

# Politics of Conflict and Cooperation in Eurasia



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## CHAPTER ONE

# PERPETUAL HOSTILITIES? AGENTS AND STRUCTURES OF COOPERATION IN CENTRAL EURASIA

HUSREV TABAK AND ALI IHSAN KAHRAMAN

The projections in the West regarding the post-Cold War world order, while declaring the absolute victory and unrivaled position of neoliberalism, described post-Soviet Eurasia as a space doomed to experience everlasting conflict, turmoil, and war.<sup>1</sup> While the Eurasian mainland has been seen as destined to the instability, insecurity, and uncertainty arising from this, the normative quality of political discourses and the capability of regional agents or structures to advance peacebuilding or conflict management have been ruled out. These arguments stem from (i) an intrinsic Western-centric bias in mainstream international political writing, (ii) the dominance of the neorealist research paradigm in theorizing about world and regional politics, and (iii) the reductionist geopolitical approaches that attribute causal qualities to geography (based on the argument that geography is destiny).

The Western-centric bias is a result of ethnocentrism in written discourse on world politics, which has not only attributed a superior quality to the normative and order-building capabilities of the West, but also marginalized, excluded, and silenced non-Western experiences and

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance R. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy* (Atlantic Monthly, 1994); A.L. Friedberg, *Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia* (International Security, 1994); B. Buzan and G. Segal, *Rethinking East Asian Security* (Survival, 1994); R. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post-Cold War* (New York: Random House, 2000). Another version of this argument suggests that the post-Soviet “frozen” conflicts in Eurasia are not so frozen – meaning that they will eventually re-erupt. There are several think tank reports and analyses on this, such as those produced by the researchers of the Pulitzer Center and the Atlantic Council.

histories of world and regional orders (Acharya 2000, 2001). Such ethnocentrism has long been a core tendency in the West<sup>2</sup> – for instance, in the scope of orientalism studies – yet, in the contemporary world, this has become a mainstream mode of thinking. In the post-Cold War context, the non-Western world has been accordingly thought of as being in a state of conflictual anarchy, in which states experience a “total lack of good life” and where states’ basic motive is *survival* (Acharya and Buzan 2007, 287–312). This sense that there is no hope for non-Western stories and lifestyles therefore has sustained the epistemological hegemony of the West established throughout the last two centuries and has materialized both *West* and *non-West* as actually existing societal representations on which to build policies.

Within the scope of the neorealist bias – the dominant research paradigm in thinking about world politics and regional politics – it is suggested that the Eurasian mainland and East Asian region is more prone than other parts of the world to seeing the escalation of conflicts into military wars. This is because, “given its rising great powers,” the region is “ripe for conflict”, as four important nuclear powers (China, Russia, the U.S., and North Korea) are engaged in conflicting power plays and projections within the region and the military spending of the regional countries is rapidly increasing (Christensen 1999; Roy 1994, 1996). Moreover, within the region there is a lack of security organizations or other formalized conflict management mechanisms to prevent existing tensions and disputes from escalating into violence, and/or to resolve them and build peace (Rozman 2011). Leading political scientist Zbigniew Brzezinski confirmed this, arguing that Asian powers are in constant rivalry as the European colonialist powers were in the 19th century, resulting in the Eurasian countries’ failure to establish a regional alliance as Atlantic powers have managed to do. To Brzezinski, the competition between Asian powers which possess nuclear weapons may have destructive effects, imperiling regional stability and peaceful development, and this conflictual environment may eventually lead these powers to become involved in war-like experiences, as European states did in the last two hundred years (Brzezinski 2012, 21). These neorealist perspectives clearly both rule out the possibility of peaceful and harmonious relations

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<sup>2</sup> Here the West is not a geographical signifier; it rather refers to a way of thinking which is common in thinking about non-Western experiences and about histories in non-Western geographical settings, and which is mostly an elite endeavor. For a critique of such an endeavor in Turkey, see Ahmet Davutoğlu’s influential work on civilizational self-perceptions; A. Davutoğlu, *Medeniyetlerin Ben-idraki* (Divan: İlmi Araştırmalar Dergisi, 1997).



within the region, and suggest that an additional reason for armament is to counterbalance *Western* interventions; we will come to this below.

The third bias this paper draws attention to in thinking about the dynamics of conflict in Eurasia is the tendency to think of “geography as destiny,” suggesting that conflicts within the region cannot be avoided and therefore should be perpetually expected. Within the scope of such a bias, it is suggested, for instance, that the geography Russia and China share dictates that there is “a perennially tense relationship between” these two countries (Kaplan 2012, 171); India and China are “destined by geography to be rivals” (Kaplan 2012, 206); Iran, as “geography dictates[,] ... will be pivotal” particularly in Central Asian countries (Kaplan 2012, 280), making rivalry among powerful countries in the region more probable; and the Middle East is a “chaotic” geography in the heart of Eurasia destined to be ruled by anarchy (Kaplan 2012, 326). The legacies of geography, along with history and culture, will therefore, it is suggested, set limits on the accomplishment of peace and define potential conflicts in central Eurasia<sup>3</sup>.

