concepts that will be explained in just a moment, but for them to make the most sense in the larger framework that's been established within this dissertation, it is important to first refer to the author's 2019 analysis about how "CPEC+ is the key to achieving regional integration goals"[319] that was written for China's publicly financed international media outlet CGTN in April 2019. That piece briefly described how three supplementary trade corridors could branch off from the primary CPEC one along the northern, western, and southern vectors to strengthen integration with the former Soviet Republics, the Mideast, and Africa through the respective projects of N-CPEC+, W-CPEC+, and S-CPEC+. N-CPEC+ has already been talked about as connecting post-war Afghanistan, the Central Asian Republics, and Russia to Pakistan, and it could forseeably be actualized through the construction of the Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railway line that was discussed by the railway administrations' heads of Uzbekistan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan and Pakistan during a meeting that was held between them in Tashkent on December 3-4, 2018[320], and which the author analyzed in his article at the time for the Global Research (Centre for Research on Globalization) online outlet titled "Towards a Russia-Pakistan Railway Corridor?" [321](RuPak). The author suggested that any progress on this project would complement the North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC) that Russia is pioneering with Azerbaijan, Iran, and India and possibly even replace it if the Islamic Republic continues to remain internationally isolated since Russia could conceivably still trade with India through RuPak, though provided that it mediates between them first and gets both of them to ensure

[319] Korybko A. CPEC+ Is the Key to Achieving Regional Integration Goals [Electronic resource] // CGTN. 2019. 27 April. Mode of access: https://news.cgtn.com/news/3d3d414f30457a4d34457a6333566d54/index.html.
[320] Kerimkhanov A. Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Pakistan to Create Financial Consortium for New Railway // AzerNews. Op. cit.
[321] Korybko A. Towards a Russia-Pakistan Railway Corridor? [Electronic resource] // Global Research. 2018. 8 December. Mode of access: https://www.globalresearch.ca/towards-a-russia-pakistan-railway-corridor/5662203.

that cross-border trade won't be disrupted by one or the other. Should that plan succeed, then the Kosygin Plan would basically be resurrected in a 21st-century context.

it is important to point out, however, that while Pakistan conceptualizes this corridor as N-CPEC+, the Russian side would feel uncomfortable using this branding because of its Indian strategic partner's opposition to the CPEC core project, which is why Moscow would probably refer to it as RuPak or some other neologism in order to avoid offending New Delhi's sensitivities on this issue if the decision is made to go through with it in the future. The general idea of Russia and other countries' de-facto participation in CPEC under different euphemisms was discussed by the author in his July 2018 piece for the Eurasia Future online media outlet, "Creative Non-CPEC Marketing Strategies For Pakistan"[322], that's since been shut down by the site's owner but was republished on the author's personal blog Intel 101 at a later date. These non-CPEC marketing strategies are essential if Pakistan is to succeed in attracting the greatest number of stakeholders to invest in this project and its northern, western, and southern derivatives without offending their Indian partners. Whether through N-CPEC+, RuPak, or whatever other name is proposed, the northern branch corridor of CPEC represents the most promising post-Afghan form of cooperation between Russia and Pakistan, which would facilitate the EAU's planned integration with BRI simultaneously with fulfilling the trans-regional integration vision of an Arctic-Indian Ocean trans-regional corridor that President Putin shared while speaking at the Valdai Club in October 2019. Pakistan, however, cannot sign any free trade deals with the EAEUuntil it recognizes the bloc's Armenian member, which it refuses to do out of solidarity with its Azerbaijani ally, though just like Baku which also has issues with Yerevan, the functional workaround for Islamabad could be to improve trade with the bloc's other members on a bilateral basis instead of compromising on its interests to reach a multilateral deal just for the sake of it when trade with Armenia's less than 3 million people will never be that important to it to do so.

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[322] Korybko A. Creative Non-CPEC Marketing Strategies For Pakistan [Electronic resource] // Intel 101. 2019. 25 September. Mode of access: http://intel-101.com/creative-non-cpec-marketing-strategies-for-pakistan/.

W-CPEC+

The CPEC+ vision is not just about connectivity with Russia, however, since its other two branches are just as important. The western one, W-CPEC+, could extend through Iran and then to Azerbaijan en route to Russia via the NSTC and also to Turkey on the way to the EU seeing as how Tehran is interested in pairing CPEC's terminal port of Gwadar with the NSTC's one of Chabahar[323]. it is therefore entirely feasible that preplanned Russian, and ironically enough also Indian, investments could lay the basis for improved Russian-Pakistani trade along this vector. Even in the event that Gwadar is not twinned with Chabahar, there's nothing stopping Russian and Pakistani businessman from trading with one another through the latter port since Russian-Indian trade across the NSTC will still take on a maritime dimension, so ships could also go to and from the Pakistani ports of Gwadar and Karachi too. Looking beyond the significance of W-CPEC+ for Russian-Pakistani trade, it more broadly represents an opportunity for strengthening Pakistan's already deep ties with the region, especially if it takes on a maritime component to include trade with the Gulf. it is predicted that it will since every country in the Mideast wants to trade more with China, and with CPEC representing the overland shortcut for doing so, it is extremely likely that they'll come to rely more on this route in the coming future, which would be to Pakistan's benefit especially if it capitalizes upon this emerging trend in order to expand its own trade with those countries too.

S-CPEC+

The same principle holds true for S-CPEC+, which is envisaged to serve as one of the future corridors for Chinese-African trade. Just like Gwadar can prospectively pair with

[323] Iran Says Ready to Connect Pakistan's Gwadar to Iran's Chabahar Port [Electronic resource] // Xinhua. 2019. 24 May. Mode of access: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-05/24/c_138086073.htm.

Chabahar, it could also do the same with the port of Djibouti and Kenya's Mombasa, a well as the Chinese-built ports of Lamu in Kenya and Bagamoyo in neighboring Tanzania, the purpose of which would be to improve bilateral trade as a result. To reframe this part of the strategic equation, China's BRI investments in Africa are creating infrastructure that could serve the secondary purpose of improving Pakistani-African trade as a natural outcome of improving Chinese-African trade, which is these investment's primary purpose. The more that Chinese-African trade traverses through CPEC, the more likely it is that Pakistani businessmen can get their own companies involved too. Pakistan, after all, does not just have to be a passive transit state through which other countries' goods and services traverse, but can take ownership of its pivotal role in this corridor to promote its own enterprises as well. There are of course certain domestic economic obstacles that first need to be overcome before the country can fully maximize its geostrategic position in this respect, but that does not mean that progress cannot still be made, nor that it is not already in the process of being made as it is.

