

The revitalisation of the Silk Road: Theoretical Challenges and Policy implications

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Abstract

Considered as the ‘Heartland of the World’ by Mackinder, Central Asia has an essential influence on the power dynamics of the world. With the advantage of the revitalisation of the ancient Silk Road, Russia, United States of America, European Union, China and Turkey have different outcomes with their policy implications on the framework of complex interdependency. Due to the different bargaining powers, vulnerabilities and purposes of the states, each power has focused on the region in a different way. So, this paper aims to analyse the power dynamics on the region via revitalisation of the Silk Road on the concept of complex interdependency. Within the selected articles and journals, literature reviews for the theoretical framework and policy papers for the policy implications is used to deepen the analysis. To do so, the complex interdependency model will be analysed under three different aspects to explain its policy implications on the region, such as economic dimension, energy security section and human rights and democratization issues.

Introduction

For centuries, Central Asia has always been considered as a strategically and militaristically essential region for the world. This was particularly the case for Russians who had lived for three centuries under the rule of the Turkish Islamic state-the Golden Horde-which had captured its principalities one by one in order to balance and take advantage of the Turkish-Russian relations (Kappeler, 2014). Due to concerns about the security of the south coast, Russia adopted a new ideology by deploying to Central Asia. The region is also important for Russia because of its trade capacity and contributions to the Russian economy. Once Peter the Great came to the throne and unified Russia as an empire, the perspectives and politics towards Central Asia changed, because Central Asia was the most important way for Indian trade relations (ibid,2014).

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During the 19th century, Russian expansionist policies had arisen due to the fact that British merchants came as serious competitors for Russian merchants in the region (ibid, 2014). Nicholas I of Russia wanted to limit British activities in the region, so he increased the diplomatic and military initiatives towards Central Asia. In the 1880s, Central Asia was almost totally located within the Russian borders (Saray, 1982). The annexation of the region to Russia took three centuries (Kappeler, 2014). On the 31st August 1907, Russia and the United Kingdom (UK) signed an agreement which claimed that Central Asia was under Russian rule, while Afghanistan was Great Britain's (Purtas, 2006). Consequently, Russia has had power over the region for centuries and has seen itself as the unique power and owner of the region. After the collapse of the Soviet Union however, the global world order and the balance of power between actors changed. Since the 1990s, states' foreign policies have prioritised the economy rather than the military.

The historical East-West Silk Road started from Kashgar following the southern way, across Hotan and arrived to the source of the Chinese silk (See, appendix I) (Ligeti 1997). Known as the Sea Silk Road, it started from the northern coast of China to the Indian peninsula, Strait of Malacca, then to the Ganges. From the West to the Far East, India to China, the Silk Road has travelled over the Central Asian territory for two thousand years (Kirpik, 2012). At the golden age of the Silk Road, it was 7.500 km as the crow flies, and 10.000 km in the normal way (Hedin 1974). The road was also a combination of both sea and land roads which was used to travel between continents. When it was closed due to natural disasters or other reasons, the Far Eastern products were carried via the sea or caravan routes. For years, Islamic and Turkic states took the rich profits of the Silk Road. The Silk Road itself was not just a road which helped to transfer goods; it also helped to transfer culture, technology and ideas from east to west, or vice versa. Going across Asia's mid-zone, however, this route had several problems due to its length and journey. Geographical discoveries of new routes shaped the trade relations between the east and west, and eventually resulted in the Silk Road being increasingly deemed as less important, unlike in previous years (Kirpik, 2012). It further lost its importance once Istanbul was conquered by Mehmed the Conqueror (Georgiyev, 2015).

After giving a brief historical explanation of the region and of the Silk Road, it is easier to consider power relations and conditions at different levels, using the theory of complex interdependence. This is because the new global world order includes different actors who all differ in terms of their vulnerability and bargaining power. That is why it is essential to use com-

plex interdependency theory to explain power relations, states' potentials and their impact on Central Asia (Garrison & Abdurrahmonov, 2011). It is necessary to recognise and acknowledge Russian influence and the importance of the historical Silk Road, in order to examine the power dynamics at work in the Central Asian region.

Complex interdependence is an International Relations (IR) theory which was proposed by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye. Complex interdependence examines the world from two perspectives. While nations are considered as actors, they are also interconnected to each other based on their common interests, vulnerabilities, opportunities for cooperation, and bargaining power (Garrison & Abdurrahmonov, 2011). Although the international system is anarchical, this concept creates a new form of 'hierarchy' for the world order and promotes something other than the use of the conventional "hard" power. The vulnerability and power of the states is measured by their ability to affect asymmetrical relationships (Garrison and Abdurrahmonov, 2011).

In this context, common interests and vulnerabilities make actors have both opportunities and limits on the path to decision-making. For example, although energy sources in the region are seen as essential for actors formulating their policies in relation to Central Asia, other factors also have an important effect on their decisions. These factors vary-from human rights and democracy issues in the region, to economic relations-as countries are bound in a web of complex interdependency through these different issues. Sometimes the economic capability and/or the historical bonds of the countries are not enough to empower them to influence or control activities in the region. For instance, in order for Russia to use its energy resources effectively, it has to allow for Chinese investment and Japanese technological developments (Aron, 2006).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan became independent, while the international system evolved into a more multi-polar system (Kirpik, 2012). Although Russia is one of the most important actors in the Central Asian region, in this paper it will not be considered, due to its historical, colonial and regional impact on the region. Instead, this paper will examine Turkey as a regional developing power, China as a regional and global power, the United States (US) as a global power, and the European Union (EU) as a global power. The shared interests of these actors are their energy demand, as well as the desire for the region to be stable and independent from Russia in every aspect.

Each actor has a different approach towards the region. Turkey for example, claims that it has the right to create its own politics in the region due to the nationalistic historical bonds with Turkic republics. The US on the other hand, has a more liberal approach and wants to eliminate Russia, which was seen as the only power over the region for years, particularly during the Cold War era. In addition, they all have different bargaining power. For instance once an economic crisis occurs in the region, its impact on the other countries' foreign policies will vary depending on the country's capability and vulnerability (Garrison & Abdurrahmonov, 2011). As Gilpin (2001) asserts, the economic system relies on a specific political order with particular values, expectations and norms which shape the decisions and behaviour of the actors.