As a challenge to such tendencies (Western-centric, neorealist, and geographically reductionist) in thinking about world and regional politics, this paper argues that there are ever-growing, historically present, and promising efforts taking place both in individual states and at sub-regional and regional levels to build sustained peace, harmony, and reconciliation within Eurasia. There are, accordingly, various grounded normative world imaginations and discourses informing such peace efforts, produced by both individual agents and regional structures within central Eurasia. These imaginations challenge the determinism around history and geography on the one hand, and on the other offer normative frames that are an alternative to the Western epistemological hegemony over thinking about conflicting and reconciling behaviors within the region. This paper examines these efforts and projections toward building a region or regions of peace and cooperation within Eurasia.

Following this introductory critique of the Western-centric and reductionist account of thinking on world politics, the paper initially discusses the dynamics of conflicting behaviors within central Eurasia with reference to historical and contemporary discordant encounters. This is followed by a section introducing the multiple peace projections for central Eurasia produced by individual countries and regional organizations as alternatives to the Western-centric approaches to conflict

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<sup>3</sup> This deterministic quality of geography is defended in another recent work; see T. Marshall, *Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps that Explain Everything about the World* (New York: Scribner, 2015)

prevention, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution and disregard for *vernacular* normative projections. The paper concludes with a discussion on the possibility of harmonizing divergent and plural peace discourses and projections within Eurasia.

## **Conflict Dynamics within Central Eurasia**

The biases making the mainstream thinking on Eurasian politics hopeless in terms of peace are fed by the numerous – in fact, vast numbers of – historical and contemporary military conflicts that the region has experienced, mostly sparked by territorial disputes. Yet, to say the last first, none of the conflicts listed below could ever be scaled up to be a “world war” comparable to the European conflicts that ravaged the northern hemisphere in the last century (in fact, even if there had been one, due to the dominance of Western-centric epistemologies on world politics, it would likely have been called not a world war but rather a regional war).

Historically speaking, the wars between China and Japan in the early 20th century, especially after the Meiji restoration era, were a prime example of militarization and discontent in Eurasian politics, and China’s recent increasing military investments have been interpreted as a policy of the same kind a century later. But while China and Japan were involved in military conflicts, the relations between China and (Soviet) Russia, for instance, were quite peaceful in comparison to the relations between the European powers in the last century. Albeit that their relations were relatively weak and that they even came to the brink of war in the late 1960s due to border disputes, their power play was mostly focused on the leadership of the communist and anti-capitalist bloc (Calabrese 1991). After the Soviet Union’s demise, the two countries demilitarized the borders over which relations had once been tense, and since then they have been cooperating in several domains with obvious efforts to avoid hostility. The India–China border dispute over the Bhutan–China–India tri-boundary point (*the Doklam dispute*) led to military engagement in 1962 and to occasional clashes for decades thereafter, and it continues to be an issue of contention. Yet it has not led to all-out war between the two regional powers, and for quite a while there have been several diplomatic processes initiated by third parties and regional organizations to prevent a possible full-blown conflict, as seen in the standoff at Doklam (The Hindu 2017), although the latter caused the emergence of a sense of mistrust between the countries (Lidarev, 2018). Therefore, notwithstanding the frequently mentioned resemblance between the current territorial disputes

in Asia and 19th-century European conflicts<sup>4</sup>, territorial disputes and regional rivalry have rarely escalated into extended military wars in Eurasia, especially between regional powers possessing nuclear force. One could accordingly argue confidently that most of the military involvements we see throughout the Asian mainland today are limited in scale, and that they are generally motivated by border disputes (including marine space). The rivalry, therefore, has not led to all-out wars.

This is a conclusion that stands in opposition to the above-mentioned biases, and which rests on a geopolitically driven argument that Eurasia is the heartland of the world and that this very feature makes it a point of focus for all the powers of the world – hegemon, great powers, rising powers, and local powers. To such a way of thinking, world powers focus on the maintenance of their presence in this territory in order to protect their national interests, and this, in turn, turns the region into an unstable environment<sup>5</sup>. This conclusion, in fact, would better explain the colonial experience or the United States' involvements in the region – rather than the affairs of the regional powers. Having seen that most of the wars experienced in central Eurasia have actually been against colonial powers, both before and after decolonization, the hostility toward the U.S. military presence in the region in the (post-)Cold War context makes more sense. And, in fact, the wars in Afghanistan are prime examples of such an anti-colonialist spirit, resistant to the U.S. presence in the region, and of obstructions to peace in the region. This indeed holds true in the historical context – as the proxy wars in Vietnam and Korea clearly show: the United States' hegemonic presence and intervention in the region marginalized some parts of the region and turned them into a more distrustful environs.

Some other disputes in the form of intra- and interstate fights in Central Eurasia that act as obstacles to peace include the conflicts between Chechnya and Russia (Dunlop 1998; Trenin, Malašenko, and Lieven 2004), Xinjiang and China, the Rohingya and Myanmar, Taiwan and China, Pakistan and India (Brass 2010), the Philippines and separatist groups, and disputes in the South China Sea. Among such conflicts, the

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<sup>4</sup> See M. Auslin, "Can the Doklam Dispute Be Resolved? The Dangers of China and India's Border Standoff" <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2017-08-01/can-doklam-dispute-be-resolved> (accessed 01 August 2018)

<sup>5</sup> To this way of thinking, moreover, rising powers must be interested in this heartland in order to gain a greater share from the distribution of global economic and political power, because at least 60 percent of the world's economic activity happens within this land. Local powers must also carefully pursue transitions in this land because every transition in any field has the potential to affect their sovereignty.

