

Chapter 1: Introduction

As we know, the term "China's peaceful rise" was widely introduced at the 2003 annual session of Boao Forum for Asia (BFA). But, the origins of the "China's Peaceful Rise" theory can be traced further back to an April 1998 book by Chinese strategic scholar Yan Xue-tong and three of his colleagues, focusing on how China could accomplish its rise as a world power without starting another cold war. This seemingly benign theory was designed to counter fears of a "China threat" by portraying Beijing as a power that intends to rise peacefully without posing a danger to the rest of the world. But it also carries a stinger in its tail, with the unspoken corollary that any attempts by the US to prevent China's rise would be interpreted as a hostile act.

Russia's attitude toward China embodies how the above-mentioned theories affect the pragmatic relationship between China and Russia. Together with China's rise, Sino-Russian relations have steadily improved since the 1990s. China and Russia complement each other perfectly and have even participated in joint military exercises. This relationship is much different than that during the Cold War, when China allied with the United States to counter the Soviet Union, which China feared. Nevertheless, today's Russia is profoundly ambivalent about China, as many Russians express their concerns about the growing economic and military power of China and how Sino-Russian cooperation will be limited, especially because of the potential threat of China to Russia's Far East regions. Basically, the Sino-Russian relationship lays its foundation upon their deep ties in geo-politics, territorial security, and economic interests. Most importantly, it is an intended mutual dependence, as a Russian-Chinese balance against the United States.

Therefore, Sino-Russian relations should always be viewed in a historical context surrounding the Western engagements of both. It is with this historical view in mind that this

thesis shows that many of the factors currently improving Sino-Russian relations are unlikely to sustain the current positive relationship and instead are likely to cause a divergence in their relationship. By looking at the hidden factors from apparent clues I determine that many of the factors that seem to bring the two countries closer instead have the potential to cause a divergence between the two countries in near future.

For instance, as Russians have been disappointed by some pro-western policies in the past few years, such as NATO's eastern expansion and the US-led NATO intervention in Kosovo, nationalism in Russia plays a primary role in seeking to restore Russian influence in the former Soviet regions. Consequently, since the early 2000s, Russia started a shift toward the East aimed at implementing the "dual-track diplomacy" toward both the East and the West. As a result, Russia no longer emerges with proactive responses to western influences on many issues, and focuses instead upon a China-oriented policy, by objecting the NATO's proposed expansion and demonstrating its diplomatic independence on the intervention in Kosovo in 1999, and by making Sino-Russian relations its foreign policy priority.

However, with the rapid growth of China's economy, the trade relationship between China and Russia has gradually become imbalanced in China's favor and has deteriorated the normalization and symmetry of the Sino-Russian relationship. Such imbalance might have gotten worse as Washington intentionally became closer with China in the immediate aftermath of September 11th. Under such circumstances, Russia, as a nation capable of patently affecting China's national security with strong military forces and a 4,300-km shared border with China, might raise the historically unresolved issues of ideological aversion, border disputes, and military confrontation in the future since the power imbalance between Russia and China is growing rapidly both in economical and international terms.

In addition, China's imports of energy supplies are growing fast due to its booming economic development, making China the second largest importer globally and the largest

importer in Asia. The growth of dependence on imported sources of energy, particularly oil, reminds Chinese leaders about their country's economic vulnerability, especially in the absence of a strategic oil stockpiling capacity. In consideration of possible measures aimed at achieving greater energy security, bilateral trade of energy between China and Russia draws high attention and gives rise to discussion among Chinese policymakers and the public at large. However, as every country, regardless of whether it imports or exports energy, aims at protecting its own national energy security interests, it is highly questionable whether such energy cooperation will stabilize or destabilize Sino-Russian relations in the future.

Notwithstanding the foregoing topics, however, on the Taiwan Strait issue, Russian realists came to represent the mainstream opinion of Russia's foreign policy towards China, asserting the priority of national interest and multilateral relations by supporting 'One-China Policy' against Taiwan. In spite of this emphasis on a Sino-Russian military alliance, as well as a number of declarations in favor of China's Taiwan policy, President Putin reiterated that the primary objective of Russia's foreign policy is to enhance its own national security and economic development. As a result, Putin always embarked on policies that kept Russia's interests in mind, addressing disputed issues such as the construction of a Siberian pipeline, the bilateral trade imbalance, the import of Chinese goods, and the development of Sino-Russian military-technical cooperation.

The Committee on National Security Policy in Russia concludes that Russia shall not intervene in the thorny Sino-US relations, in order to maintain the Sino-Russian strategic partnership, as the avoidance of conflict has been one of the primary principles set forth in the foreign policy of Russia in these years, especially in those regions that Russia's economic development relies on heavily. Since the current mission of Russia's foreign policy focuses on stabilizing relations with western powers and obtaining adequate investment from the West to revive its declining economy, it is ostensible that Russia will not damage its relations

with US and the West even though it maintains a pro-China policy vis-à-vis Taiwan. However, Taiwan and Russia have economic ties with a trade volume amounting to approximately \$2 billion per year, making Russia reluctant to sacrifice relations with US, the West, or Taiwan simply by supporting China's military threat against Taiwan.

Besides the possibility that the Sino-Russian rapprochement will intensify in response to the power asymmetries between these two countries, United States will not let an intimate Sino-Russian relationship affect its status of world hegemon. For military strategy regarding national security, the United States will make every effort to alleviate the Sino-Russian bilateral axis as a counterbalance to the US so that neither China nor Russia will be able to challenge US power superiority in the short to middle term. This US presence will significantly destabilize Sino-Russian relations.