E-CPEC+

Before taking a comprehensive look at the collective geostrategic potential of the previously discussed CPEC+ projects, it is relevant to touch upon the prospective one of E-CPEC+ that wasn't included in the author's April 2019 article for CGTN but was thought about several months later after the Iranian Ambassador to India revealed in September 2019 that "Iran is now discussing an LNG pipeline to China along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), as India is not expected to retain its prior interest in LNG imports from Iran."[324] Conceptualized by the dissertation's author as E-CPEC+ (with the "E" referring both to "east" and "energy"), it was elaborated upon by him in his analysis for Global Research that month titled "Iran's CPEC-Parallel Pipeline Plans (E-CPEC+) Could

[324] Haidar S. India Should Not Have Joined U.S. Ban, Says Iran [Electronic resource] // The Hindu. 2019. 11 September. Mode of access: https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-should-not-have-joined-us-ban-says-iran/article29386180.ece.

Ruin India's Regional Vision"[325], which suggested that the $10 billion memorandum of understanding that Russia and Pakistan signed in September 2018[326] (analyzed at the time by the author in his article "The Russian-Pakistani $10 Billion Pipeline Will Promote Eurasian Integration"[327] for the online non-academic journal Oriental Review) for Rosneft to potentially export the gas that it controls off of Iran's coast to the South Asian state via an underwater could be expanded to include the construction of an overland pipeline to China afterwards. This general idea was then summarized and shared by the author during that same month in his piece for CGTN titled "Iran's interest in CPEC strengthens regional integration"[328], emphasizing how Iran's interest in E-CPEC+ can benefit the whole of Eurasia and advance BRI's vision of a "common future for mankind", which would happen with or without Russia's possible participation in this respect. In any case, the argument can be made that Russia should get involved in this, even if it is only in using its world-class expertise in pipeline construction to build that energy route whether by itself or through a consortium comprised of other companies as well.

The Zipper Of Eurasia

Having explained the entirety of what constitutes Pakistan's future geostrategic potential through the CPEC+ vision, it is now time to discuss the overall impact that these plans could have on Eurasia. The author published a forward-looking analysis in September 2015 for the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies titled about how "Pakistan Is The 'Zipper' Of

[325] Korybko A. Iran’s CPEC-Parallel Pipeline Plans (E-CPEC) Could Ruin India’s Regional Vision [Electronic resource] // Global Research. 2019. 12 September. Mode of access: https://www.globalresearch.ca/iran-cpec-parallel-pipeline-plans-e-cpec-could-ruin-india-regional-vision/5688897.
[326] Pakistan, Russia Sign MoU for $10b Gas Pipeline from Iran // Daily Pakistan. 2018. 28 September. Op. cit.
[327] Korybko A. The Russian-Pakistani $10 Billion Pipeline Will Promote Eurasian Integration [Electronic resource] // Oriental Review. 2018. 12 October. Mode of access: https://orientalreview.org/2018/10/12/the-russian-pakistani-10-billion-pipeline-will-promote-eurasian-integration/.
[328] Korybko A. Iran's Interest in CPEC Strengthens Regional Integration [Electronic resource] // CGTN. 2019. 16 September. Mode of access: https://news.cgtn.com/news/2019-09-16/Iran-s-interest-in-CPEC-strengthens-regional-integration-K2ybECc94A/index.html.

Pan-Eurasian Integration"[329], which was the conceptual forerunner to his later work about CPEC+ that was cited earlier in this subsection. The idea is that Pakistan's location perfectly imbues it with the power to act as the key catalyst for bloc-to-bloc integration (which Lissovolik later described as BRICS+) between the EAU, SCO, and SAARC and their Mideast partners (which would refer in practice to what Lissovolik calls BRICS++), essentially connecting/"zipping" them together to create a new center of integration gravity in the Eurasian supercontinent. The perception of Pakistan as a "zipper" is also beneficial for its soft power since it completely reconceptualizes how its partners view its geostrategic importance in the emerging world order, which is the first step towards getting them to tangibly commit to investing in its success out of the shared interests that they have in it. Moreover, it also powerfully counteracts the information warfare incessantly waged by India purporting that Pakistan is nothing more than a "rogue state" that should be "isolated" from the world, which is a negative narrative that's regularly shared with Russians but one that they should begin to question (to say nothing of the nefarious intentions driving it) upon reconsidering that country's future geostrategic potential through the "zipper" paradigm of CPEC+.

The Convergence Of Civilizations

Accepting that Pakistan does indeed have the potential to connect the diverse trade blocs and countries of Eurasia and even Africa if taken to its logical conclusion with S-CPEC+, then it can be said that Pakistan also represents what the author described as the "Convergence of Civilizations" in his January 2017 analysis for the Moscow-based Katehon think tank titled "CPEC And The 21st-Century Convergence Of Civilizations"[330]. Instead of civilizations being seemingly being destined to "clash" like Huntington

[329] Korybko A. Pakistan Is The ‘Zipper’ Of Pan-Eurasian Integration [Electronic resource] // Russian Institute for Strategic Studies. 2015. 15 September. Mode of access: https://en.riss.ru/analysis/18882/.
[330] Korybko A. CPEC and the 21st Century Convergence of Civilizations [Electronic resource] // Katehon. 2017. 19 January. Mode of access: https://katehon.com/article/cpec-and-21st-century-convergence-civilizations.

theorized[331], they might actually peacefully "converge" through the "zipper" role that Pakistan is destined to play through CPEC+, thus bestowing the South Asian state with an even greater significance for the world than previously thought because of the potential that it has to promote inter-civilizational harmony through its Chinese-backed trade corridors. This satisfies its own interests, China's, Russia's, and every other responsible actor's as well, thereby making its CPEC+ vision indispensable to the future of world peace so long as it is properly implemented, which is why it is so important for Pakistan to attract as many stakeholders as possible who are willing to commit to tangible investments in the country. This concept is admittedly ambitious, but it perfectly dovetails with Lissovolik's own, albeit approached from a different perspective wherein Pakistan becomes an active and key player in these developments alongside Russia and China instead of the entirely passive and marginal one that he only once talked about through his InPEAKS concept.