Kashmir dispute<sup>6</sup> is one of the most significant in Central Eurasia and is worth elaborating on, as an interstate conflict which also has a religious dimension. Kashmir has been subject to sovereignty claims by both Pakistan and India since they gained their independence from Great Britain in 1947. Demographically, Kashmir has a Muslim majority which wants either to be governed by Pakistan or to be an independent state<sup>7</sup>. This demographic feature of Kashmir makes it a religious-ethnic conflict. As they did in 1948<sup>8</sup>, India and Pakistan agreed upon a ceasefire in 2003; however, it didn't last long. Although hopes for peace increased after the ceasefire, Kashmir is still a dangerous source of conflict between the two nuclear powers in the region – namely India and Pakistan.

All these interstate and intra-state disputes, hostilities, and military conflicts are the main reason for the framing of Eurasia as an inherently anarchic geography and of peace as something impossible in the region. There are definitely incompatible goals pursued discordantly by regional powers, yet it is clearly not accurate to describe them as eternally “hostile nations” and as doomed to war and conflict. It is particularly important to emphasize the fact that the Eurasian regional powers have not embarked on all-out military wars, as the European powers did during the 20th century. The above-listed conflicts throughout Eurasia, therefore, have never been region-wide and are not due to the supposed anarchic character that the region is claimed to embody. Contrary to what is believed, there are ever-growing, historically present, and promising efforts spent on building sustainable peace, harmony, and reconciliation within Eurasia. This is elaborated on in the following section.

## **Peace Dynamics within Central Eurasia**

The above-listed and many other disputes pose severe obstacles to establishing and maintaining a sustained peace within the Eurasian mainland. Yet what is promising is that none of these conflicts are structurally imposed ones; they mostly derive from political competition and conjunctural rivalries (Singh 2008; Bellacqua 2010). This is, in fact,

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<sup>6</sup> For a detailed analysis of the Kashmir dispute, see C. Zutshi, *Kashmir: History, Politics, Representation* (Cambridge University Press, 2017)

<sup>7</sup> A detailed analysis can be found at BBC, “Kashmir: Why India and Pakistan Fight Over It” <http://www.bbc.com/news/10537286> (accessed: 23 April 2018)

<sup>8</sup> For those interested in the Kashmir dispute, the ceasefires between the two states may give many clues about the regional dynamics of peace. For detailed research on the processes behind these ceasefires, see L. Carter, *Towards a Ceasefire in Kashmir: British Official Reports from South Asia* (New York, 2018)

the very reason that the projections for peace proposed both by individual countries and by regional organizations in relation to the visible conjunctural disputes seem promising. In this section we introduce some of these mostly government-led peace projections (with vernacular normative qualities) that provide an alternative to Western-centric conflict resolution approaches and the disregard shown for the *peace-ability* of the region and regional actors. These projections involve both state-level and intergovernmental-level efforts.

One of the leading agents endeavoring to build a peaceful region is China – despite its contributions to certain conflicts. Having hugely benefited from its “Open Door” policy, pursued since the 1990s, the country has not only integrated itself into the world community, but also initiated the building of an economically prosperous region into which both its immediate neighbor countries and even those further afield have been integrated (Agnew and Corbridge 1995, 140). Mostly addressed – in Western-centric accounts – as a matter of China’s socialization into the international system, this policy shift in the country’s international relations was, however, about more than just becoming part of the neoliberal order; China commenced pursuing a normative integration fed by vernacular values that aims to make the *world* – initially its neighborhood – a better place to live.<sup>9</sup> As part of such a mission with implications for the broader Eurasian region, China pursues a particular policy priority commonly expressed as the will and endeavor “to live in a better world” – an expression often used by Chinese officials. This has implications for both domestic and foreign policies. For instance, Xi Jinping, the president of China since 2012, declared at the 18th Central Committee Meeting of the Communist Party in 2014 that the core of the Party’s mission is to realize the desire of the Chinese nation for a good life (Xi 2014, 35). In line with this, in another example, Zhang Yan, the Chinese ambassador to India has stated that the core foreign policy principles and security concept of China are that “all states should be in respect with each other, know [the] main aims of [the] United Nations and other international organizations and behave in association with universal values of respect [for] sovereignty.” (Chan 2000, 36) To Yan, if all countries

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<sup>9</sup> It has been argued that China has its own values which can contribute more to world peace, at least in theory, than the neoliberal world order has been able to contribute in practice (Xi 2014). For the relevant debate, also see S. Breslin, *Handbook of China’s International Relations* (London, 2010); Liang, *China: Globalization and the Emergence of a New Status Quo Power (Asian Perspective, 2007)*; Jacobson and Oksenberg, *Toward a Global Economic Order* (University of Michigan Press, 1990).

acted in accordance with these principles, the world would be a better place to live in. In fact, China has long been putting emphasis on *making the world a better place*, and thus there are plenty of *empirical* manifestations of such normative discourses. The transition of China's foreign policy and relations with its neighbors – even with historical rivalries such as those with Japan, Russia, Korea, Taiwan, and the U.S. – from conflicting engagements to cooperation can be understood as a clear demonstration of such principles. China, moreover, realizes this transition also through building economic bridges with Europe that require the establishment of peace and stability throughout Europe and Asia (Xi 2014, 330). As the most promising expression of such an intention, the “One Belt, One Road” (OBOR) project, by which the historical Silk Road is imagined to be rebuilt, is expected to serve peaceful development in Eurasia. To realize this project, China has initiated several investment projects throughout the continent, provide financial assistance and investment. Yet Chinese financial investments are not confined to the OBOR project; the country has for some time been providing direct investment, financial assistance, and critical infrastructure-building assistance to developing countries, including, for instance, African countries such as Namibia, Kenya, Madagascar, Botswana, Rwanda, and Tanzania (Xinhua 2017). Here there emerges a critical issue – China, having provided huge levels of aid to underdeveloped countries, has not imposed on recipient countries any of its own *civilizational* values. This is suggested to be a key way in which China differs from Western hegemonic states, and to evidence that China is not seeking to build a hegemony over the rest of the world. Contrarily, in the building of the U.S. hegemony, the U.S. is suggested to have sought to impose pockets of U.S. values along with its provision of economic aid. That China, on the other hand, intentionally refrains from such impositions can be underlined as a key difference between the two countries.