This paper aims to analyse the influence of the revitalisation of the Silk Road on the power relations between regional powers: the EU, Turkey, the US and China, using the 'Complex Interdependency Model'. Thus, the study seeks to address the ways in which the revitalisation of the Silk Road shapes power relations between regional actors. In order to explain the effects of the new Silk Road on power relations, an examination will be conducted on three different areas: the economic dimension of the Silk Road, the security challenges in the region, and human rights and democratisation initiatives.

Firstly, the main part will analyse in three sub-sections, three determinants of states' foreign policies towards each other. In the economy section, the trade and cooperation for the regional infrastructure development will be examined in relation to the Silk Road. Next, in the security section, energy security, energy resources and pipelines, as well as other security challenges in the region will be analysed. In the final section, there will be a study and an evaluation of Russia-friendly state leaders, the democratisation process and human rights issues.

It is important to emphasise that these issues are determined based on the states' priorities, which can differ from one to the other. China for example, is seen as pushing for the revitalisation of the Silk Road for the main purpose of developing its trade relations with the West; while for the US it is seen as an attempt to prevent Russian monopoly in the region-thus it is from a more political perspective. Mackinder's Heartland theory will be used to explain the importance of the region for countries, after which the complex interdependence model will be used to structure a theoretical framework to clarify the implementations of the new Silk Road on the states' relations.

Theories applied to Central Asia and Methodology of Study

Why Central Asia is essential for the new world order

'Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; Who rules the World Island commands the World.'- Sir Halford Mackinder (1962, pg.150).

According to Mackinder, Eurasia or Central Asia is considered as a key region for world dominance (Fettweis, 2000). Although Mackinder's Heartland theory seems out of date, it is still a pioneer study for contemporary scholars who analyse the region. As it can be easily understood from history, Central Asia has been subject to different wars and conflicts between states over the centuries. Following the two world wars in particular, Central Asia arguably became the most important region to rule, thus causing conflicts of interest between countries-especially the US and Soviet Russia during the Cold War era.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the attention over the region from regional and global powers has gradually increased. Undoubtedly, the most radical and transformative initiative for the region is the revitalisation of the historical Silk Road which had once been used as a main trade route from China to Europe through Central Asia for centuries, until the conquest of Istanbul in 1453 (Filis,2008). In order to revive the Silk Road most of the regional powers have different initiatives in the region. China helps the development of infrastructure for transportation, while the US attempts to re-create political stability and security (ibid, 2008). The transformation of the region inevitably disturbs Russia as a regional and historically unique power over the Central Asian states. Different purposes, aims and initiatives result in different outcomes for the countries. Furthermore, each country is different in its vulnerability, sensitivity and bargaining power over the region. For instance, the energy crisis in Central Asia has an influence on both Turkey and the EU, but its *impacts* all differ depending on each country's vulnerability. Therefore it is important to emphasise that this vulnerability shaped countries' foreign policies with regards to Central Asia.

From a geopolitical perspective, the Black Sea region is generally seen as a 'natural geopolitical centre' or a new 'geopolitical pivot' which has rich natural resources including uranium and other energy reserves, as well as geopolitically critical transport roads, as highlighted by Georgiev (2015). He also implies that this geopolitical significance makes the region more attractive not only for neighbouring countries such as China and Russia, but also for the European countries like Turkey, Germany or even more

non-Eurasian countries like the US (Georgiev, 2015). As stated earlier, Mackinder argued that the power which has control over the Heartland will be the global power (Iseri, 2006). For the West and Russia, Central Asia is seen as a security layer for the constraints from China, or vice versa. Furthermore, those countries see the region as a base upon which to improve their activities and efficiencies (Turan, 2014).

In order to explain the actors' behaviours and strategies, we need to look at the different geopolitical perspectives related to the region. On the one hand, Kim and Indeo (2013), claim that competition on the region occurs between the 'great powers' such as China, the US and Russia. On the other hand, some scholars argue that rather than there being solely one big game, there are several 'small' games between these three big powers-China, Russia and the US-on the region (Laruelle and Peyrouse, 2013). Other readings suggest that power relations in the region can easily be considered on the framework of the balance-of-power, which consists not only of global powers, but also includes the rising regional powers (Kubicek, 2013). Another important perspective is that in the new world order, countries are not the sole actors in politics, and therefore other actors such as international organisations or multinational companies should also be included in the equation (Kuzsnir and Stegen, 2015).

It is important to emphasise that unlike several other scholarly approaches which consider power relations as a 'game', here power relations will be examined using the concept of interdependency, and power dynamics will be analysed from the liberal perspective rather than the realist one. To illustrate the necessity of the liberal arguments, Joseph Nye implies that the oil crisis and the OPEC embargo resulted in a change of power relations, where power shifted to developing countries from the industrialised ones (Garrison and Abdurrahmonov, 2011). As Smith Stegen (2015) argues, it is hard to say that all actors have the same power, objectives or interests in the region. He also suggests that China would be considered as the 'winner' of the region due to its capabilities and geopolitical strategies-such as trade agreements with energy-rich countries Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan (Stegen, 2015).

The US' Silk Road initiatives officially started in 1999, when it accepted and put into practice the Silk Road Strategy Act (Turan, 2014). According to the Act, the US agreed to help improve communication, transportation, education, health, trade and the energy infrastructure, in order to support the developmental activities in the region and promote the international organisation and multinational companies' investments in the region (ibid, 2014). At first glance, China was disturbed by the newly independent states,

because of their national bond with the Turkish community in its Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region. When China recognised the energy reserves in the region which would compensate its energy demand for its rising economy, it changed its policies' base towards the region (ibid, 2014). Included in these policies was the idea of eliminating US and Russian influence in the region and reducing their power to manipulate. In this complex interdependency, China inched toward Russia in order to balance the relations and further engage itself in the region by using Russia's historical ties (ibid, 2014).

