



Russian and Chinese Activity in Central Asia

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KAZAKHSTAN

UZBEKISTAN

TURKMENISTAN

KYRGYZSTAN

TAJIKISTAN

CHINA

Dushanbe

PAKISTAN

IRAN

UKRAINE

Black Sea

TURKEY

SYR.

Euphrate

MONG.

Korla

Indian Claim

Ufa

Chelyabinsk

Petropavlovsk

Omsk

Samara

Saratov

Donets'k

Rostov

Volgograd

Astrakhan

Groznyy

Sokhumi

Bat'umi

GEORGIA

Tbilisi

ARMENIA

Yerevan

TURKEY

Naxçivan

Mosul

Arbil

Euphrate

Makhachkala

Caspian Sea

Sumqayit

Baku

Tabriz

Lake Urmia

Mosul

Arbil

Euphrate

Oral (Ural'sk)

Aqtöbe (Aktobe)

Atyraū (Atyrau)

Aqtaū (Aktau)

Aral (Aral'sk)

Baykonur Cosmodrone

Aral Sea

Qyzylorda (Kyz'yorda)

Saryshaghan (Saryshagan)

Lake Balkhash

Taldyqorghan (Taldykorgan)

Almaty

Astana

Qaraghandy (Karaganda)

Öskemen (Ist'-kamenogorsk)

Semey (Semipalatinsk)

Öskemen (Ist'-kamenogorsk)

Karamay

Yining

Taraz

Talas

Bishkek

Karakol

Aksu

Nukus

Daşoguz

Urganch

Tashkent

Navoiy

Jizzax

Khitujand

Namangan

Jarg'ona

Andijon

Osh

Türkmenbaşy

Balkanabat

Gyzylarbat

TURKMENISTAN

Ashgabat

Türkmenabat

Buxoro

Samarqand

Qarshi

Termiz

Tejen

Mary

Mashhad

Mazār-e Sharif

Hotan

Kashi

Hotan

Hotan

Indian Claim

China's Rise, Russia's Stagnation?

- ▶ China became CA's main economic partner, before Russia, in 2009
- ▶ High level of Chinese investments with few immediate strings attached except massive state debts
- ▶ China helps for more regional integration even if projects are bilateral
- ▶ China remains hesitant to engage more in the security realm
- ▶ Russia's economic presence retreated, recovered, and now stagnates
- ▶ Russia seen as unreliable for investments—promises more than does
- ▶ Russia promotes its own regional integration structures, not CA ones
- ▶ Russia dominates the security realm in all aspects, from military equipment to educational training

A Binary Domination?