Nevertheless, complying with the aim of living in a better world, China contributes huge levels of military and economic support to United Nations peacekeeping operations (UNPKO) – indeed, China is the country that contributes most to such missions. Since 1989 – the year in which China sent its first troops to UN peacekeeping missions – its increasing role has given the country a chance to prepare efficient and sufficient ground on which to develop a normative position in such operations. Exactly for this reason, while China is interested in increasing its troops in these missions, it does not do so out of a reliance on the use of the military in building peace. China offers an alternative interpretation of such interventions – an alternative to Western normative frameworks. Mostly

expressed under the banner of “Five Principles” (also known as “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence,” based on Confucian values), Chinese foreign policy embraces *mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in other countries’ internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence* as its guiding principles. Through these vernacular and equally universally applicable *values* China endeavors to promote a more collectivist and harmonious alternative to the conflictual individualism of most Western international relations thinking (Buzan 2010, 5–36). For example, China places great importance on the principle of non-interference in its foreign relations, and accordingly strongly recommends the UNPKO to comply with this principle in its peacebuilding missions, a stance countering the Western position of disregarding sovereignty.<sup>10</sup>

Another country with peace projections for Eurasia is Russia, and similarly to those of China, they are led by economic integration and are designed as an alternative and a challenge to the Western hegemony over international and regional peace discourses. The Russian peace discourse is mainly built on breaking the Western influence in its immediate neighborhood and beyond, and it therefore embodies a region-wide anti-hegemonic discourse. It is on this basis that the recent Russian offensives

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<sup>10</sup> There are yet some critics of such a normative argument. Accordingly, there are studies suggesting a strong correlation between China’s involvement in UNPKO and its trade levels at the time of operation (Benjamin Lawson, *The Price of Peace: A Quantitative Analysis of Economic Interests of China’s Involvement in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations* (Georgetown University, 2011). Here, it is suggested that the motivation of China is not only based on developing a normative base; rather, it is based on its economic interests. This argument, however, is challenged by others who suggest, for instance, that the energy investments of China in the MENA region are built not only on the need to facilitate economic objectives, but also on a shared opposition to dominant norms and values (Shaun Breslin, *China and the Global Political Economy*, International Political Economy Series (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 138. China is argued to be motivated to see itself as a great power in the international arena. As a development strengthening such positions, China is heavily criticized for human rights abuses and seen as incapable of embracing a normative approach that would secure internal peace within the country; this is something overshadowing the normative position of the country. China and other states that are accused of being incapable of building domestic peace argue that the West does worse when it occupies non-Western territories and structurally breaks the peace capability of the people. In this context, China’s normative arguments for international peace provide an alternative to practice, both historical and contemporary, of Western hegemony-building or colonization, which leaves locals incapable of building and sustaining peace.

in Georgia, in Ukraine, and even in Syria are mostly depicted as a fight against Western influence which ruins the capacity and willingness for peaceful coexistence in the region. This is, in fact, also the reason why Russia, after frequent contributions in the 1990s, no longer contributes to United Nations peacekeeping missions and takes a strictly cautious stance toward Western intentions. To Russia, so-called international peacebuilding missions often, if not in all cases, are about protecting and securing Western interests rather than prioritizing local needs and concerns. To counter such missions, Russia has often involved itself in mediation activities in its “near abroad,” for instance in the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh (Azerbaijan).

With regard to economic integration and cooperation, first and foremost, it should be underscored that there are increasing energy-related economic relations between Russia and China. Accordingly, in order to build lasting and sustainable energy security, Russia’s Gazprom and the China Natural Petroleum Company (CNPC) signed an agreement in November 2016 to build the “Power of Siberia” gas pipeline, starting from Siberia and ending in northeastern China – something leading to greater interdependence between the two countries in the energy sector. Needless to say, this project is equally significant for both Russia and China, and in fact also for regional stability. Another project contributing to the peace capacity in the region is the “Turkish Stream.” Russia followed a very aggressive policy toward Turkey especially after the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline was constructed, and the Nabucco gas pipeline project – bypassing Turkey to supply gas to European markets until 2011 – was one of the reflections of such aggression. Russia has not yet shown the same aggressive attitude toward the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP), which bypasses Russian gas pipelines to European energy markets. This shift in Russian attitude can be said to be based on the transformation of Russian foreign policy, from seeking to be an *enforcing* great power on other countries to seeking to be a coordinative regional power aiming to reach sustainable regional peace. A final example in this regard is the North–South Transport Corridor (NSTC), the transport network linking India to Russia and to Europe via Iran and the Caucasus through a combination of rail, road, and sea networks. The NSTC, while increasing intra-regional energy cooperation, also contributes to the possibility of solving interstate conflicts within the region. It links India to Russia through Azerbaijan, making Baku the bridge between India and Europe and thus encouraging Russia to change its position in the Azerbaijan–Armenia conflict. Historically speaking, while Russia has mediated in negotiations on the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, it has also



played a supporting role to Armenia against the alliance between Turkey and Azerbaijan on the issue. Nevertheless, with the NSTC it is increasingly apparent that Russia would prefer for Armenia to seek a peaceful compromise on Nagorno-Karabakh in order to promote the “greater good” of multi-polarity (Korybko 2017). The NSTC may, in the long run, also help to solve the continental shelf disputes over the Caspian Sea, as Russia has already begun relinquishing its historical claims of property over the Caucasus gas fields and has accepted Azerbaijani arguments on the continental shelf order.