For the EU, after recognising the independent post-Soviet states, the region was not seen as a strategically-important territory until the Ukraine-Russian crisis. When Russia used its energy card against the EU, they realised how much they relied on Russian energy supply. So the EU started to change its energy policies and search for new sources. They then increased their initiatives, but to address more energy-based and economic concerns. From this viewpoint, the EU just wants to be a trade and energy partner for the region, rather than eliminate any super power (Belkin and Morelli, 2007). Although it is not seen as a big power in the region, Turkey is also geopolitically important as a regional power and due to history. Just after their independence declaration, Turkey immediately recognised all Central Asian countries and started to develop its diplomatic relations with them (Turan, 2014). Similarly with the EU, Turkey wants to create a strong energy and trade partnership instead of uprooting other powers or reducing their capabilities in the region.

In order to revitalise the historical Silk Road, nearly each country has a new Silk Road project. For China it is called 'One Belt, One Road', while the US called its own project 'The new Silk Road'. Through the concept of interdependency, all countries agree to act together, because they are all aware that the stability of the region, as well as more advanced transportation infrastructure would result in a win-win for all parties (ibid, 2014).

Methodology

In order to explain the power relations between countries, it is important to use several policy papers related to policy implications, initiatives of countries, agreements, bilateral or multilateral negotiations related to revitalisation of the ancient Silk Road. To do so, in this paper policy papers, articles related to region and those global powers, and books particularly to clarify the theories applied into the study. To exemplify some theoretical issues, current political issues will be narrated from newspapers as well. As journals, Oil and Gas Journal, Energy Policy for the energy security section,

Chinese Business Review, International Journal of emerging Markets for the economic dimension and Asian perspective, Bilig for the general information about the region. Both Turkish and English articles will be considered to reach the perfect explanation for the condition of power relations in the region. Apart from books, within selected journals, articles will be chosen by their relevance to the region and the theory, then their date because of the contemporaneity of the study. As it is explained above, theory challenges in the region is explained to contrast the different perspectives, then as a main theory, complex interdependency model will be embedded into three different sections by considering different aspects of the theory and the policy implications related to it on the region. In addition to study, in the appendix section the map of the projects will be provided to illustrate the routes clearly.

Economic Dimension of the Silk Road

Turkish minister Hayati Yazici declared: “The trade volume of the Silk Road countries has quadrupled in the last decade and there is a noticeable shift in the growth of these countries in contrast to Europe and other regions.” (Haberler, 2012). As such, it is essential to emphasise the economic significance of the region and its influence on power dynamics (Fedorenko, 2013). There have been dramatic developments in Chinese and other Asian states’ economies for a few decades, so the revitalisation of the Silk Road would be a great chance to introduce their goods to the European market by using Central Asia as a bridge between the two continents (ibid, 2013). This route would not only be an advantage for trade and for the economy, but also for the travel and transportation of new ideas and culture too (Georgiev, 2015).

In the 19th century, Pax economica was introduced as a reflection of power dynamics and a result of interdependency between powers (Kantarci, 2012). Pax economica can essentially be understood as having little to no conflict between economic powers, so that states could have more trade agreements and relations under peace circumstances rather than spending their money and time on military power and war (ibid, 2012). Within this context, trade agreements and developed economic relations can be seen as the only thing able to avoid war. Looking from a global perspective, liberal economics scholars argue that the global system would be discouraged from using military power, if liberal economics and foreign trade result in engaging countries’ national interests (ibid, 2012). This argument overlaps with the neo-liberal complex mutual interdependency concept.

The new global order requires multi-national coalitions which can deal with common problems and threats. Until the new world order, instant conflicts occurred; but countries could not resist the liberal system and sooner or later they recognised that conflict is only a zero-sum game (ibid, 2012). For example in 2016, Russia and Turkey froze their trade relations for a couple of months due to the air strike crisis. They only resisted the system for 8 months, and soon enough both Putin and Erdogan held a subsequent meeting, agreeing to develop their economic relations (Walker and Rankin, 2016). As this example shows, this tense process-familiar in our anarchical international system-shifted to the coalition and agreement period after only a few months (Kantarci, 2012).

Central Asia with its rich natural resources and its specific topography makes the global powers on the region focus more on economic and technological factors rather than on security challenges. Global competition in Central Asia is structured based on political economy, so that the complex interdependency between power dynamics is shaped on the context of a geo-economic perspective. It is generally argued that powers first focus on oil and natural resources in the region, then on its trade potential (Budak, 2013).

In addition to how power relations shape and maintain the region, it is also important to emphasise the well-being of the regional economies. Developmental economics could be used to describe the recovery of Central Asian states' economies after Soviet Russia. As Daron Acemoglu proposed 'institutionalism' for economic development, Central Asian countries also need to improve their institutions and make them more transparent and democratic for the sake of their economies (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012). In order to create and maintain the institutions in the region, there is greater need for the initiatives to focus on the economy and democracy, which will bring political stability for the region and make the region more attractive for foreign investments (ibid, 2012).

In the next section, countries will be analysed one by one in order to explain their economic initiatives in the region and what they expect in return.

Initiatives for the region

This section will examine the effect of the economic initiatives of the active powers in the region from the concept of complex interdependency. Starting with the US, it can be observed that the main purpose of the US' 'New Silk Road Strategy' is for more developed liberal trade, incentives for economic cooperation, and enhanced trade bonds with Central Asia (Fed-

renko, 2013). At this point, the US Silk Road policies appear to be more economically-oriented and are focused on pumping liberal values into the region. The very first initiatives of the New Silk Road Strategy started in 2011 with the call of former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, for the revitalisation of the historical Silk Road:

“Let’s build an international web and network of economic and transit connections. That means building more rail lines, highways, [and] energy infrastructure, like the proposed pipeline to run from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan through Pakistan into India (TAPI). It means upgrading the facilities at border crossings. And it certainly means removing the bureaucratic barriers and other impediments to the free flow of goods and people.” Fedorenko (2013, p.4)

According to Vladimir Fedorenko (2013), the US mainly aims to develop Afghanistan’s condition with its Silk Road initiatives, so that when Afghanistan engages with Central Asia’s economies, it will become more attractive for foreign investments, which will result in advancing the opportunities and facilities for both the economy and for its society.