It should be also acknowledged that China's and Russia's interests coincide on a number of issues, most notably in trade (especially the arms and energy trade), security and border issues (as manifested with the establishment of the Shanghai Five mechanism in 1996); nevertheless, since Sino-Russian relations improved in the 1990s, military co-operation has been the most enduring component of Sino-Russian partnership. However, *Defense Journal* recently pointed that the military co-operation between China and Russia is nearing its end. Russia's weapon-purchasing policy for Beijing is an "absurd tragedy", the journal indicated. The journal further pointed that, even though China imported a huge number of advanced weapon systems from Russia in past decades, China is trying to cut off Sino-Russian ties of military co-operation and is starting to produce the weapons themselves, which really nettled Russia government.² But in fact, what Russia exports to China is not the most advanced weaponry they have, rather it is weaponry that is at least 15-years behind the latest Russian weapons, since both countries do not have real trust in their relationships and never have.

²中俄軍售快玩完了，聯合報，2007年3月21日。"The Decline of Sino-Russian Military Sales", Lian He Bao. (UDN News) March 21, 2007.

On the other hand, the rapid economic development over the past several decades has not only made China a major economy in the world but has also provided a strong foundation for the military modernization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The PLA's modernization has allowed China to increase its military power in East Asia and to accumulate the potential to challenge US hegemony in the future. Recently, America and China have been trading barbs over the issue of China's expanding military power. On June 4, 2005, while attending the IISS Asia Security Conference (Shangri-La Dialogue) in Singapore, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld openly criticized China, questioning why China keeps investing so much on military expenditure and expanding its missiles forces when no nation currently threatens China.

In July, Zhu Chenghu, a PLA General, expressed that China is prepared to use nuclear weapons against the US if attacked by Washington during a confrontation over Taiwan. Though the US response to Zhu's comments was low-profile, there is no evidence to show that the strategic competition between Beijing and Washington is getting more intense. There should be no doubt that the balancing dynamics between China and Russia are driven to a large extent by US policies, so the response to such intense language by the US Government would be regarded as one of the external cruxes that might influence Sino-Russian relations.

1.1 Motivation and Purpose

China and Russia are two of the biggest superpowers in the world, and the relations of the two countries have been widely researched since China's rise. It becomes more and more apparent that the triangular relations between China, Russia and the US influences the global community. The Chinese government announced its "peaceful rising" theory to counter the impact of the "China threat" theory because as China becomes stronger, more countries would like to believe that China won't threaten the rest of the world.

Numerous attempts have been made by scholars (especially Chinese scholars) to demonstrate that the improving relations between China and Russia will continue get better and better after 1990s, but I believe that their relationship is likely to diverge from the current congenial and untrusting relationship due to both the internal and external international environments for each country. Thus I explore a further possibility, which to the best of my knowledge has never been examined, that there are many circumstances that may drive Sino-Russian relations to diverge. In this thesis I hope to exemplify a few related points and predict what circumstances have the potential of causing such a divergence.

I was led to choose this thesis topic after taking the course Sino-Russian Relations with Professor Wang Ding-Shu. In that course I read many books and articles that said that Sino-Russian relations are currently improving and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. For many scholars, China's rise combined with Russia's market needs for low cost goods and Russia's ability to provide China with some of its energy needs make this a great partnership, not to mention their strong military trade which has grown considerably during China's rise since the fall of the Soviet Union.

I disagreed with some of these thoughts. I continued to read books and articles about Sino-Russian relations and came to the conclusion that their close relationship is unlikely to last. China and Russia have never been friendly neighbors. History has shown that they have had conflict after conflict and even among comrades under communism their relationship was still strained. Why else would China ally with the United States to counter the Soviet Union in the 1970s? I think history is a good judge of the future and through my research will show the why this current positive state of Sino-Russian relations is unlikely to last.

1.2 Hypothesis and Framework

Throughout history, Sino-Russian relations has always been influenced by the two countries' inter and outer forces of international changes. For example, China and Russia

proclaimed the “unbreakable friendship” of Stalin and Mao in the early 1950s, yet they ended up with the Sino-Soviet split in late 1950s, and again, in late 1960s. It should be noted that, except for a handful of CIA analysts, few people were able to predict the Sino-Soviet split in late 1950s and 1960s, but were instead misled into believing the rhetoric used by Stalin and Mao. Although now we are facing different entities than the Communist USSR and Communist PRC of the past, this historic lesson should serve as a reminder of accessing the future of Sino-Russian relations. Therefore, even though Sino-Russian relations are getting better and they improving their cooperation in certain aspects, I believe that Sino-Russian relations will get worse in the future after China become strong enough to threaten Russian national interests. Therefore my hypothesis is: Factors that have brought China and Russia closer in recent years have the potential to cause divergence in their relationship.

I will prove this hypothesis and my rationale for it in the following chapters. Chapter 2 is my literature review, where I will summarize the past research on Sino-Russian relations. Chapter 3 will explain the methodology I use. Chapter 4 will discuss the recent history of Sino-Russian relations (during the past 50 years). Chapter 5 will introduce the theory of “China’s Peaceful Rise” and also the “China Threat” theory and will compare and contrast the two. Chapter 6 will discuss future potential divergence in Sino-Russian relations and the factors causing such divergence. Chapter 7 is my conclusion.