Along with China and Russia, India also has put helpful efforts into overcoming regional conflicts and contributing to peace in the region – despite sustained border disputes with China and Pakistan as a colonial legacy. After all, India is one of the earlier employers of soft power in its international relations – thanks to Gandhi, who not only led his country to emancipation from the colonizers but also introduced a nonviolent philosophy in governing relations with opponents. Turkey can be said to be another country with peace projections for the entire region. The country, under the Justice and Development Party, has developed a global discourse – “the world is bigger than the five” – suggesting “democratizing” the world politics overseen by the United Nations Security Council. It is accordingly argued by Turkey that international peace may be achieved through leaving the ground clear for states’ greater participation in solving their own problems. It is, therefore, a discourse resisting hegemonic interventions and the imposition of political solutions. On this, Turkey shares common ground and a common position with Russia and China – and thus challenges the Western discourse and contributes to the construction of normative alternatives to the Western world order. Turkey’s willingness to gain membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and embracing of political discourses building it as the normative alternative to Western social environments well demonstrate such shared ground.

Moreover, Turkey initiates – as does Russia – mediation missions aimed at increasing the disputing parties’ capacity to work through their own problems, and thus at promoting peaceful relations. Turkey confirms this by explaining its motivation as follows: “As one of the most important centers of power of the region and as a nation directly affected by any development in this geography, Turkey strongly feels the need for conflict prevention and spares no effort to bring about lasting peace, stability and welfare in the region” (Foreign Ministry of Turkey n.d.). Accordingly, Turkey has taken on the mediator role in several interstate and intra-state conflicts within Eurasia. In the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute, particularly

between 2008 and 2010, Turkey endeavored to bring Azerbaijan and Armenia closer to normalizing their relations. A similar role was taken by Turkey to ease the dispute between Syria and Israel; it initiated trilateral negotiation between Bosnia and Serbia; it brought the Iraqi and Syrian governments together to discuss their mutual accusations that the other was hosting violent groups in their lands; and, before the five-day war, it tried to mediate between Russia and Georgia to prevent Russian military intervention and sustain stability in the region. In another example, Turkey played a mediator role in the Philippines civil war and contributed to the agreement between the Philippines government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) to end the war. Turkey also took the lead, with Finland, in launching the Mediation for Peace Initiative in 2010. Along with other bilateral undertakings, Turkey, together with Spain, initiated the Alliance of Civilization Initiative, later to become a UN initiative, in order to enhance the mutual respect between cultures that is necessary for sustaining international peace and stability and for overcoming prejudice, misperception, and polarization among nations and cultures. Considered together with its role in the BTC, the Turkish Stream, and OBOR, Turkey's normative challenge to the Western hegemony, its sharing of a core argument with China and Russia in this regard, and the humanitarian mechanisms it has developed throughout seem to be contributing to achieving peace in Eurasia.

In addition to individual-level peace projections, there are many intergovernmental-level institutional efforts to achieve peace throughout the region. Of these efforts, the SCO and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are the two leading ones, with commitment and promising results regarding peace projections within the region. The SCO, at its very core, was established in order to strengthen mutual trust and good-neighborhood and friendly relations among Central Eurasian countries through the exertion of common efforts for the protection of regional peace, security, and stability, and through jointly combating terrorism, radicalism, and separatism. The SCO proposes an alternative security and peacebuilding model for Eurasia, prioritizing regime security over Western discourses on liberties and democracy. In doing so, the SCO sees that it is again the *imposition* of so-called Western humanitarian values that leads states to weaken and eventually lose their stability, thereby falling into the trap of civil war and human catastrophe. Alternatively, the SCO proposes that what is needed for sustained peace in the region is the creation of an "atmosphere of mutual trust" among sovereign nations throughout the region, known as the "Shanghai spirit" (Bailes et al. 2007).

ASEAN is another institutional actor involved in the building and maintenance of peace, security, and stability in the region. In line with the Shanghai spirit, the organization endorses the following principles, which are also called the “ASEAN Way”:

(i) mutual respect for the independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity and national identity of all nations; (ii) the right of every state to lead its national existence free from external interference, subversion, or coercion; (iii) non-interference in the internal affairs of one another and settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means; (iv) renunciation of the threat or use of force, and finally (v) effective cooperation among themselves (ASEAN n.d.).