The ‘New Silk Road’ can be seen as a chance to trigger economic growth and engagement with the world economic system, with more developed infrastructure and advanced cross-border trade. The US has introduced nearly 40 infrastructure projects which mostly focus on initiatives for the Silk Road strategy since 2012 (Georgiev, 2015). Although there are lots of bilateral negotiations between Central Asian states and the US, there is only limited information about the contents of those meetings. Those undisclosed data from the bilateral meetings create doubt regarding the US’ purpose, particularly from the perspective of neighbouring states (ibid, 2015). Furthermore, military negotiations are also done privately between Central Asian states and the US, so those initiatives and meetings are only limited and specific to countries, rather than being a means for the *region* to integrate (ibid, 2015).

Turkey, parallel to the US’ purpose, wants to create integration in the region and revitalise the ancient Silk Road between Asia and Europe through its own territory. Turkish initiatives to the region are essential for the reconstruction of the Silk Road, particularly for its transportation web, free trade procedures, securitisation of the crossroads and logistics. As mentioned by Vladimir Fedorenko (2013), Turkish minister Hayati Yazici emphasised the importance of the Silk Road for the global economy and for transporting Asian products to Europe and vice versa. From the Turkish perspective, in order to reconstruct the Silk Road, it is essential to develop railroads, crossroads, custom borders, energy corridors and pipelines; thus the region

would undoubtedly become the ‘heartland’ of the world. Turkey’s Central Asian Silk Road-based initiatives were introduced in 2008 in Antalya Forum, which hosted discussions about how to simplify border crossing procedures through the Silk Road. Not only did seventeen Silk Road countries attend the meeting but so did many international organisations, including the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) (ibid, 2013).

Here it is important to highlight that as liberal theories suggest, states are not unique actors in the new global order; international organisations, NGOs and multinational companies also have enough power to affect the international system. The next meeting was held in Georgia in 2011, the Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) was mentioned for its contribution towards creating the Permanent secretariat for the management of further applications and decisions of the forum (Karaman and Karluk, 2014).

Despite several initiatives from Turkey, some scholars argue that current initiatives and investments focusing on specific sectors do not guarantee a strategic long-term interdependence between Central Asian states and Turkey (ibid, 2014). It is also argued that Turkey needs to consider the 20 years’ impact since the collapse of the Soviet Union on the region and needs to develop a new strategic agenda which contains energy policies, trade relations and other important factors for the stability, integration and development of the region (ibid, 2014). While developing relations with Central Asian states, Turkey should also consider its European trade partners and the revenue of the reconstruction of the Silk Road (Budak, 2013). Contrary to the US, Turkey carries out all initiatives and meetings with Central Asian states transparently, so that Central Asian governments hardly think about any potentially suspicious aims behind Turkish initiatives in the region.

Although the EU has attended several meetings related to the reconstruction of the ancient Silk Road, its initiatives towards the region is limited to energy and human rights issues. In particular, the economic integration of the region and the development of trade relations have hardly found a place on the EU’s Central Asia agenda (Sally, 2010). The TRACECA project includes the Silk Wind initiative for the construction of the high-speed train railways between European countries, Caucasus and Central Asia, the development of the technology used in the transportation or communication between countries, and simplifications of custom trade procedures (Fedorenko, 2013). Another important project supported by the EU is the Viking Railroad, which is a railway project aimed at linking Scandinavia to

China via Central Asia, creating new trade opportunities and developing current political relations amongst those states (Stegen and Kuszniir, 2015). As mentioned above, the EU has hardly recognised the importance of the region. Nevertheless, there have been two main events which enabled the EU to understand the power dynamics in the region and how they solely relied on Russian energy. Firstly, the energy demand from EU countries has risen rapidly due to technological developments in the industry sector and rising demography by migrants. Secondly, the Ukrainian crisis in 2014 resulted in gas interruptions in the EU by Russia, due to their political position during the crisis (ibid, 2015). The EU was forced to recognise that it needed to diversify its energy source, or Russia's monopoly would give it the power to manipulate the EU.

From the Central Asian perspective, perceptions towards the EU make Central Asian states less willing to cooperate and undertake common projects. East European countries want to control the possible trade route coming from Central Asia, rather than encourage the cooperation between the whole region, China and other members of the Silk Road (Georgiev, 2015). Scholars have also addressed these qualms, stressing that the EU needs to analyse both its interests and Central Asian states' interests, and create a new agenda for the region which contains common goals, shared interests, cooperation and financial aid to the region (ibid, 2015).

Undoubtedly, Chinese initiatives also focus on their own interests when it comes to the revitalisation of the historical Silk Road. Central Asia attracts China's attention with the idea of boosting its own economic interests by using the ancient Silk Road route (Fedorenko, 2013). Furthermore, China considers the energy resources in the region to be beneficial to its energy demand (Dhakal, 2009). That is why China has increased its economic initiatives with great vigour, to advance the region's infrastructure. Differing from Turkish initiatives, Chinese investments are quietly sent to the region for the construction of crossroads and railways. An example of this is when in 2013 the Chinese government invested 2 billion dollars to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan for the construction of a new railway, because China believes that the returns of the low transportation costs and dramatic reduction in other costs and time would complement the initiatives for Central Asia (Fedorenko, 2013).

Officially announced by the Chinese president in 2013, the One Belt One Road project aims to develop integration between states in the region via two main determinants; one of them is land-based 'Silk Road economic Belt' and sea route-based 'Maritime Silk Road' (See appendix II) (Georgiev,

2015). With the advantage of those two initiatives, the output of the cross-road web would rise, while China would connect to the European market by becoming less reliant on the maritime route which is generally under US control (ibid, 2015). In addition to those revenues, China would also guarantee and secure the natural resources and energy reserves. By achieving these goals, China will increase its power in the world order. Chinese investments are kindly welcomed to the region due to the fact that the initiatives are seen as a chance to improve the quality of life, economic development and securitisation of the region.