The New Multipolar Trilateral

It is important to keep in mind the prospect of further cooperation between these three countries because it holds the chance of creating what the author described as a new "Multipolar Trilateral" in Eurasia in a speech that he gave at the one-day international conference on “China, Pakistan & Russia: Regional Stability and Dividends for Peace”[332] that was hosted by the prestigious Pakistan House think tank on 7 February, 2018, in Islamabad and which saw the participation of such high-profile speakers as Pakistani Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff General Zubair Mahmood Hayat NI (M), Former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan and the High Commissioner of Pakistan to India Ambassador (Retired) Salman Bashir, His Excellency Russian Ambassador Alexey Y. Dedov (succeeded by Danila Ganich in April 2019), and His Excellency Chinese Ambassador Yao Jing. His

[331] Huntington S. P. The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order. Op. cit.
[332] Conference on China, Pakistan & Russia: Regional Stability and Dividends for Peace [Electronic resource] // Associated Press Service. 2018. 8 February. Mode of access: https://www.associatedpressservice.net/national/conference-on-china-pakistan-russia-regional-stability-and-dividends-for-peace/.

speech was republished in full at the time by Oriental Review under the title "21st-Century Paradigm Shift In Eurasia: Towards A New Trilateral"[333] and asserted that trilateral cooperation between them could eventually become strategic and possibly even replace RIC if India continues with its pro-American pivot. Even if that second-mentioned scenario does not transpire, the PRC trilateral (Pakistan-Russia-China, with PRC specifically being used as the abbreviation to emphasize the central role that China plays in bringing together its two neighboring strategic partners) could still complement RIC by serving as the Russian-Chinese Strategic Partnership's platforms for engaging with these two rival South Asian states and therefore promoting stability in the region.

Barabanov wrote a year later about a “sustainable Russia-China-Pakistan geo-economic line” connecting the Arctic and Indian Oceans, the grand vision of which was officially suggested by President Putin in his speech at the Valdai Club in September 2019. This order of events proves that the author of this paper was suggesting something visionary when he spoke in February 2018 about the "21st-century paradigm shift in Eurasia" which is a paving the way for a "new trilateral" forming between these three countries, one that is not directed against any third party but is open for all since it is only aim is to promote trans-regional integration in the supercontinent and beyond (such as to Africa through S-CPEC+). Pakistan, Russia, and China have every reason to intensify their cooperation with one another through the CPEC+ model, though it is predicted that Indian lobbyists (both those operating in a formal capacity and those doing so informally through think tank work and other influence efforts) will do their utmost to malign this move and pressure Moscow into reconsidering the wisdom behind it, but it should be forewarned that any efforts undertaken by New Delhi in this direction could possibly be supported behind the scenes by Washington since both of them have an interest in containing China and preventing BRI from bringing together all of Eurasia's trading blocs (especially through its flagship project of CPEC that India is so vehemently against). Russia and its representatives must therefore

[333] Korybko A. 21st-Century Paradigm Shift In Eurasia: Towards A New Trilateral [Electronic resource] // Oriental Review. 2018. 30 March. Mode of access: https://orientalreview.org/2018/03/30/21st-century-paradigm-shift-in-eurasia-towards-a-new-trilateral/.

brace themselves for the inevitable information warfare onslaught from their enraged Indian partners if they choose to go through with this, though the fact of the matter is that New Delhi cannot do anything to physically stop it if Moscow makes this choice other than just complain about it and make a fuss, so the Eurasian Great Power shouldn't allow itself to be influenced by such simplistic methods that would ultimately result in it abandoning the opportunity to promote its grand strategic interests in the supercontinent.

The Multipolar CENTO

Pakistan is not just important to Russia because it is the Zipper of Eurasia, the focal point of CPEC+ connectivity, the Convergence of Civilizations, and the third member of a new multipolar trilateral, but also because the South Asian state has the chance to become one of the three anchors of what the author described as the "Multipolar CENTO" in his February 2017 analysis for Katehon titled "Has A Multipolar CENTO Sprung Up In The South Eurasian Rimland?"[334] The main concept is that the Old Cold War-era CENTO primarily formed between the contiguous, immensely populated, and civilizationally rich Muslim states of Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey (Iraq and the UK were also members but aren't included in the author's modified model) could be revived in a contemporary context to create a belt of promising rising powers along the South Eurasian Rimland that could intensify their collective integration (through non-military, economic means) to become an impressive geopolitical force in their own right. These three countries share similar cultures despite having different histories, and they're all very religiously pious nowadays too, as well as being the largest members of the Economic Cooperation Organization[335] (ECO) that they founded in 1964 but which has since expanded to include the majority-Muslim former Soviet Republics (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan,

[334] Korybko A. Has a Multipolar CENTO Sprung Up in the South Eurasian Rimland? [Electronic resource] // Katehon. 2017. 16 February. Mode of access: https://katehon.com/article/has-multipolar-cento-sprung-south-eurasian-rimland.

[335] History [Electronic resource] // Economic Cooperation Organization. Mode of access: http://www.eco.int/general_content/86055-History.html?t=General-content.

Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan) and Afghanistan. In fact, the ECO -- some of whose members such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan overlap with the EAEU-- could even become the platform through which the Multipolar CENTO could experiment with advancing their joint integration proposals, first between themselves and then later expanding them to include the other countries to the north of their South Eurasian Rimland belt. Russia already has excellent ties with both Turkey and Iran, so any further improvement of its relations with Pakistan would be both natural and also complementary to the ones that it has with the Multipolar CENTO's other two anchors, all of which could then be leveraged for trans-regional integration ends with a view towards strengthening the Greater Eurasian Partnership that Russia's leadership and expert community envisages.

The Golden Ring

As astounding as it may sound to readers who more than likely hadn't spent much time thinking about Pakistan's future geostrategic potential in such detail, the country has yet another importance to Russia in this context and it is that it complements Moscow's role in what the dissertation's author described as the "Golden Ring" in his March 2018 analysis for Oriental Review titled "From 'Bandwagoning' Against Eurasia To 'Circling The Wagons' In The Center Of It"[336]. The "Golden Ring", it should be said, is not the author's original idea in and of itself, as others have also used either this term[337] or the "Golden Circle"[338] to refer to the prospective multilateral integration of Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey to form a geopolitical ring/circle in the Eurasian Heartland, after which

[336] Korybko A. From ‘Bandwagoning’ Against Eurasia To ‘Circling The Wagons’ In The Center Of It [Electronic resource] // Oriental Review. 2018. 31 March. Mode of access: https://orientalreview.org/2018/03/31/from-bandwagoning-against-eurasia-to-circling-the-wagons-in-the-center-of-it/.

[337] Dr Mazari Discussed the Concept of a New Strategic Economic Bloc of China-Iran-Pakistan-Russia and Turkey, the Golden Ring Bloc, for Regional Security and Economic Stability [Electronic resource] // Media Today. 2019. 30 April. Mode of access: http://mediaonlinetoday.com/dr-mazari-discussed-the-concept-of-a-new-strategic-economic-bloc-of-china-iran-pakistan-russia-and-turkey-the-golden-ring-bloc-for-regional-security-and-economic-stability/.