These principles constitute a non-Western normative ground for peaceful coexistence at both the regional and even the international level. Having long been an economic instrument in mobilizing and encouraging member states toward peaceful relations, ASEAN in due course evolved into a political security community aiming to achieve the peaceful settlement of all intra-regional disputes through solid political cooperation and region-wide security dialog (Artner 2017). It accordingly now functions primarily as a platform to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts and to promote non-militarization and self-restraint “in the conduct of activities that would complicate or escalate disputes and affect peace and stability” in the region (Acharya 2001). It hence prompts its members to engage bilaterally to resolve their common problems and disputes by peaceful means, and thus to solve conflicts with *full* respect for legal and diplomatic processes. Moreover, although ASEAN is not a military alliance, it nevertheless acts as a structure for engaging with external powers and balancing their influence, as a sign of a regional solidarity that can be utilized against external interventions.

## Final Remarks

This paper has suggested that attributing an inherent anarchical state of affairs to the intra-regional interactions of the Eurasian region is not valid. Further to that, such a position is biased and conceals the ever-growing, historically present, and promising efforts being made at individual state, sub-regional, and regional levels to build sustained peace, harmony, and reconciliation within Eurasia. This paper accordingly has made clear that the suggestion that the Eurasian mainland is destined to clashes, instabilities, insecurities, and uncertainties, and that the regional agents or structures lack normative political capacity for peacebuilding, stems from

certain Western-centric reductionist geopolitical biases and only serves to obscure the creation of normative epistemological alternatives to the Western international normative order. Proving such reductionism wrong, there are promising efforts, projections, and normative frames challenging the determinism around world history and providing an alternative to Western epistemological hegemony throughout Eurasia. Moreover, there are ever-growing efforts and projections toward building a region, or regions, of peace and cooperation within Eurasia, and several peace discourses have been produced and put into circulation by individual countries and regional organizations, as discussed above. All these diverse discourses and projects may seem incompatible. This is the case especially when one considers the conflicting interests, competing hegemonic involvements, and retrospective records of conflict and economic competition among states in the region – for instance between China and India or Russia and China. Yet in fact, a closer look reveals that they are not so incompatible after all. Rather, in essence they share an anti-Western normative ground, representing a local alternative to the normative peace order proposed by Western institutions and countries and a resistance to Western interventionism. Here, the very idea of sustaining peace through promoting and protecting state sovereignty – against Western disagreement – along with advancing the rights and conditions of disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals and communities are mutually adhered to by all of the agents and structures of cooperation – both economic and political – in Central Eurasia.

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## CHAPTER TWO

# RISING POWERS AND THE DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT AND COOPERATION WITHIN EURASIA

HULYA KINIK AND OZGUR TUFEKCI

### **Analytical Framework**

The international system can be defined as an environment in which states interact with each other, and that is formed by states whose basic elements are separated from each other by certain boundaries with regular and dependent relations among them. Although international relations have existed as long as states themselves, the modern international system is just a few centuries old. Important events have acted as the milestones in the transformation of the international system. The Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which ended the Thirty Years' War among European states, can be deemed the commencement of the modern international system. It established the state as the legitimate European polity and legalized a commonwealth of sovereign states (Philpot 1999, 581). From that stage forward, the international system has been mainly based on relations between the nation states, which have been regarded as the dominant political units in world politics, have enjoyed exclusive rights within a given territory, and have been able to implement their own domestic policies in their own domain.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, several powerful nation states controlled Europe. Some of these remained powerful throughout most parts of the modern age, but some others shrank in power over time. Weaker states often came together to limit dominant powers' influence, a practice known as 'balance of power', which refers to the distribution of power among countries so that no nation can seriously threaten the fundamental interests of another. Demonstrating that they sought to preserve the power balance, the dominant units of the international system



tried to prevent French attempts under Louis XIV during the War of the Spanish Succession (1700–1713), and Napoleon’s efforts in the period 1789–1815, to dominate the international system.

The period from 1815 to 1871 is known as the Concert of Europe; it marked a period of relative peace following Napoleon’s final military and political defeat in 1815 and the Vienna Settlement. During this period no nation states attempted to dominate the system, as the Concert of Europe was primarily planned by the great European powers as a means of controlling the rebirth of the French imperial power and of enabling the spread of the trends of democracy, liberalism, and nationalism, and was established with the overriding aim of protecting collective security and preserving international peace (Yılmaz 2007, 19; Sotirović 2017). In the period 1871–1918, Germany, under the leadership of Wilhelm II, tried to dominate the international system, but was precluded from doing so by other great powers (mainly Britain, France, and Russia). After 1871, nationalism appeared as a strong force which led to nation states becoming much more powerful, and imperialism intensified the clash of interests among European powers. The problems raised by the unification of Germany, among other factors, led to the outbreak of World War I and resulted in the collapse of Germany and its allies. The period 1918–1945 was characterized by the process of attempts to preserve peace treaties (1919–1925), increasing stability as a result of the Locarno Treaties (1925), the Briand-Kellogg Pact (1928), and the Young Plan (1929), and finally by new international tensions due to the Great Depression (1929) and the attempts of Germany, under the Nazi regime, to once again to dominate the system. This attempt also failed; Germany broke up and has long been the focus of the East–West tensions (Yılmaz 2007, 19).