Another initiative which is a joint cooperation by two regional powers-Turkey and China-is the 'New Eurasian Land Bridge' which aims to connect China, Central Asia to Europe through Turkey, crossing the Bosphorus via Marmaray (See appendix III). In Istanbul, Marmaray provides the opportunity to cross the Bosphorus under the sea, and proceed to the North-west of Europe such as Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Germany (Georgiev, 2015). Turkey has been vigorously focusing on accomplishing the high speed railroad route from its Georgian Border, which is 1500 km and will take 8 hours when the whole project will be completed (ibid, 2015). This 35 billion dollar high-speed railway project depends on China, not only for the investments but also for its advanced technology (ibid, 2015). Therefore one can reason that from the liberal perspective, countries would have more power to improve the facilities in the region through cooperation and diplomacy. This can be seen in the example of the New Eurasian Land Bridge. Another such cooperation and initiative to revitalise the Silk Road has been attempted by China and the EU in 2015 (ibid, 2015). The main purpose of this initiative is for the advanced railways and crossroads to ease and increase the volume of trade between those two continents. A further benefit is that China will have greater opportunity to reach the raw materials and energy sources (ibid, 2015).

According to scholars, Chinese initiatives for the revitalisation of the ancient Silk Road are more extensive than Russian and US initiatives, which put China at the heart of the energy and trade sector. China provides both its own security and the region's stability through its energy-based investments (Svaine, 2015). In doing so, China may arise as a regional and global power against the EU and the US in the region, so that the more power China gains, the less powerful the EU and the US will be in the region. Consequently, this will also affect their complex interdependency.

Joseph Nye presents the three aspects of relational power as: dominate the transformation, create the agenda and determine the choices (2004).

Undoubtedly, the most critical aspect is shaping perceptions, beliefs and choices, because in doing so one could have enough power to dominate the power dynamics (Stegen and Kuszniir, 2015). China has increased its global prestige by using 'soft power' in its diplomatic relations and spreading its Confucius Institutes to the world (Nye, 2004). In order to create those power dynamics in the region as Nye proposes, China started its initiatives and meetings in 1996 and has created the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (Azer, 2012). On the other hand, due to the common interest in the region with the US and the EU, China needs to maintain its good relationship with the EU and the US, with the advantage of trade as proposed by Henry Kissinger (Ibid, 2012).

Security Challenges in the Region

This section will analyse energy security, energy resources and pipelines, other security challenges in the region and the initiatives for those challenges. Rising demand in energy, limited access to the resources and high natural gas prices have led the world to evolve in the search for new reserves (Azer, 2012). Energy sources and energy-rich territories became the most important strategic part of the policy agendas of global powers. The implementation of those policy agendas are reflected differently, depending on the country and its level of dependency, possessions, accessing the energy sources, and influence on the territory. Thus, Central Asia became a subject of big debate between global powers (Georgevic, 2015).

Russia has an advantage over the rest due to its historical, cultural and political bonds. In addition to its historical ties, Russia also has enough energy pipelines and infrastructure from the Soviet Russia era with Central Asia. Therefore any serious energy negotiation regarding Central Asia should always contain Russia, as long as they are ready to use pipelines belonging to Russia (Fedorenko, 2013). Contrastingly, China does not have such a relationship with Central Asian states, but it can still easily reshape the power dynamics, as it has the money and technology to build new pipelines and reach energy sources.

It is important to highlight that, whichever way their efforts go the real winners of this competition would be the Central Asian states and their societies with the profits of the Silk Road-based initiatives (Garrison & Abdurrahmonov, 2011). On the energy competition, the whole picture could be described as financial aids from China, more advanced technology provided by the EU and Russia, to which it is bound together by history (ibid,

2011). So as Bahgat Gawdat (2009) emphasises, the energy competition over Central Asia has occurred mostly between the EU, China and Russia (Turan, 2012).

The US' desire to deploy the national air defence system has been directly rejected by China and Russia (Turan, 2012). According to scholars, Russia would intensify its strategies on the securitisation of the region due to the nuclear threats from the other global powers (ibid, 2012). Furthermore, the US' missile shield project is seen as a breaking point of the relations between the two countries since the Cold War era (Fedorenko, 2013). The US increasingly penetrated the region, particularly since 9/11, but due to the active Russian policies in the region, the US started to lose its edge (Turan, 2012). Starting from Putin's vision, Russia has started to transfer 1 trillion of the energy income to the military modernisation and armaments (ibid, 2012). During these tense periods of conflict, Central Asian states have not known how to balance these two global powers.

Uranium which is used in the production of nuclear weapons is plentiful in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (World-nuclear, 2016). So, Central Asia became the heart of the energy and securitisation policies of the states who want to procure uranium or nuclear weapons. After independence, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan dramatically developed their economies with the advantage of their energy and natural resources whilst becoming important regional powers in a short time period. The demand of uranium from Central Asia attracts global powers' attention (Turan, 2012). Therefore in order to become a global power, those countries need to transmit their sources efficiently to the world market (Fedorenko, 2013).

In the last decade, Central Asian states started to be part of a couple of agreements aimed at the construction of new pipelines and transportation web for the transmission of their natural resources. Unsurprisingly, Russia objected to those projects and tried to block them using its political and historical clout in the Central Asian region, particularly with the Russia-friendly presidents of those states (ibid, 2013). Kazakhstan resisted Russia's oppression and agreed to take part in the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline project (Budak, 2013). By attending this project, Kazakhstan portrayed less dependence on Russia and gained the power to behave more like an independent state.

In comparison, due to the lack of energy resources Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan still rely on Russian energy (ibid, 2013). While Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Russian energy relations are based on a complex interdependency, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Russian energy relations are still

under Russian control. Turkey does not have a distinct energy relation within the concept of complex interdependency. The current energy relations between Central Asian states and Turkey could not be called a strategic policy. In comparison, the Turkish role in the energy and nuclear sector in the region has been very limited compared to Russia, China and the US (ibid, 2013).

Energy security includes the ability to control energy prices, which is to do with more than being a global power. China is really sensitive to energy prices due to its rising energy demand for its booming and developing economy (Azer, 2012). That is why energy security not only includes the goal to be a global power, but also to exercise major control over energy prices. The most powerful energy strategy is undoubtedly investing in countries that have rich natural reserves. This strategy strengthens the regional power while restraining the entrance of the global powers to the region (Mearsheimer, 2005). Accordingly, China has not only gained dominance on its own territory, but also in Central Asia by using its soft power, as seen through initiatives and investments (Azer, 2012).