[338] Ahmad M. CPEC Opens Door to Golden Circle of Trade for Pakistan [Electronic resource] // The News International. 2017. 10 September. Mode of access: https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/228827-CPEC-opens-door-to-golden-circle-of-trade-for-Pakistan.

they'd all then contribute to integrating the former Soviet Republics and Afghanistan between them to create a zone of stability that would also fulfill China's vision of charting a "common future for mankind". Pakistan is connected to the other four main countries through the Multipolar Trilateral (Pakistan-Russia-China) and Multipolar CENTO (Pakistan-Iran-Turkey) frameworks, whereas Russia is a member of the first-mentioned and also the leader of the Astana peace process for Syria that brings together Iran and Turkey, thus making these two countries complementary poles of integration on opposite sites of the Golden Ring (which is the unique insight that the dissertation's author contributed to this concept). Instead of some of these states bandwagoning with the US like in the past during the unipolar heyday of the 1990s, they're now coming together in the contemporary international context to pool their multipolar efforts in order to avoid being divided and ruled by external players to their collective detriment, being increasingly held together more closely the further along that the CPEC+ projects (specifically N-CPEC+ and W-CPEC+) progress (which is also another unique point made by the dissertation's author).

Pakistan: The Global Pivot State

To recap everything, BRI's flagship project of CPEC has the potential to branch out along the northern and western vectors to draw Afghanistan, Central Asia, Russia, Iran, Turkey, and even the Gulf States (say nothing of the African ones through S-CPEC+) closer together through N-CPEC+ and W-CPEC+ respectively, which can form the economic foundation for the Multipolar Trilateral between Pakistan-Russia-China (PRC) and the Multipolar CENTO between Pakistan-Iran-Turkey, both regional integration visions of which could then combine to strengthen the prospects for forming the Golden Ring between all five previously mentioned states and the six ones in between them. Pakistan serves the dual roles of being the Zipper of Eurasia and Convergence of Civilizations by virtue of being uniquely positioned to connect Eurasia's disparate blocs into the Greater

Eurasian Partnership that would naturally result in the creation of a "community of shared destiny", both of which fulfill the shared grand strategic goals of Russia and China by also facilitating the EAU's integration with BRI, laying the basis for President Putin's envisaged Arctic-Indian Ocean corridor, and promoting inter-civilizational harmony through trade in order to counteract Huntington's thesis of a supposedly inevitable "clash of civilizations". Altogether, this realization led the dissertation's author to conclude that Pakistan is the global pivot state without whom neither Russia nor China can can achieve their 21st-century grand strategic objectives unless they enter into close cooperation with it, the thought of which he expanded upon in his March 2019 article for Global Research self-descriptively titled "Pakistan: The Global Pivot State"[339].

In the contemporary International Relations era of multipolar balancing that was elaborated on at length in the preceding chapters, closer Russian-Pakistani relations would enable Moscow to simultaneously keep Beijing at ease regarding its plans for jointly leading the Neo-NAM with New Delhi while keeping the latter's pro-American pivot in check with the Damocles' sword of the Golden Ring, which can be advanced both in parallel with the Neo-NAM in order to retain intra-network balance with its South Asian pole or in response to India causing trouble for Eurasian integration processes at its new US' strategic partner's behest. Elevating Pakistan to the level of becoming the fifth player in the extant Russia-China-India-US quartet through the implementation of the "Fifth Player Theory" that was previously talked about in the text would represent a paradigm change that would assuredly work to Russia's benefit by giving it more opportunities to balance between the different axes of this arrangement and thus retain stability within this structure. The establishment of strategic relations between Russia and Pakistan would therefore advance Russia's integration (Greater Eurasian Partnership via CPEC+ and the Golden Ring) and balancing ("Fifth Player Theory" to better manage relations between the Chinese-led BRI and jointly Indian-led Neo-NAM) interests and should therefore be prioritized, thus

[339] Korybko A. Pakistan: The Global Pivot State [Electronic resource] // Global Research. 2019. 9 March. Mode of access: https://www.globalresearch.ca/pakistan-the-global-pivot-state/5668621.

necessitating the creation of a roadmap for "Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar" that will be proposed in the dissertation's conclusion.

4.4 Prospects of Russian-Pakistani Relations Breakthrough

Russian-Pakistani relations experienced a breakthrough in 2021 due to seven primary reasons which built upon the strategic insight that has been shared in the thesis up until this point. These are Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan signing a roadmap in February 2021 to build a railway between their countries[340] (which can casually be referred to as PAKAFUZ for convenience's sake); Pakistan's political, diplomatic, and military leadership jointly unveiling their country's new geo-economic grand strategy during the inaugural Islamabad Security Dialogue in March 2021; Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov's visit to Islamabad in early April 2021; US President Biden's decision later that same month to fully withdraw US military forces from Afghanistan by September 11th; Russia and Pakistan finally reaching an agreement to construct the Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline (formerly referred to as the North-South Gas Pipeline) in May 2021; Foreign Minister Lavrov endorsing Central Asian-South Asian connectivity as key to Russia's Greater Eurasian Partnership during his keynote speech at a topical regional conference in Tashkent in July 2021; and President Putin's phone call to Prime Minister Khan in August 2021 following Kabul's fall to the Taliban.

PAKAFUZ

PAKAFUZ is the tangible embodiment of N-CPEC+ and proves that the concept extensively elaborated upon by the dissertation's author is attractive to the most immediate

[340] Saif S. K. Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan Ink Map for Rail Link [Electronic resource] // Anadolu Ajansı. 2021. 22 February. Mode of access: www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/afghanistan-uzbekistan-pakistan-ink-map-for-rail-link/2131605.

regional stakeholders. It can prospectively form the backbone of a larger Central Asia-South Asia economic corridor that can easily connect with the first-mentioned region's rail network and thereafter extend all the way to Russia and even the EU. This project also has an additional strategic significance in that it makes India's NSTC redundant with respect to its Central Asian branch corridor. To explain, New Delhi has yet to ink any similar regional connectivity infrastructure agreement with the regional states, meaning that the Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan will increasingly come to rely on PAKAFUZ/N-CPEC+ for accessing the Afro-Asian ("Indian") Ocean. it is unrealistic to expect those countries to abandon PAKAFUZ in favor of the NSTC when the former has already been agreed to. At the very best, they might utilize some aspects of the NSTC's planned infrastructure between the Indian-controlled Iranian port of Chabahar and Afghanistan, but it is extremely unlikely that the volume of trade will ever come anywhere close to what New Delhi had originally anticipated. Nevertheless, PAKAFUZ arguably advances Russian strategic interests since its eventual completion will enable Moscow to more directly connect with South Asia via unimodal transport (rail) instead of NSTC's planned multimodal (land, sea) one. Should Pakistani-Indian relations ever improve, then it is possible to extend PAKAFUZ to India and thus actualize a 21st-century version of the Kosygin Plan. In the best-case scenario, PAKAFUZ might even inspire Moscow to more actively offer its diplomatic services to Islamabad and New Delhi with an aim towards achieving this best-case scenario in the interests of economic pragmatism.