The objectives of the peace treaties designed by the great victorious powers at the end of World War I included the prevention of a possible new war and peace-keeping on the European continent. However, as several historians of the interwar period accept, the treaties contained within themselves causes for the outbreak of World War II, the largest and most destructive conflict in history (Vohn 2016, s. 50–51). The period between the two world wars is generally described in international relations literature as one of “crisis” or “transition,” or as the “long ceasefire,” because it was only after World War II came to an end that the international system underwent profound and large-scale change, and the nature and character of the international system became totally different from that of the classical (nineteenth-century) international system. The logic of the Cold War gave birth to the bipolar system centered on just two great world powers – the United States and the Soviet Union — which had

different spheres of political and military influence and maintained a precarious nuclear balance (Vohn 2016, 49; Mearsheimer 1990, 15). The international system during the Cold War era was structured and functioned as bipolar, in terms of military potential, the form of political regimes, the model of the economic system, and the conflicting dominant ideologies of communism and capitalism (Tomja 2014, 58).

In the early 1990s, just after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the world's diplomats, politicians, and journalists contended to define the structure of the new, post-Cold War world and were induced to ask, "Are we moving into a new world order?" To put it differently, "Is the Westphalian order near the end, and, if so, what is going to replace it?" (Posen 2009, 347). Optimists like Frances Fukuyama asserted that we had reached the "end of history," announcing the triumph of liberal democracy and capitalism and the arrival of a post-ideological world (Fukuyama 1989, 1). On the other hand, pessimists like Samuel Huntington claimed the opposite: the outbreak of new "civilizational" wars between the West, Islam, and the Confucian world (Applebaum 2002, 1; Huntington 1993, 22). George Bush, Sr., president of the United States at the time, used the concept of the "new world order" during the Gulf Crisis, stating that the bipolar order was over and that a new order and structure had emerged in the international system. In an address to Congress on September 11, 1990, Bush stated his vision of the new world order as follows:

We stand today at a unique and extraordinary moment. The crisis in the Persian Gulf, as grave as it is, also offers a rare opportunity to move toward an historic period of cooperation. Out of these troubled times, our fifth objective – a new world order – a new era – freer from the threat of terror, stronger in pursuit of justice and more secure in quest for peace, an era in which the nations of the world ... can prosper – a world where the rule of the law supplants the rule of the jungle, a world in which nations recognize the shared responsibilities for freedom and justice, a world where the strong respect the rights of the weak. (Bush 1990)

Although the United States emerged as the only superpower in the international system in the aftermath of Soviet dissolution and several states followed a pro-Western foreign policy, around the 2000s new actors began to emerge onto the world stage and to take an increasingly important role in the global order. These countries, which have formed new regional organizations capable of challenging existing supra-state organizations, have begun to transform the international geopolitical system. This, in a sense, has caused important changes in the balance-of-power equation, and the global political economy has experienced a period of significant transformation as the hegemonic power of the U.S.A. is

challenged by the rise of new powers. As a result of the growing influence of each of these rising countries, based on their economic development and defense capabilities, the unipolar structure of the U.S.-led international system has been replaced with a multipolar order which consists of a continuation of competition and comparison among all these centers of power (Öniş and Yılmaz 2016, 72–73).

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the bipolar system around 1990 changed the meaning of the term “Eurasia” from an anthropological concept to a significant category of regional and international relations. Throughout history the Eurasian region has ranked among the most significant and prominent regions in the world in terms of its natural and human resources. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the well-known British political geographer S.H. Mackinder referred to the significance of Eurasian region by stating that “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands World-island; who rules the World-island commands the world” (Mackinder 1962, 261). He regarded Eurasia as a “pivotal area,” a heartland. With its geopolitical features, rich energy deposits and mineral wealth, rising economies, and regional institutions, the Eurasian region is also one of the most important elements in challenging a U.S.-dominated world and may well help to describe the world order of the twenty-first century, since three so-called “emerging economies” of the BRICS grouping – Russia, China, and India – are located on the supercontinent of Eurasia. These three are expected to direct the world economy by 2050, and they already have growing influence in world affairs as they account for more than 40 percent of the world population right now. While Russia, China, India, and other Asian actors are increasing their engagement in international affairs and are playing a crucial role in reshaping the political, economic, and military balances within Eurasia, the United States and other countries of the West are receding (Brzezinski 1997, 30–35). States that are becoming even stronger, such as Russia and China, in line with the relative power loss of the United States have sought to protect their established relations with Eurasia and have developed new relations in order to further increase their power and diminish the impact of the U.S. in the region.

In this context, this article investigates the rivalry, as well as the cooperation, that is taking place among rising powers within Eurasia. Specifically, the first part of this study focuses on areas of cooperation and conflict in relation to the energy order, especially between the two rising powers of Eurasia, China and Russia, both of which have strong interests and considerable influence in the region. The latter part of the study will present an overview of the climate agreements (the United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change, Kyoto Protocol, and Paris Climate Agreement, among others), and the extent to which rising powers in the Eurasian region are involved in these agreements will be considered.

## **The Energy Order and Rising Powers in Eurasia**

Energy is of vital importance, for both developed and developing countries, for industrialization, sustainable economic growth, and maintaining living standards (Svyatets 2015, 8). Studies on energy done by international organizations show that the most rapid growth in energy demand will occur in developing countries, and their proportion of global energy consumption is projected to grow by 57 percent over the 2004–2030 period (EIA, 2007). In this context, from past to present, Eurasia has been of particular interest to regional and international actors due to its vast energy resources and geographically vital location, through which economic and commercial connections have been established between Europe and the Pacific on one hand and between Asia and Europe on the other. The region holds some of the largest deposits of oil, natural gas, uranium, and gold in the world (Starr 1996, 80). According to 2017 data, Russia and the Central Asian states have nearly 30 percent of the world's proven natural gas reserves and almost 9 percent of the world's proven oil reserves (BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2017, 14, 28).