The most important way of maintaining a certain degree of independence in the global market is for a state to diversify its energy supplier. Hence with the advantage of complex interdependency, countries could have the opportunity to act without any pressure from other states, and eliminate monopolisation in a specific sector, so they can exercise their policies. According to realist scholars, complex interdependency cannot provide equality (or equality of power) amongst states or players in the international system (Georgievic, 2015). They argue that the dependent side shows weakness towards the powerful country (ibid, 2015) For example, the EU relied on Russian gas for a few decades, so this condition made the EU weaker and more vulnerable to policies related to Russia or to the other part of the post-Soviet world.

At the same time, European countries became more sensitive to energy prices because of Russian monopoly on the sector. From a realist perspective, energy security can only be provided by *states*, due to the rejection of other actors within the global order such as OPEC or other energy organisations (ibid, 2015). The 1973 oil crisis showed us the importance of international organisations and their impact on the new world order. From a general perspective, the realist approach does not have enough arguments to address the changes and the new power dynamics in contemporary politics (Azer, 2012).

Considering the complex interdependency model's main principles, there are three outstanding points on the framework of energy security (Sohret, 2014). First of all, states are not solely effective actors on the determination of energy security strategies. According to the neo-liberal approach, in the global system there are also non-state actors such as international organisations, non-governmental organisations and multi-national companies (ibid, 2014). Secondly, there is no hierarchy or sequence of problems in the system; no specific subject has priority (AZer, 2012). Therefore, different interest groups can have different perspectives and interests which let them use different approaches and employ different policies. For example, some of them can focus on energy security whilst others consider the economic and environmental factors as well. This shows us how the concept of energy security can be diversified.

Thirdly, according to this approach the use of military power should be reduced between developed countries (Sohret, 2014). The liberal approach argues that cooperation between democratic states is predictable, and that in addition to this, there are lots of other factors to convince those states to cooperate. The factors enabling states to cooperate are international law, international organisations and states' rational strategies (ibid, 2014).

Initiatives

As stated above, Central Asian states are already at the heart of the US' energy and securitisation strategies. In order to eliminate Russian influence from the region, the US accomplished different projects and investments related to the region (Fedorenko, 2013). From 2010 to 2012, 520 million dollars were invested in Central Asia to construct a more secure region by regulating law enforcement related to terrorism and drug trafficking (ibid, 2013). In the same period, the US also invested 380 million dollars for the development of the region. The US has spent nearly 3.9 billion dollars to help the construction of the transportation, the development of trade relations, and making the region secure since their independency (Georgevic, 2015).

Despite several initiatives towards regional energy security, the US has still been criticised regarding its nuclear stance. The idea of accumulating nuclear weapons and other armaments runs contrary to the region's energy security; it hardly encourages regional states to cooperate with each other, nor does it support the concept of the democratisation of energy security (Azer, 2012). Apart from nuclear weapons, the US' energy security initiatives could be considered using the liberal approach. They have a degree of

influence on the region, which aims to provide peace, stability and reduce Russian dominance.

China has also been achieving its initiatives, brought about in order to revitalise the energy routes and their securitisation by cooperating with Central Asian states. For instance, China and Central Asian governments agreed to construct a new 1100 mile natural gas pipeline which transfers the Turkmen gas to China through Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (Turan, 2012). Furthermore, China invested 4 billion dollars into Turkmenistan to develop its local gas field and 10 billion dollars to Kazakhstan in 2009 (ibid, 2012). According to Jeffrey Woodruff, Central Asian states would have enough financial power from Chinese loans to reduce their debts to Russia (Fedorenko, 2013). This shows us therefore, how states can use cooperation and interdependent relations to eliminate one country, or reduce its power in the region. By providing more loans and investments to Central Asia, the region will rely less on Russia, and this will reshape the power dynamics for China's own interests.

In the context of energy security, Central Asian regional energy security is developing gradually with the advantage of Chinese initiatives. China is willing to pay significant amounts for the energy in the region (ibid, 2013). China with its energy securitisation strategy, aims to secure the region while contributing to the construction and route of the pipelines for its increasing energy demands. The country has adopted a pragmatic, trade-based approach in its contribution towards revitalising the Silk Road. For instance by 2020 the gas portion will be tripled which will have a good influence on the Central Asian-Chinese relations (Turan, 2012). In contrast to Russia's socialist approach, China does not appear to have any ideological strategy towards Central Asia by reconstructing the Silk Road (Fedorenko, 2013). In addition to its investments in the region, China also uses international organisations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to effectively engage in the region and promote energy cooperation with Central Asian states (Garrison & Abdurrahmonov, 2011).

Europe's main initiatives related to Central Asian energy security is TRACECA which aims to develop transport sections; marine transport, air routes, crossroads and railways, transport infrastructure and transport security (Fedorenko, 2013). INOGATE is another important energy-oriented cooperation between European countries and post-Soviet countries such as Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (ibid, 2013). It aims to gather together energy markets on the framework of the EU international

energy market, to develop energy security by highlighting the issues of energy supply and demand, to encourage sustainable energy developments such as renewable energy and to make the region more attractive for investors. The president of the European Commission-Jose Manuel Durao Barroso emphasized the current energy policies as the age of energy interdependence, due to the supply-demand balance between the two continents (Garrison & Abdurrahmonov, 2011). Despite its serious negotiations between other countries and cooperation with energy-based organisations, the EU is not seen as a rational security partner for the Central Asian states (Stegen and Kuszniir, 2015).

Turkey needs to develop a new energy strategy in order to compensate for having a lack of energy sources to address its increasing demand. Thus the country has been participating in several multilateral agreements and meetings, to develop and to secure new pipelines from or through Central Asia, to its own territory (Georgevic, 2015). The Trans Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline Project (TANAP) is the one of those initiatives which aims to transport Central Asian gas to the EU via Turkey and support the diversification of Turkey's energy suppliers. This project will help to secure energy suppliers for the EU and for Turkey (Stegen and Kuszniir, 2015).