Pakistan's New Geo-Economic Grand Strategy

Some readers might have been skeptical of the ambitious grand strategic connectivity vision put forth by the dissertation's author in this thesis, perhaps regarding it as political speculation or wishful thinking without much basis in Pakistani reality. Be that as it may, such concerns can officially be dismissed after Prime Minister Khan[341], Foreign Minister

[341] Khan I. Prime Minister Imran Khan Today Inaugurated the Islamabad Security Dialogue and Launched the

Shah Mahmood Qureshi[342], and Chief Of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa[343] jointly unveiled their country's new grand strategy of geo-economics during the inaugural Islamabad Security Dialogue on March 2021. They each spoke about the necessity of taking advantage of Pakistan's geostrategic potential to connect Eurasia, building upon CPEC in order to integrate their country with other regions in order to diversify their perceived dependence on its primary corridor. In other words, instead of just being a bridge to China for other countries as some cynics have described it as, Pakistan wants to use its Chinese-backed infrastructure as a springboard for building its own bridges with the rest of the world. This is exactly what the dissertation's author has been writing about for several years already and which was discussed in the previous section. This proves that the Pakistani leadership is embracing visionary proposals in order to accelerate their country's integration into the global economy and truly turn it into a global pivot state. PAKAFUZ/N-CPEC+ is the first embodiment of Pakistan's new official grand strategic policy of geo-economics, and it is expected that progress will also be made in the coming future along CPEC+'s other geographic vectors. it is just that the northern one is the most important for Pakistani policymakers because of their desire to contribute to Afghanistan's economic stability and expand their ties with the former Soviet Republics, first and foremost among them Russia.

Lavrov's Historic Visit To Pakistan

Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov became the first Russian Foreign Minister in 9 years to visit Pakistan when he arrived there in early April 2021. It was symbolic that he traveled to Islamabad directly from New Delhi since this strongly suggests that Moscow feels

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National Security Division’s Advisory Portal Connecting over 100 Think-Tanks and University Departments in Pakistan with Policy Makers [Electronic resource] // Prime Minister's Office | Islamic Republic Of Pakistan. 2022. 17 March. Mode of access: www.pmo.gov.pk/press_release_detailes.php?pr_id=3278.

[342] Qureshi S. M. Full Text of Keynote Speech by FM Shah Mahmood Qureshi at Islamabad Security Dialogue [Electronic resource] // Dispatch News Desk. 2021. 18 March. Mode of access: dnd.com.pk/full-text-of-keynote-speech-by-fm-shah-mahmood-qureshi-at-islamabad-security-dialogue/242148.

[343] Bajwa Q. J. Read: Full Text of Gen Bajwa's Speech at the Islamabad Security Dialogue [Electronic resource] // *Dawn.com.* 2021. 18 March. Mode of access: www.dawn.com/news/print/1613207.

confident enough with its new regional balancing policy to not have thought that India would be offended by incorporating its rival Pakistan into the same regional trip. The press conference[344] that he held with his counterpart saw him praising the South Asian country for its anti-terrorist successes and their joint diplomatic progress in attempting to politically resolve the Afghan War. Lavrov urged both sides to conclude an agreement on the North-South Gas Pipeline as soon as possible and also promised to provide anti-terrorist military equipment to Pakistan. This second-mentioned point is also very significant since it reinforces the observation that Russian-Pakistani ties are improving so rapidly due to the strategic dynamics that the author articulated throughout this thesis that Moscow does not believe that its promised arms shipments to Islamabad would negatively affect its relations with New Delhi. Military and political ties weren't all that was discussed during the press conference, however, since Lavrov also talked about bilateral trade. Russia's top diplomat noted that it grew by 45% to $700 but later added this is mostly attributable to Russia's $200 million wheat exports to Pakistan during the same year. With this in mind, he proposed diversifying economic relations and scaling them up, which is where PAKAFUZ/N-CPEC+ could obviously come into play upon its completion as was earlier analyzed. Taken together, the military, political, and economic issues that Lavrov discussed during his press conference in Islamabad show that there's certainly a solid basis nowadays upon which to build a more robust partnership with Pakistan.

The US' Military Withdrawal From Afghanistan

By pure coincidence, Biden announced shortly after Lavrov's trip to Pakistan later that same month that the US will fully withdraw its military from Afghanistan by September 11th[345]. He justified his continuation of former President Trump's plans on the grounds that

[344] Lavrov S. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's Remarks and Answers to Media Questions at a Joint News Conference with Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Islamabad, April 7, 2021 [Electronic resource] // The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 2021. 7 April. Mode of access: www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4666612.
[345] Biden J. Remarks by President Biden on the Way Forward in Afghanistan [Electronic resource] // The White House, The United States Government. 2021. 14 April. Mode of access: www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-

his country simply cannot continue fighting the Taliban forever. The American leader also claimed that it already achieved the anti-terrorist successes that it set out to accomplish after those terrorist attacks two decades ago since Al Qaeda's presence there has been destroyed. The prevailing uncertainty surrounding Afghanistan's post-withdrawal future will naturally compel Russia and Pakistan to strengthen their political and security coordination with one another. It also deserves mentioning that Prime Minister Khan unambiguously announced that he will "absolutely not" allow the US to have any bases in Pakistan for carrying out attacks in Afghanistan[346]. He also reportedly refused to meet with the CIA chief who paid a secret visit to his country[347], justifying this by saying that protocol demands that he only meet with his counterpart. It might perhaps be because of that snub that Biden had yet to speak to Prime Minister Khan by June 2021[348] despite being in office for nearly half a year by that time and obviously dependent on Pakistani cooperation to assist its post-withdrawal regional military plans in Afghanistan. Interestingly, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) refused to take Pakistan off of its grey list in June 2021 despite it having met 26 out of 27 required criteria[349], which could be an indirect form of punishment from the US for Pakistan declining to host its bases. Shortly after, the US added Pakistan to its list of child soldier recruiters[350]. From the looks of it, US-Pakistani relations are once again becoming more complicated, which could provide additional strategic openings for Russia. Moreover, Pakistan's unprecedented decision to not continue being the US' regional proxy speaks to its increasingly independent foreign policy which also aligns with Russian interests. It might even be that

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room/speeches-remarks/2021/04/14/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-way-forward-in-afghanistan/.