Besides the structuring of the international system, the dissolution of the Soviet Union also transformed world geopolitics and the energy map. In respect of Eurasia, which witnesses today's major energy cooperations and conflicts, two related primary developments have occurred in the post-Cold War era: first, the great importance that has been given to natural resources, and second, the rise of China and the recovery of Russia as an energy giant (Yiğit 2013, 77). With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, China and Russia quickly integrated into the international system, and they have become major forces in the Eurasian region, where both countries have strong interests and considerable effect.

Over the years, China and Russia have come together due to developments in their external environment. Their relationship is an unstable alliance of two unsatisfied powers, which enables cooperation in certain areas but is also characterized by different perspectives that form several elements of tension and rising geopolitical competition between the two, mainly in the energy and economic fields. The relationship between them has elements of both competition and suspicion (Carlsson, Oxenstierna, and Weissmann 2015, 11). As a result of China's growing economy on one side of the border and Russia's vast energy resources on

the other, strong energy relations and trade ties in this area are expected to become unavoidable. Russia is important for China as a critical supplier of natural resources at a time when Chinese demand for energy is rapidly accelerating. But although Russia and China have intense cooperation and relations in the energy field, there is also a point of conflict on energy between them. This dispute is the result of geopolitical considerations and struggle between the two powers in Central Asia, the vast energy reserves of which have led them to compete for imports and for a hold on power in the region (Kaczmarek and Rodkiewicz 2016, 1).

In Chinese energy security, oil and gas supplies in Central Asia have an essential role. Beginning in the 1990s, China has made diplomatic attempts in Central Asia with the aim of developing bilateral trade and gaining access to natural resource reserves. For instance, Kazakh oil makes a big contribution to the diversification of China's import sources and to implementing alternative territorial energy routes, taking into consideration that more than 80 percent of Chinese oil imports are delivered via oil tankers. Another important feature of energy cooperation between Kazakhstan and China is represented by the fact that Beijing is the major purchaser of Kazakh uranium. Besides that, in the Central Asian gas sector Turkmenistan has recently become China's major partner: since 2012, half of Beijing's total gas imports have contained Turkmen gas, supplied to China through the China–Central Asia gas pipeline (CAGP), which also crosses Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and by 2020 will cross Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (Indeo 2016). Thereby, Chinese energy strategy will include all five Central Asian republics. The improvement of the Caspian Sea–Xinjiang pipeline – shipping Kazakh oil – and the CAGP pipeline has provided Central Asian countries with an opportunity to develop an alternative energy export route without being under the shelter of Moscow, also profiting by Chinese loans and investments to actualize infrastructures and to utilize national energy reserves (Socor 2007; Indeo 2016).

The opening of the CAGP and the implementation of the Sino-Kazakh oil pipeline deepened trade and investment relations among China and Central Asian countries but also triggered another element of tension between Russia and China, as the former ended the Russian monopoly on Turkmen gas exports and the latter has reduced Russian authority over energy exports in Central Asia. It is clear that the Silk Road initiative and the Chinese participation in Central Asia pose a serious geopolitical risk to Russia's integration projects, because the success of the Chinese strategy is progressively downgrading the traditional role and influence of Russia in the post-soviet space (Popescu 2014, 19–21; Indeo 2016). For years,

Russia has attempted to make a gas deal with China for the purpose of broadening destinations for its gas exports and securing foreign demand for gas. However, China has preferred to invest heavily in Central Asian energy resources and infrastructure, including oil and gas pipelines from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, allowing energy imports without Russian influence (Oxenstierna 2012, 102).

In recent years, Russia and China have entered into two ambitious projects which involve the Eurasian landmass, for the purpose of developing economic cooperation between East and West through trade and energy routes passing through Central Asia. Russia has implemented the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) in order to promote cooperation within the region and create a Russian-led geopolitical bloc. On the other side, China's "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR, or New Silk Road) initiative, announced by China's president Xi Jinping in the autumn of 2013, is an attractive project including whole Central Asian countries in a profitable energy and economic network, following huge Chinese investments aimed at improving infrastructures and developing national economies (Indeo 2016).

However, while China and Russia are racing against each other for regional primacy, they are accelerating their cooperation too. In 2009, notable credit was given by the China Development Bank (CDB): a \$15 billion loan to Rosneft, an oil company owned by the government of Russia, and a \$10 billion loan to Transneft, a Russian state-owned transport monopoly and the largest oil pipeline company in the world. In response to these credits, Russia agreed to supply China with oil for the next twenty years via a supplementary pipeline from its Eastern Siberia–Pacific Ocean oil pipeline. Previously, all Russian oil supplies to China had been transported by rail and via a pipeline through Kazakhstan (Yiğit 2013, 78).

Eventually, in May 2014, not long after Russia's annexation of Crimea, which resulted in sudden confrontation and damaged relations with the West and led to sanctions against Russia, an agreement worth \$400 billion was ratified between Moscow and Beijing, under which Russia's state-controlled energy giant Gazprom would supply 38 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas from Eastern Siberia to China for thirty years, starting in 2018 when the system would become fully operational (Carlsson, Oxenstierna, and Weissmann 2015, 51–52; Savic 2016; Adamson 2015, 6–7). The Russian conflict with Ukraine has resulted in greater Russian dependence on China in both political and economic terms. Despite the sanctions imposed by the West, Russia has not changed its behavior and has been isolated from its Western partners, paving the