Following the Ukraine-Russia crisis, the EU and Turkey realised that the possibility of a gas cut-off from Russia highlighted the strategic importance of pipeline projects like TANAP (ibid, 2015). It is important to emphasise that the timing of the project is also crucial, especially when considering the tense relations and rising energy demand in the region. However from a political perspective, the Turkish Stream makes Turkey more dependent on Russia. Volkan Ozdemir stated that the new nuclear power station which will be built by the Russian state company would make Turkey to rely on Russia by nearly 60%. This is in conflict with the idea of the diversification of one's energy supplier and thus reduces the attractiveness of the TANAP (Al Jazeera, 2016).

Human Rights and Democratisation Initiatives

In the final section of the evaluation part, there will be a study of Russia-friendly state leaders, the democratisation process and human rights issues.

The most important subject which creates closer relations between Central Asian states and Russia is undoubtedly Russia-friendly governments. Russia during Putin's rule has introduced a new term related to democracy: 'controllable democracy' for the region (Azer, 2012). Central Asia has also

found this policy attractive, particularly because most Central Asian governments argue that the Western-type democracy is not suitable for their region (Georgevic, 2015). Thus Russia is actively dominating the region by using its ties with the ruling parties and eliminating oppositions or counter-arguments. Furthermore, Russia blocks external intervention from the Western world into the Central Asian-type of democracy, so that most of the western countries are not capable of intervening in the situations surrounding the region (ibid, 2015).

This section will therefore be shorter than the previous economy and energy security sections, due to the Russian impediments to the development of human rights and democracy in the region. As Daron Acemoglu (2012) explained, the function of the institutions of a country is considered as the most important factor for the development of the country. This means that in Central Asia there is an urgent need for effective, independent institutions which could only be provided in a proper democracy. One can argue that as long as democracy and human rights issues are solved in the region, Central Asia would become more stable and attract more investment.

Thus it is important to highlight here that democracy and human rights are undoubtedly two of the most important determinants of the region's development, so it needs to be taken into further consideration. For the benefit and stability of the region, China needs to take greater care than other states due to its regional neighbourhood and its problems with its minorities and autonomous regions. For example, the accretion of Taiwan to China, the Tibet Autonomous Region and conflicts in East Turkestan could all be considered as a threat to its economic development (Azer, 2012). Therefore in order to secure its own place and the region, China needs to give greater space to democracy and human rights on its policy agenda (ibid, 2012).

Initiatives

With the influence of the liberal approaches, the US knows how state regime and other soft power issues affect a country's development. It understands that in order to stabilise the region, democratisation and human rights are indispensable. As the US has laid claim to being the world's provider of security and democracy, it has lots of initiatives towards the region to structure the 'Western' type of democracy (Fedorenko, 2013). This section will illustrate the initiatives from the US-its investments to enhance the conditions of civil society groups and minorities, the rule of law and human rights issues (ibid, 2013).

To achieve these goals, the US uses “liberal” methods. It lets Central Asian states cooperate with each other and with regional powers through bilateral and multilateral initiatives and agreements, in order to solve those issues and develop the quality of life in the region (ibid, 2013). For the revitalisation of the Silk Road, as mentioned above, the US introduced the idea of the Northern Distribution Network, but according to Graham Lee, 93% of investments for this project go to the local governments and unfortunately there is no substantial evidence that this increases the quality of life in the societies (Fedorenko, 2013).

It is important to explain why those investments and other economic initiatives are not enough to contribute to the development of human rights and democratic conditions. According to developmental economist Nancy Qian (2015), foreign aids and investments cannot always bring welfare with it. This can be due to the entrenched habits of the society or the corruption at the state level, which could easily block those investments from trickling down to the people. As can be seen in the Solow model which was applied to Sri Lankan micro enterprises by Woodruff, McKenzie and De Mel (2008), the poverty trap is not easy to get rid of, due to habits and practices, meaning that aid or investments cannot filter to the society. But from the US perspective, it could easily be said that Central Asian governments seem willing to accept investments and to cooperate with other states, even though there are criticisms that Central Asian states have concerns about the western type of democracy from the Western world (ibid, 2008). The US’ new Silk Road strategy aims to manipulate the Russian-influenced Eurasian Union by imposing western type of democracy (ibid, 2008).

As a regional actor, Turkey on the other hand has several initiatives related to democratisation and human rights issues in the region through its multilateral negotiations and bilateral meetings with the local governments (Turan, 2012). TIKA (Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency) is an example of these initiatives. It started in 1992 by not only encouraging the development of the economy, but also of the social life structure (Fedorenko, 2013). The main purpose of TIKA is the elimination of poverty and continuous development in the region with its 30 partner countries (TIKA, 2016).

Turkey has been active through this, and its historical and national bonds with Central Asian people largely help Turkey and its initiatives to reach the region. Turkey is not only investing for economic development, but it also has a lot of initiatives related to education, for Turkish schools, universities and civil society centres which protect Turkish culture in the region and en-

hance the quality of education (Georgevic, 2015). Turkey's democracy and human rights policies towards the region are transparent. Another important difference between the US and Turkish initiatives is that the US aims to block Iran from the new Silk Road project, while Turkey sees it as a regional and strategic partner (Fedorenko, 2013).

Another important advocator of democracy and human rights, the EU's initiatives are not specifically related to democracy in Central Asia because of the location of the region and its importance in the EU policy agenda (EU Parliament, 2016). The EU has important initiatives for civil society activities, LGBT groups and their conditions in the region, and other important human rights and democratisation concerns (ibid, 2016). Neither the EU nor Central Asian governments are willing to find a common ground for the regional democratic stabilisation, however, because Central Asian governments think that the Western type of democracy is not suitable for their region (Georgevic, 2015).

In 2013 for example, the EU started negotiations with Central Asian states for their social development, but the Central Asian governments only sent their ambassadors rather than ministries or other high-level officials (ibid, 2015). Another important meeting was organised for May 2014, but Tajikistan cancelled its participation (EU Parliament, 2016). From a general perspective, Central Asian countries have welcomed Turkish initiatives due to their historical and national ties, the US initiatives due to the big amount of loans and investments, but the EU's initiatives have not really had a good impact on the region due to the concerns about the type of democracy the institution might seek to impose upon them.