[346] 'Absolutely Not': PM Imran Khan on Giving Pakistani Bases to US for Afghanistan Operations [Electronic resource] // The News International. 2021. 19 June. Mode of access: www.thenews.com.pk/latest/851990-bases-to-cia-pm-imran-khan-says-no-to-us.

[347] Syed B. S. CIA Chief Told Drone Bases Won't Be Hosted [Electronic resource] // *Dawn.com.* 2021. 9 June. Mode of access: www.dawn.com/news/1628311.

[348] Yousaf K. 'Internal Review' Delays Biden-Imran Contact [Electronic resource] // The Express Tribune. 2021. 31 May. Mode of access: tribune.com.pk/story/2302562/internal-review-delays-biden-imran-contact.

[349] Kiani K. Pakistan to Stay on FATF Grey List for Another Year [Electronic resource] // Dawn.com. 2021. 26 June. Mode of access: www.dawn.com/news/1631498.

[350] Iqbal A. US Adds Pakistan, Turkey to Child Soldier Recruiter List [Electronic resource] // Dawn.com. 2021. 2 July. Mode of access: www.dawn.com/news/amp/1632676.

Pakistan felt somewhat emboldened by its developing relations with Russia to not have to submit to American demands anymore since it no longer sees the strategic utility in doing so. Islamabad is also obviously angered by Washington's newly established comprehensive strategic partnership with New Delhi so that might have played a role in its calculations as well.

The Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline

Russia and Pakistan finally inked an agreement to construct the Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline in late May 2021[351]. This multibillion-dollar infrastructure project will serve as the flagship of bilateral economic cooperation. This development confirms three important observations that the dissertation's author has been discussing throughout the thesis: there's veritably a mutual desire to expand Russian-Pakistani trade ties; Pakistan is sincerely interested in strategically engaging with Russia, including in the energy sphere where Moscow's expertise is world-renowned; and Russia is not worried any longer about how India would view its ties with Pakistan. As the proverbial icing on the cake, Pakistani Foreign Minister Qureshi told his Russian counterpart a few weeks later during their next phone call in June 2021 that "relations with Russia are a key priority for Pakistan's foreign policy" according to the Pakistani Foreign Ministry's press release of their conversation[352]. Later that same month, the Pakistani and Russian National Security Advisors held a meeting on the sidelines of the SCO one at the time in Tajikistan where they "expressed resolve to deepen and diversify the bilateral relationship."[353] There should no longer be any question about the sincerity of each country to comprehensively expand relations with one another despite the US and India's concerns. This adds credence to the primary thesis of the

[351] Russia, Pakistan Sign Pakistan Stream Pipeline Construction Protocol [Electronic resource] // TASS. 2021. 28 May. Mode of access: tass.com/economy/1295501.

[352] Telephone Call between the Foreign Minister of Pakistan and the Foreign Minister of Russia, 14 June 2021 [Electronic resource] // Ministry of Foreign Affairs | Government Of Pakistan. 2021. 14 June. Mode of access: mofa.gov.pk/telephone-call-between-the-foreign-minister-of-pakistan-and-the-foreign-minister-of-russia-14-june-2021/.

[353] Pakistan, Russia Express Resolved to Deepen, Diversify Bilateral Relationship [Electronic resource] // Radio Pakistan. 2021. 23 June. Mode of access: www.radio.gov.pk/23-06-2021/pakistan-russia-express-resolved-to-deepen-diversify-bilateral-relationship.

dissertation's author that the Russian-Pakistani partnership will continue growing into the future and might ultimately come to have strategic dimensions with time, though of course provided that a realistic blueprint can be agreed upon to facilitate this, ergo the research's intent as was earlier explained in the Introduction.

Russia Endorses Central Asian-South Asian Connectivity

The penultimate development in bilateral relations in 2021 occurred when Foreign Minister Lavrov endorsed Central Asian-South Asian connectivity as key to Russia's Greater Eurasian Partnership during his keynote speech at a topical conference in Tashkent in July 2021. The top diplomat said that "We are regarding the issue of connectivity between Central and South Asia primarily through the prism of the integration processes that have picked up high dynamism throughout the Eurasian region. Russia has been consistently in favour of forming the Greater Eurasian Partnership, a congregative integration contour in the entire space from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific, one that is maximally free for the movement of goods, capital, the workforce and services and open, without exception, to all the countries of our common continent, Eurasia, and the integration unions created there, including the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations...In this broad context, higher connectivity between Central and South Asia is opening new vistas for the development of trade, economic and investment processes on the Eurasian continent...At the same time, the further development of mutually beneficial ties between Central and South Asian states and their neighbours in the investment, infrastructure, humanitarian and other spheres will help to promote unification processes in Eurasia and also in a broader political context. Russia is interested in promoting this constructive agenda."[354] This policy promulgation confirms the thesis' relevance and shows

[354] Lavrov S. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's Remarks at a Plenary Session of the International Conference Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity. Challenges and Opportunities, Tashkent, July 16, 2021 [Electronic resource] // The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. 2021. 16 July. Mode of access: www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4814877.

how seriously Russia intends to advance the primary proposal contained therein with respect to pioneering a trans-Afghan corridor for connecting itself with Pakistan and thenceforth the rest of South Asia.

President Putin Calls Prime Minister Khan

Lastly, President Putin initiated a call with Prime Minister Khan on 25 August to discuss Afghanistan's future following Kabul's fall to the Taliban earlier that month[355]. The two sides agreed to work more closely on coordinating their policy towards that ground and its de facto leaders whom Moscow still officially designates as terrorists despite pragmatically engaging with them in the interests of peace and security. The two leaders also pledged to intensify contacts at various levels as well as further develop their trade and economic ties. This development was very important because Biden had yet to call Prime Minister Khan despite depending on transit through his country's airspace to make the West's panicked withdrawal from Kabul possible, which shows that President Putin is treating his Pakistani counterpart with more respect than the American leader is even though Pakistan is still nominally the US' "Major Non-NATO Ally". Furthermore, the very fact that President Putin initiated this call shows that Russia is deferring to Pakistan's decades of expertise in dealing with Afghanistan's de facto leaders, the Taliban, which signals that Moscow has come to rely on Islamabad with respect to ensuring its regional security interests in the region. This adds an undeniably strategic dimension to their relations and can lead to the two sides coming to trust one another even more than ever before as a result of their close coordination in Afghanistan.

[355] Telephone Conversation with Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan [Electronic resource] // President of Russia. 2021. 25 August. Mode of access: en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66461.