- ▶ Territorial contiguity, historical continuity BUT very different soft powers

RUSSIA

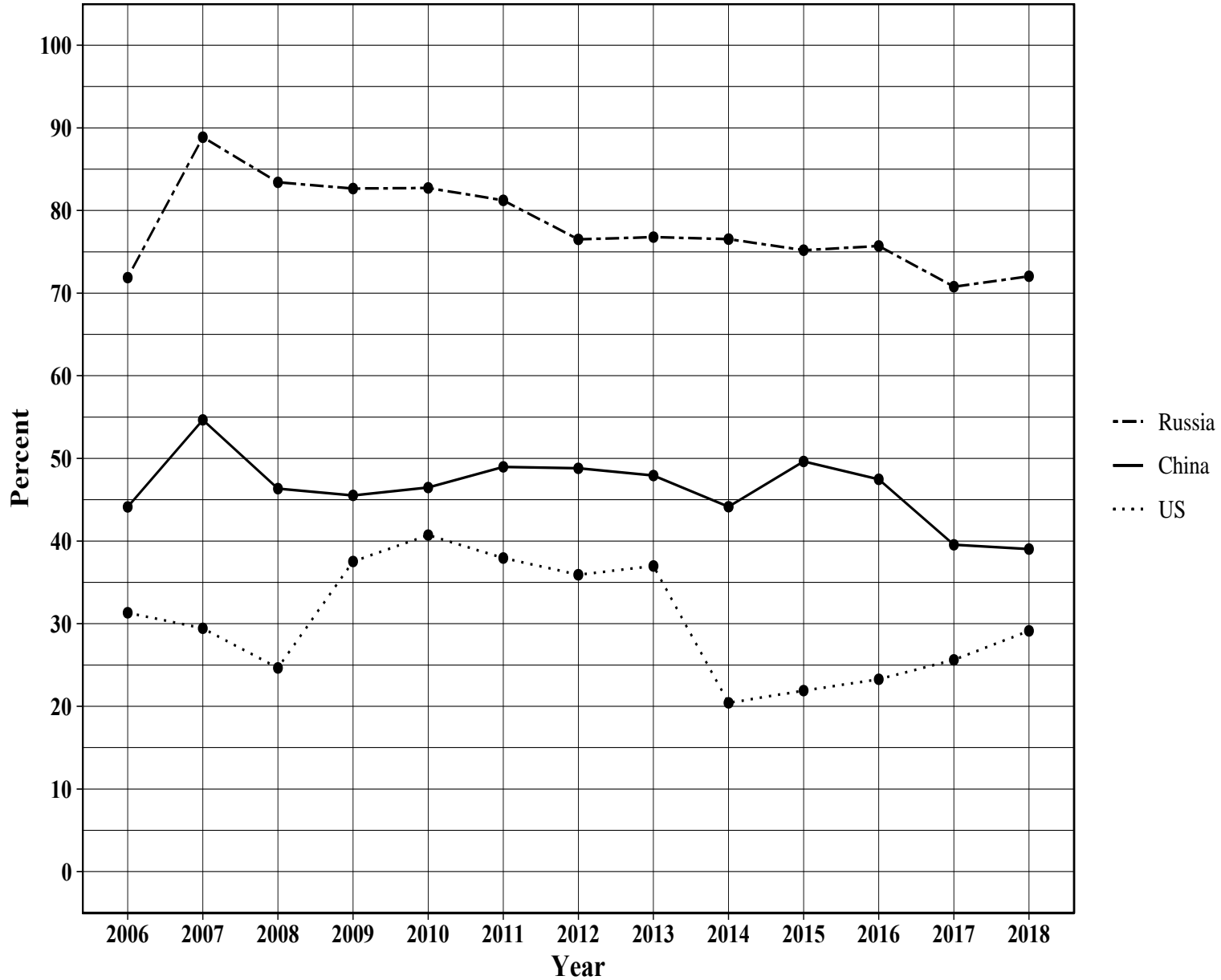
- Soviet legacy
- Reproduction of elites
- Cultural influence
- Media presence
- People-to-people contacts
- Support of Russia's posture in international affairs
- Rising criticism on Russia's "colonial" attitude toward CA

CHINA

- Very low knowledge
- Limited cultural influence
- People-to-people contacts growing but still...
- Rising Sinophobia
- Fear of Chinese hidden goals
- Doubts on the BRI
- Impact of the reeducation camps on CA public opinion

Central Asian Respondent Approval of Chinese, Russian, and US Leaderships

Gallup World Poll



Approval of
Russia, China
and the US in
CA, 2006-2018

Partnership or Competition?

- ▶ Competition is in fact limited or virtual:
 - ▶ No more on energy
 - ▶ Little on economics/investments
 - ▶ Only potentially on security issues
- ▶ Partnership:
 - ▶ Broader bilateral relationship
 - ▶ SCO seen as a success
 - ▶ Mutual goodwill to adjust narratives (Greater Eurasia, Polar Silk Road)
 - ▶ Partly similar vision of the world order – US out of CA
 - ▶ Mutual trust on hierarchy of each other's priorities

Central Asia as a 'test zone' for the Russia-China relationship

- ▶ One of the first zones to test each other and find mutually beneficial strategies in a “post-American order”
- ▶ Trust in each other's priorities toward the West
- ▶ Successful strategies of avoidance
- ▶ Respect of tactics of asymmetric power developed by the other
- ▶ But some doubts remain –more immediate worries on the Chinese side, more long-term ones on the Russian side