Conclusion

This study aimed to discuss how geopolitics and the complex interdependency model exemplify the conditions of global and regional powers' policies towards the revitalisation of the ancient Silk Road. In order to do so, the study gave a brief account of the century-old Russian influence and presence in the Central Asian region. This account served to understand Russia's dominance in Central Asia.

Then, it undertook an evaluation of the ways in which the revitalisation of the Silk Road shapes power relations between regional actors. The study analysed and concluded that there are three main areas which have a direct impact on the power relations and strategies of the states in the region: economic initiatives, energy security and last but not least, human rights and democratisation, within the context of complex interdependency. From

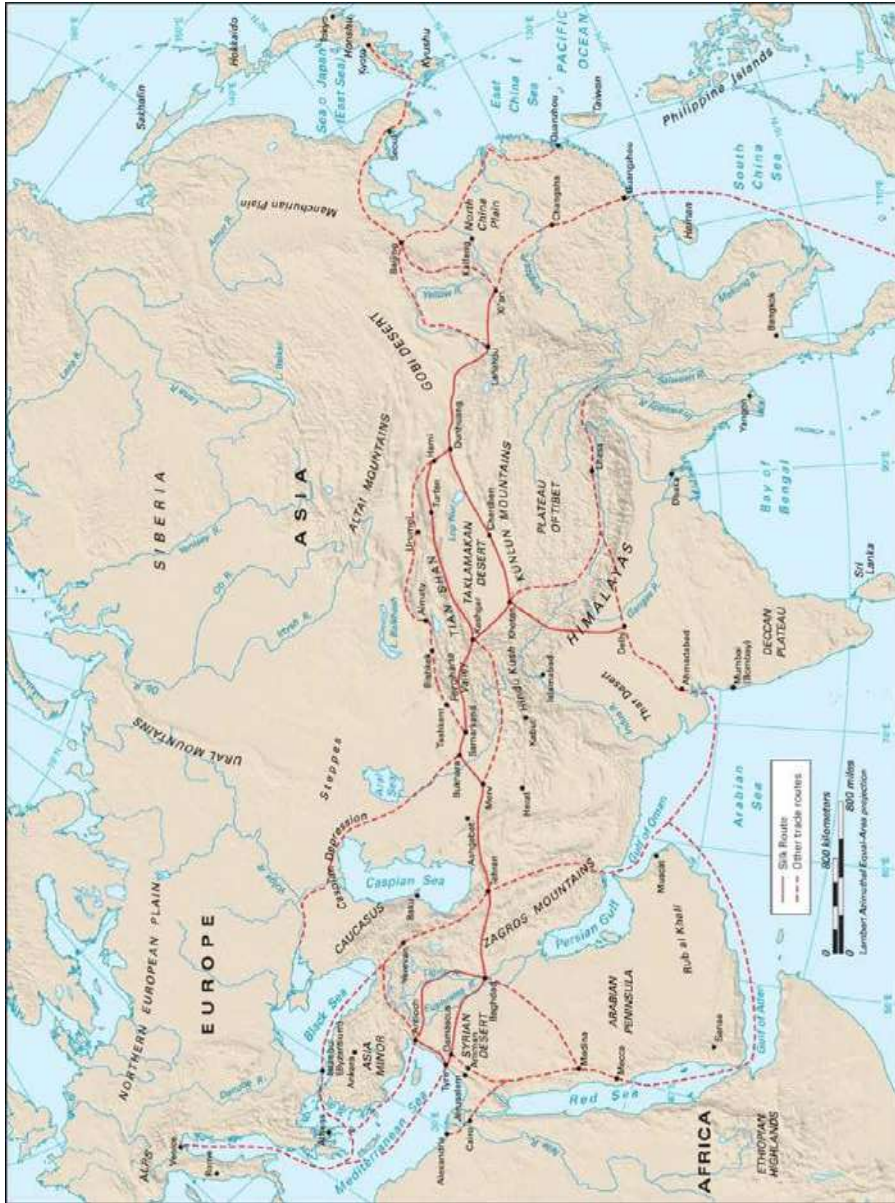
an economic perspective, all global and regional powers undoubtedly have their own interests as well as shared interests regarding the revitalisation of the Silk Road and the Central Asian region.

The study carried out an in-depth analysis on the power struggle associated with this revitalisation. While the US aims to eliminate Russian penetration in the region, China wants to become a global superpower and improve its trade routes by using the new Silk Road. Turkey and the EU have less ambitious economic purposes in the region due to their perspectives towards the region. Whilst Turkey has economic agreements and initiatives by using its national and historical ties with the region, the EU has more concerns about the trade routes and energy pipelines in the region.

In the energy security section, it is clear that all powers want to eliminate Russian monopoly in the energy sector and let Central Asian states sell their own energy sources via their own pipelines and trade routes by reconstructing the crossroads, railways, pipelines and maritime routes. In the last section, perhaps due to the fact that all western countries claim to be democracy and human rights pioneers, there are less initiatives and investments in the region. This is because of fears by Russia-friendly Central Asian governments, of a 'Western-type' of democracy. These fears can be a source of friction and unwillingness to cooperate with western countries. China as a regional power also shares these concerns, as the country has no room for the development of democracy and human rights because of its own human rights issues with its autonomous regions and minorities.

In summary, it is important to highlight that each country has largely focused on *their* own interests rather than on the general regional interest. The US focuses more on economic and trade relations, while the EU focuses more on energy securitisation and trade routes. Although China has invested billions of dollars to develop the trade routes for its business interest, it has also focused on energy security to meet its needs. Turkey has more initiatives for but presently it is not considered as a global power by the Central Asian states.

I would like to add that this study analyses only four different types of powers to understand their aims in reconstructing the historical Silk Road and consequently, their goals in the Central Asian region. In future studies, Russia and Iran could also be considered. Their policies and actions could be analysed to see how, and the extent to which they affect the power relations and the complex interdependency in the Central Asian region.



Appendix I ²

2 Vladimir Fedorenko, 2013, pg. 2

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