CONCLUSION

According to the results of the study, the following can be stated:

1. Current international context of multipolarity was determined to be very complex since the unipolarity that succeeded the Old Cold War-era bipolarity has yet to fully decentralize into the system that Russian officials assume is already in effect[356]. Rather, it appears as though the world is somewhere in between a new bipolarity and a forming multipolarity. This state of contemporary affairs is characterized by the global competition between the superpowers of the US and China, though other players such as Russia and

[356] Лавров счел тщетными попытки остановить развитие центров многополярности// РБК. Режим доступа: https://www.rbc.ru/politics/27/01/2023/63d316379a79476461e6e74b (дата обращения 11.04.2023).

India have since assumed more prominent roles than before as influential Great Powers. The latter two also interestingly seem to be contemplating pooling their efforts into jointly leading the Neo-NAM, which could facilitate the emergence of a tripolar system that could in turn ease the eventual transition into a multipolar world order with time.

2. As for the contours of Russia's balancing act in Eurasia, particularly between China and India, Moscow feels uncomfortable with its growing strategic dependence on Beijing after the West pushed it away following Crimea's reunification in 2014, hence why it is since reinvigorated its relations with their fellow BRICS and SCO member India as a friendly counterbalance that became all the more impossible to deny upon the outcome of the Eastern Economic Forum in 2019. The challenge that this policy poses, however, is to avoid inadvertently sparking a security dilemma with China while simultaneously keeping India's pro-American pivot in check so as to prevent it from destabilizing Eurasia, which is where the strategic importance of improving Russian-Pakistani relations is pertinent because it would enable Moscow to perfect its balancing act between Beijing and New Delhi per its aforementioned interests regarding each of them.

3. The opportunities to do so are geopolitical and integration-related. The first concerns the application of the "Fifth Player Theory" in enacting the paradigm change of transforming the Russia-China-India-US quartet into a quintet by more openly recognizing Pakistan as an equal player in this "concert of powers" like it already de-facto is, which would then open up more possibilities for Moscow to balance between the different axes once the one between itself and Islamabad is formally created. About the second-mentioned opportunity, this involves Russia's participation in N-CPEC+ (whether under that name or a different one) as the most pragmatic modality for fulfilling President Putin's plans of integrating the EAEUwith BRI. As for the limitations constraining their progress towards a strategic partnership, Russia and Pakistan must both have the political will to make up for lost time. Islamabad is much more eager to do this in a comprehensive sense than Moscow is, though the latter could be inspired to pick up the pace upon coming to appreciate the significance of the two opportunities that were just summarized. Another

limitation that deserves to be mentioned is that Russia will have to devise a formula for improving ties with Pakistan in parallel with maintaining its strategic partnership with India, which naturally entails yet another dimension of its Eurasian-wide balancing act.

4. Regarding the task to recontextualize Russian-Pakistani relations in the current international context of multipolarity, the South Asian state is the last former rival of significance in Eurasia with which Moscow has yet to enter into a meaningful comprehensive rapprochement. Germany, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, China, and even Japan -- all of which have historically been Russia's rivals in one way or another at different stages of history, especially the comparatively recent one -- are now increasingly close, and in some cases even strategic, partners with Moscow, yet the same cannot be said about Pakistan, though that's not due to any fault of Islamabad's own but is attributable to a combination of factors such as the length of time that it took for them to finally find some common ground with one another (i.e. Afghanistan) and the influence that India has over Russia (e.g. "informal lobbyists" in the diplomatic and think tank communities). Without a meaningful partnership with Pakistan, Russia's balancing act between China and India will riskily remain imperfect, and its envisaged grand strategic goal of building the Greater Eurasian Partnership will never be completed. Should Russia decide to move in this direction, however, then it would accelerate the global systemic transition from US-Chinese bipolarity to multipolarity via the tripolarity that could be brought about by itself and India through the Neo-NAM that would then be internally balanced by a meaningful partnership with Pakistan, which would also serve to facilitate Russia's trans-regional integration plans of the Greater Eurasian Partnership by advancing North-South connectivity from as far north as the Arctic through Central Asia to as far south as Pakistan's Arabian Sea coastline through N-CPEC+, which conceptually represents the 21st-century spiritual successor of the 1960s Kosygin Plan.

5. The last task that was set out to be achieved was to provide policy recommendations for improving bilateral relations and creating the strategic partnership that the author calls "Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar", the outline of which will now be presented based upon the

author's August 2018 article for Oriental Review titled "The Roadmap For 'Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar'"[357]. That 20-point plan will now be cited in full, followed by some further recommendations based off of the completed dissertation:

Socio-Economic:

- Popularize the slogan Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar in order to make both publics aware of this new friendship and increase interest in learning more about it.
- Sign agreements for more academic exchanges and possibly even visa-free travel so that interested individuals in both countries can have more opportunities to learn about one another.
- Explore the potential for information cooperation between publicly financed & private media outlets and possibly even the creation of a new joint multimedia platform.
- Establish Friendship Centers in one another's countries in order to manage socio-economic and cultural exchanges as well as to serve as points of contact for each country's interested citizens.
- Promote economic ties on the micro-, mid-, and macro-levels, facilitated by the Friendship Centers and Pakistan's proposed membership in the Eurasian Development Bank, and engage entrepreneurs.

Technical-Infrastructural:

- Develop an economic presence in Gwadar that may or may not be openly affiliated with CPEC.
- Link the North-South gas pipeline with the prospective Iran-Pakistan-India one and consider expanding this network to China.
- Streamline physical connectivity through a three-pronged Russian-Pakistani Economic Corridor (RPEC) that transits through Azerbaijan & Iran, Central Asia, and China.
- Enter into peaceful nuclear energy cooperation with one another.

[357] Korybko A. The Roadmap For 'Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar.' [Electronic resource]// Oriental Review. 2018. 10 August. Mode of access: https://orientalreview.org/2018/08/10/the-roadmap-for-rusi-pakistani-yaar-yaar/.

- Reach for the stars by inking space and satellite cooperation agreements.

Diplomatic:

- Expand cooperation between prestigious think tanks such as the Valdai Club and Pakistan House in order to strengthen Track II diplomacy.
- Continue to advance a political solution to the War on Afghanistan by including the Taliban in the Moscow peace process and rebranding them as a "National Liberation/Resistance Movement".
- Reach an understanding whereby neither country challenges one another at international fora (especially regarding the Nuclear Suppliers Group, Crimea/Syria, and Kashmir issues).
- Build trust to the point where both parties feel comfortable enough openly cooperating with one another at international fora on topics of shared interest (e.g. Afghanistan, Silk Road, Iran).
- Unveil a coordinated sanctions relief strategy for Iran and one another (especially in the event that the US sanctions Pakistan for CPEC) and remove administrative barriers to trade.

Military:

- Concentrate on replacing the void left by their traditional Indian and American partners expanding cooperation with one another at their expense but stress that strengthened ties aren't against them.
- Take anti-terrorist cooperation to the next level by expanding the Russian-Pakistani drills to include a trilateral Tajik component.
- Broaden naval cooperation to the point where the export of Russia's Kalbr cruise missile-armed Project 22800 corvettes is a realistic possibility.
- Consider signing a deal for Russia to export Su-35s and T-90s to Pakistan in order to buttress its air and land capabilities.
- Think deeply about the long-term mutually beneficial "balancing" advantages that

the sale of S-400 anti-missile defense systems would reap.

Strategic:

- Rely on coordinated diplomatic and informational means to thwart the forthcoming US-Indian infowar against them but do so defensively without going on the joint (key word) offensive against either.
- Leverage their expanding relations, especially in the economic sphere, in order to bargain for the most competitive Silk Road deals from China.
- Brainstorm ways that their maritime cooperation in the Afro-Asian Ocean could be used as the basis for formulating a comprehensive joint approach to Africa, especially in the Horn of Africa region.
- Go on the initiative to jointly engage the many transit states between them in order to get all stakeholders involved in the Golden Ring vision and its attendant sub-component of RPEC.
- Pursue the most symbolic crowning achievement of Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar by scheduling the reciprocal visits of President Putin and PM Khan to one another’s countries."

RPEC includes N-CPEC+ (RuPak), and that progress on these connectivity initiatives should be advanced through the creation of a multilateral working group between Russia, Pakistan, and the other countries that are pursuing this goal. As for the financial aspect of their partnership through Pakistan's proposed membership in the Eurasian Development Bank, this might not be possible owing to Armenia's refusal to agree unless the South Asian state first recognizes it, so bilateral or other multilateral channels should be pursued instead. On the topic of anti-terrorist cooperation, China and the post-war authorities in Afghanistan (whoever they end up being) could be included in their presently bilateral drills at a later date alongside already-proposed Tajikistan in order for all parties to get the most out of these exercises.

There are other recommendations to be made too in light of the insight revealed by the

research. Russia should more broadly explore the possibilities of participating in other CPEC+ projects, especially S-CPEC+ given its recent "Return to Africa" following the first-ever Russia-Africa Summit that was held in Sochi in October 2019. It should also institutionalize the new Multipolar Trilateral (Pakistan-Russia-China, PRC) through yearly meetings, just as it should do the same with a more formalized post-war Astana arrangement between itself, Iran, and Turkey. The latter proposal could then naturally be broadened to include Pakistan, which is involved in both PRC and the Multipolar CENTO proposal between itself and the second-mentioned Muslim-majority countries, thus forming the basis for holding meetings between all of them (and eventually the seven nations between them) under the umbrella of the Golden Ring, which could even be broadened to include Russia and Pakistan's close partner Azerbaijan as well seeing as how it is a member of the ECO that all the others except for Russia and China are a part of. Regular expert meetings focused on this grand integration initiative could be convened between their think tanks and possibly hosted by the Valdai Club under the name GREEN, which stands for the Golden Ring Exploratory and Engagement Network.

Wrapping everything up, the dissertation will now assess whether the five hypothesis that were proposed in the Introduction were proven or not.

1. International Relations are transitioning from unipolarity to multipolarity: Partially Proven

The overall direction of International Relations is trending away from unipolarity but moving closer towards bipolarity than multipolarity, though Russia and India might be able to usher in a period of tripolarity if the proposed Neo-NAM is successful.

2. China's Belt & Road Initiative is the catalyst of change most responsible for shaping the new system: Proven

BRI, especially CPEC, has permanently changed Eurasian geopolitics, particularly in South Asia and the broader Russia-China-India-US quartet by simultaneously challenging the US' global leadership model and also inadvertently creating a security dilemma with India that America is trying to exploit in a Kissingerian fashion.

3. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has turned Pakistan into a geostrategic pivot state: Proven

CPEC by itself is significant enough to make Pakistan a geostratgic pivot state, while the potential CPEC+ corridors that could branch off from it along the northern, western, and southern directions amplify its significance in the ongoing global systemic transition and can contribute to shaping its ultimate outcome.

4. Russia is pursuing a policy of multipolar balancing to make itself the irreplaceable stabilizer in Eurasia: Partially Proven

There's no doubt that Russia is balancing between China and India with the intent of stabilizing Eurasia, though its policy is presently imperfect and thus runs the risk of further destabilizing affairs if its recent recalibration in favor of India creates an uncontrollable security dilemma with China.

5. The strengthening of Russian-Pakistani relations will enable both countries to shape the future world order: Proven

Russian-Pakistani relations, through the "Fifth Player Theory", can be the paradigm changer for transforming the Russia-China-India-US quartet into a quintet in which this axis could be the kingmaker. In addition, joint progress on N-CPEC+ could create a new center of integration gravity in Eurasia, specifically its Central Asian Heartland, that serves as a catalyst for completing Russia's envisaged Greater Eurasian Partnership.

In conclusion, Russian-Pakistani relations in the era of multipolar balancing are pivotal if Moscow is to perfect its balancing act between Beijing and New Delhi as well as advance its vision of the Greater Eurasian Partnership, both of which would represent paradigm changes that prevent it from being marginalized by many of the larger processes that mostly remain beyond its control at the moment in the ongoing global systemic transition. Pakistan is the missing piece for completing the Greater Eurasian Partnership, and its recognition as an equal player in the Russia-China-India-US quartet like it already de-facto is would open up new balancing opportunities for Moscow that could ultimately be leveraged to make it indispensable to ensuring Eurasian stability in accordance with its

21st-century grand strategy. Geopolitical balancing through the "Fifth Player Theory" could thus be paired with the economic benefits that stand to be derived from N-CPEC+, thus making "Rusi-Pakistani Yaar Yaar" the epitome of pragmatism for both parties. The failure to seize this opportunity could lead to Russia's presently imperfect balancing act between China and India inadvertently backfiring with uncertain consequences for Eurasian stability, just as it could also lead to the Greater Eurasian Partnership never reaching its full potential with similarly uncertain consequences. it is therefore incumbent upon Russia's policy influencers and decision makers to seriously consider intensifying relations with Pakistan to the eventual point of a strategic partnership in order for both countries to reap the mutually beneficial dividends that would also greatly contribute to stabilizing Eurasia during these unpredictable times.

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